



# INVEST



## Igo Network of Volunteer Educators Serving Thailand

### What God has Wrought in the INVEST Ministry in 2019

Phil Siegrist - INVEST Director

#### Wisdom Tree Home (WTH) team:

While WTH volunteers continue to put a lot of energy into curriculum and organizational development, the ministry is flourishing. God has blessed WTH with Godly volunteers and the work continues on.

#### English For Life (EFL) team:

In 2019, God has clarified our vision for the work in the San Khampaeng district. The Thai church that we work with has been in the process of starting a church in this area. We've had volunteers teaching English in government schools there for a couple of years now. However, it was always challenging for our volunteers to know what is appropriate when sharing the Gospel in a Buddhist government school

setting. In February 2019, the Thai sister, who became a Christian in 2018 and lives in that area, asked us to help her start a weekly Saturday English club. Our Thai pastor has named this club "White Elephant Club" (WEC). God has blessed this work of WEC, which now has an average weekly attendance of around 30 students. God has worked it out that we can now invite our government school students to come to this Saturday club where they meet the Thai Christians and are taught the Bible and the Christian worldview. It has made sharing the good news so much easier and more straightforward, because we can be completely free to share about Jesus at WEC. We love that this club is the Thai church's idea, and they can teach the Bible to the students in their own language as people of the same culture. God directed us to rent a large house with a downstairs that is perfect for WEC. Lord willing, we are now preparing to expand our EFL team in 2020. There are around 25 schools

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## Champions

Leon Hulse  
EFL Teacher

“Run to win!” (1  
Corinthians 9:24 CEV)

I work with champions. Literally. For a mid-sized school on the outskirts of town, San Kamphaeng School has been punching above its weight this last year. The grade 7-8 boys' soccer team earned widespread acclaim by winning the national championship, and even got to play in China. The drama club won the queen's cup for their performances of traditional Thai music and drama. Groups and individual students have won or placed high in many other national and regional competitions, including in science, various sports, clothing design, French, and even English. The school tries to support students in pursuing their interests to the fullest, and it yields results. Every Thursday the school-wide assembly is used to honor those who have “brought a good name to the school” by awarding certificates and taking pictures.



Then, there are the other kind of champions. Those that are bravely dealing with things no child should ever have to go through. Those that lose everything continued on page 7

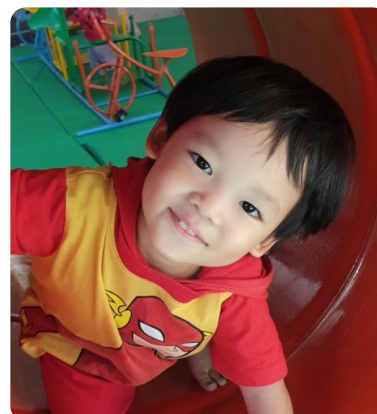
**Hello! I'm Leon Hulse, from Nappanee, Indiana. I've served with EFL since 2014, teaching English in various settings in Chiang Mai. Right now, I'm working as an English teacher for grades 7 and 12 in a government secondary school in San Kamphaeng district. It's an awesome privilege and responsibility to represent God in this strongly Buddhist setting.**

Hi, I'm Crystal Martin from Winfield, PA. Some of the things I enjoy are hearing my students speak English, worshipping through song, drinking an iced latte, driving my motorbike, playing sports, and studying Thai. I'm a changed person because of Jesus and I'm so thankful for the way He continues to work in my life.

## Called for a Purpose

Crystal Martin - WTH Teacher

Ever since I was a little girl, my biggest dream was to work with children. When I was asked to come teach at Wisdom Tree, I was so excited, yet at the same time very reluctant because it was a two-year commitment. To me that seemed like a VERY long time. Many people told me that two years might seem long, but they would go by a lot faster than I thought. I didn't really believe them, yet I knew this was God calling me and giving me an opportunity to live my dream. Those two years have gone by quickly! It hasn't always been easy, but it's so fulfilling. I've struggled with homesickness. I've seen God working in my life and in the lives of my students. I've seen children go from hard and distant to joyful and thriving. I'm greeted each morning with hugs and kisses and sometimes sobbing. I get to work with cute children every day and I'm sure I learn more from them than they do from me. Sometimes I feel unworthy



and incompetent, yet each day God has been faithful to show me the next step and give me the strength and grace I need. I'm living the life I always dreamed of and I feel immensely blessed.

# Let Your Light Shine

Heidi Otto - WTH Teacher



"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your

Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-16. Let my light shine that they might see my works and glorify my Father in heaven. This is my prayer, that when I wipe away my students tears that they feel God's love. When I tell a student to sit back down and finish their lesson for what feels like the hundredth time or when I hold a disobeying student on my lap and talk to them about being kind to their friends. I pray that in these times they don't see me but that they see God, the one who made them and loves them more then they will ever know. When God asked me to travel to Thailand for 6 months and teach a classroom full of four-year old's, I remember thinking "I'm not qualified". But as my Dad always reminds me "Heidi, God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called." This statement might be one that we hear often but friends it has never been more true. As I walked into the airport leaving all that felt familiar behind, I remember thinking "Well Lord, You asked me to go and You better not leave me now." I am so very grateful that God brought me here and grateful for the opportunity to share God's love with my students. I'm thankful



that God is with me each day, giving me strength to get through the hard days and wisdom to know how to handle each situation. I pray one day my student will know God's love personally.



The Phil Seigrist Family

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in this district, so the opportunity is there to expand and spread out all over the district teaching English in government schools and starting more "White Elephant" clubs. Our vision continues to be coming alongside the Thai church in their outreach efforts, adding value by sharing our native English-speaking abilities. 1 Corinthians 12:28 lists "helps" as a spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit. We feel "helps" is the purpose and foundation of our ministry—to "help" the Thai church in their efforts to reach the unreached in the country of Thailand.



**Hello, my name is Heidi Otto. I am from Martinsburg, Ohio, the youngest of seven children and an aunt to twenty-two cuties. I am serving at WTH teaching the K1 class for six months. In my free time I enjoy visiting favorite coffee shops, walking market streets and seeing God's beautiful creation.**

# Sharing Jesus in Teaching English



Abigail Troyer - WTH Teacher

As a Christian, opportunities to share Jesus surround us. Our responsibility is to make sure to have willing hearts to act. Teaching English to Kindergarteners is not normally thought as a platform to spread the love of Jesus. But, it's a wonderful place to plant seeds in young

children's hearts. No matter what home or nationality, your child is welcome to attend Wisdom Tree Home. We are in contact with Buddhist, Christian, Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Brazilian, and Australian children every day. All these children bring a different story, culture, and energy to school. Yet together, we pray and read Bible stories. Through Jesus, we have a common unity. We also teach English, but our work doesn't stop there. We keep the children in a straight line while singing the National Anthem, break up fights, speak life to their down cast hearts, quiet their cries, tend their scratches, and love upon them.

Through teaching, God has opened so many opportunities for me share his good news. One of my boys came to school all teary eyed, after a discussion, we prayed together asking Jesus to help him have a good day. Another day, one of my girls was sitting on my lap asking what that thing on my head was, and why I wear it. I am forever grateful to Jesus for giving me this opportunity to share Jesus's love with children.



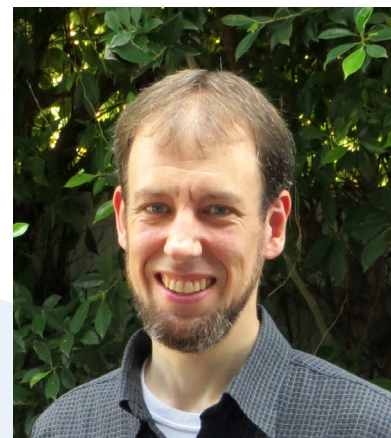
**Hi. My name is Abigail Troyer. Sugarcreek, Ohio is where I called home before coming to Thailand. I love my energetic K-3 class at Wisdom Tree Home. Drinking Lattes and Green Tea, journaling, going up the mountain, exploring new coffee shops, and solitude days with Jesus are some of my favorite things. My time teaching at Wisdom tree has been one of the hardest journeys, but also one of my favorites.**

**Hello from Thailand! My name is Timothy Rife though most people call me Tim. I grew up in Greenville, Ohio, and later moved to Caldwell, Idaho. I am currently involved in teaching at a small primary school during the week and at a children's club on Saturdays. I am also studying online for my bachelor's degree. I enjoy the outdoors and spending time with children. I feel privileged and blessed to serve the Lord here!**

## Seeds

Tim Rife  
EFL Teacher

I was preparing to teach 3rd grade one day and the students were beginning to file into the classroom.



One girl set her backpack down at her desk and pulled some books out to show me. I was delighted to see a New Testament come out that we had given the students at Christmas a year ago. The other two were a 101 Bible stories book along with a small booklet with the Christmas story that we had passed out this past Christmas. I asked her if she had read them and she proceeded to tell me she had read half of the New Testament! I was shocked, but why should I have been? Isn't that what we have been praying for? She said she was also reading stories from the 101 Bible story book and I asked her if she liked them. With a big smile on her face she nodded her head yes. I am often saddened by the wave of bad influence that I see pouring into my students lives and wish for ways to



turn the tide. Hearing about God's Word coming into one more precious life was a bright spot in my day. Pray for God's Word to take root and grow in this young heart as well as many others!

# How WTH Impacted Me

Anna Klassen - WTH Teacher



In July of 2019 my journey of taking over a Pre-K (ages 2-3) class began. I had never taught such young ages before other than Sunday School, which I loved, so it was and is still somewhat of a new experience. I am learning a lot.

I have learned that it is crucial for a Pre-K Teacher to be consistent. It takes several months and many, many repeated efforts before they grasp things. I have learned that little 2-3 year olds love to help teacher out and so when I drop something there is no doubt that several little ones will jump up to pick it up for you. And then when one that is extra sensitive didn't get to pick it up, they burst into hot, hurtful tears. I have learned and am still learning to simply enjoy them! They will be messy and make mistakes and sometimes it can be frustrating but when I laugh it off and just let them explore, it teaches them more then when they are withheld to have fun. I like to stand back at times and just watch my group of little ones interacting with each other and see a load of energy, easy forgiveness and lots of love. Such fragile hearts



that need unconditional love, undivided attention and a safe place to be. I can't help but feel my heart overwhelm with compassion and longing to be a teacher that is there for them and to be a safe place. When I hear my name being called a million times a day, or feel a small hand gently find its way into mine I am reminded that God has placed them into my life for a reason and I want them to know Him and I pray that some way some day they will know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

**I am Anna Klassen. I was born in Mexico but grew up in Alberta, Canada. I teach the pre-k class at Wisdom Tree. I enjoy adventure, God's marvelous creation and drinking coffee.**



**My name is Lori Hershberger and I've lived in Thailand serving with INVEST for about 5 ½ years. Currently I am in the final stages of completing a bachelor's degree in English Communication. In my free time I work as a volunteer teacher and translator while still dreaming of teaching in the mountains.**

## Wherever You Are

Lori Hershberger - College Student



"You must have been a Thai person in your previous life," the doctor I had just met told me after asking how many years I had lived in Thailand. A few days before, another friend told me, "I forgot to bow

to my idols before I came to work today. That's why my job today was so busy." Thailand is known to many as the land of smiles, but there is another side to the story: a darkness behind the deceptive smile. In the country of Thailand, over 40,000 Buddhist temples dot the landscape. In Chiang Mai's historic old city, at least 30 temples are located in just the 1.5 kilometer area. Thai Buddhism itself is not pure Buddhism, but is mixed with animism, superstition, and a growing materialism. Most of all, it lacks the saving grace of Jesus Christ. As we work and share the light of Christ in this nation of contrasts, pray Philippians 2:15 for us: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights of the world, holding forth the word of life."



## Sowing in Hope

Joshua Slabaugh - EFL Teacher



White Elephant Club is a Saturday morning children's club that is held at the EFL Center. For those of us who teach in government schools, the opportunity to share the gospel is limited; WEC provides a place for us to share the gospel freely.

Every Saturday morning, we start with several

Christian songs and a Bible story using a flannel graph set. The children then go to their English classes.

Recently we celebrated our first White Elephant Club anniversary. Many of our students came with at least one parent. It was a time of connecting with the parents, and it provided an open door to share the gospel. We have many opportunities to interact with our students at school, but our interaction with their parents is limited. This event gave us the chance to build relationships with the parents of our students.



Just before Christmas, I had my class color and cut out a nativity scene. Ice, a 4th grader, asked what these items were. I asked her if she knew the Christmas story, to which she replied, "No, I don't." I had one of the Thai staff sit down with her and tell her the story. He gave her a Thai "book of John" booklet to read and had her look up a video about Christmas. Although she hasn't yet surrendered her life to Christ, it is a good start. This is truly why we are here.

**Hi, my name is Joshua Slabaugh, I'm from Lancaster PA. I love teaching children new things and interacting with them outside of the classroom. I enjoy traveling whether it's by airplane or bus or a trip on a motorbike.**

## New Perspective

Nancy Neufeld - WTH Teacher



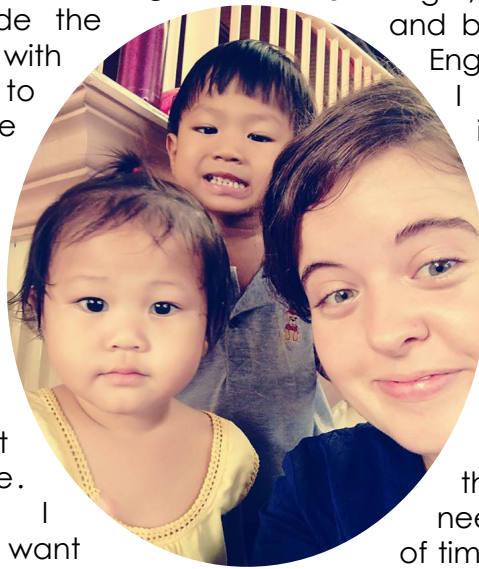
Ever since I was a young girl, I wanted to be a missionary. Admittedly, it was the adventure and excitement from reading missionary stories that attracted me. When I came to IGo in fall of 2016, my perspective on world missions changed completely. Missions is not something you do to or for people, it is coming alongside the

locals and learning and working with them! If I am not careful, my efforts to be helpful may actually cause more harm than good. When I finished my second semester at IGo, I was asked to come teach at Wisdom Tree Home. This was a very difficult decision, as I had never pictured myself working with such young children. I agreed to doing an internship and decide from there. My internship went well, but I still felt

unsure. Did I really want to commit two years of my life to something I was still unsure about? After praying about it, God showed me very clearly that this is where He wanted me at this time. So here I am, almost at the end of my two-year term. God has taught me so much, and I'm very grateful to have had this opportunity.



**Hi, my name is Nancy Neufeld. I am from Alberta, Canada. I have 7 siblings, and one adorable niece I haven't had the opportunity to meet yet! I currently teach the K-2 classroom at Wisdom Tree Home. In my free time I enjoy curling up with a good book, practicing my guitar, or trying out the various coffee shops around the city.**



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they own in a house fire, yet show up to class with a smile on their face. Those that go above and beyond to help a friend or classmate that's struggling. In either case, I don't usually find out till later what they've been up to; all I know is that they didn't show up for class or haven't turned in their work. Because of this, it's easy to judge students by their performance in my class, without realizing what else they have going on in their lives. But I've been reminded again and again that regardless of their English ability, each student is a champion in their own right, with abilities, dreams, goals, and battles that go far beyond the English classroom. As their teacher,

I get the privilege of providing input at this crucial time in their lives. What a privilege, honor—and responsibility! For my 12th grade students especially, most of the rest of their lives depends on the decisions they make during this, their last year of high school. My goal is to do the best that I can to help equip them with the English they'll need for their future in the little bit of time that I have them in my class.

More importantly, I've been called as an ambassador of a higher kingdom, as the King's champion in this arena. My prayer is that each student leaves my class with a clearer idea of who Jesus is and what it means to live as a citizen of His kingdom. When the real "awards ceremony" comes on a much bigger stage, I want to be able to say, like Paul, that I have fought and run well.





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## Opportunities

God has opened many doors and opportunities for the INVEST ministry, and we are currently preparing to add additional English volunteers. We are excited about what God is doing through our partnership with the Thai church, and we invite you to prayerfully consider whether God is calling you to join us. If it is something in which you might have interest, for more information feel free to contact us at [investigoasia@gmail.com](mailto:investigoasia@gmail.com)

Scan this code, or go to the link below to learn more about what we do.

[www.igoasia.org/invest](http://www.igoasia.org/invest)

