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**FULBRIGHT-HAYS SEMINAR ABROAD PROJECT**  
**THE THAILAND-LAOS FULBRIGHT SEMINAR**

**June 29 to August 3, 2003**

**Submitted to:**

**TUSEF, the Thailand United States Educational Foundation**  
**Thai Wah Tower 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor**  
**21/5 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok Thailand 10120**

It is an honor to submit my final Fulbright-Hays project to the Thailand United States Educational Foundation, the administering agency for our Seminar Abroad Program. My project includes the following components:

- a slide presentation of Thailand and Laos (a CD of the slides are included)
- a general “script” for the slide show
- a geographic mural of Thailand and Laos, will be painted by intermediate students (grades 4, 5, and 6) on canvass, size 5 by 6 feet
- an oral reading of the book Hanuman, retold by Erick Jendresen and Joshua Greene, ISBN # 1-883672-78-3
- a children’s play, performed by intermediate students (grades 4, 5, and 6), based on the book Hanuman; the script – a work in progress will be finished and performed in the Spring of 2004
- the CD slide show will be shown throughout the year on our school’s web site: [www.frost@spps.org](http://www.frost@spps.org)

**BACKGROUP INFORMATION**

Frost Lake Magnet School of Technology and Global Studies has the largest population of SouthEast Asian Hmong students in the St. Paul Public Schools. Many of our students were born in Thailand or Laos. Traveling to Thailand and Laos fulfilled my dream, to deepen my understanding of the difficult, complex journey of the Hmong, from SouthEast Asia, to St. Paul, Minnesota.

Our school utilizes best practices, research based strategies to improve academic achievement. We comply with the Minnesota State Department of Education's graduation standards. The graduation standards can be viewed at: [education.state.mn.us](http://education.state.mn.us). We also utilize our district standards that can be viewed at [www.stpaul.k12.mn.us](http://www.stpaul.k12.mn.us). You can click on schools, then click on St. Paul Curriculum On-line.

## **SLIDE SHOW PRESENTATION – RATIONALE**

Our school has 21 classrooms, from grades one through six. I will present the slide show to each classroom throughout the 2003-2004 school year. The following script will be included in my slide show presentation. The language in the script will be adapted, and/or elaborated upon to meet the academic needs and language proficiency of students, grades one through six.

Currently, our Hmong students face many complex issues in their identity as Hmong Americans. The need to balance and preserve the roots of their traditional culture, along with being an American, is very difficult. Many elder parents fear their Hmong children may lose the ability to speak the Hmong language, and forget to practice cultural traditions. Presenting these slides will hopefully, reinforce the history and culture of the Hmong, as I hope to re-affirm their historical connections to SouthEast Asia.

### *The Ruins of Ayutthaya – Slides One through Five*

“These slides show the ancient capital of Thailand – Ayutthaya. These ancient ruins are hundreds of years old. Ayutthaya was established in the year 1350 by King Uthong. The Ayutthaya ancient city was destroyed, or sacked, by the Burmese in 1767.

### *The Temple of the Emerald Buddha – Slides Six through Twenty*

The Temple of the Emerald Buddha is the most sacred temple in Thailand. People must dress properly and take off their shoes before entering the temple. You can see Nagas (King of the Serpents) on the staircase. You can see Hanuman, the hero monkey, protecting the temple. We will read the story of Hanuman after we see the slides. The Temple of the Emerald Buddha was built in 1782. It was built with real gold, mother of pearl, and other valuable jewels and materials.

Some of the figures you see in this slide are called kinaree, half human figures. Also, you can see the slides of the beautiful mural, the story of Ramakien, which is a sacred story in Thailand. This story is thousands of years old. It comes from India.

### *The Floating Market – Slides Twenty to Twenty Seven*

In this special floating market, you can buy food, fruits, vegetables, soup, and souvenirs. Did you ever think you would see a “floating market”? It was very beautiful and the people there were very kind and friendly.

### *The Maesa Elephant Camp – Slides Twenty Eight to Thirty Five*

In this camp, we were so excited because elephants are native to Thailand. The baby elephants grow to about age 3, then they are trained by a special teacher called a “Mahoot”. The Mahoot, usually a boy and his father, take care of the elephant and train it for the rest of the elephant's life. The elephants usually work until age 60, then they can retire. They usually live for 80 years. The elephants carry teakwood logs. They performed a talent show for us. They played soccer, painted, played the harmonica, and then wanted a

tip. We gave them bananas and sugar cane. Then we rode on the elephants. It was scary to be up that high on the elephants.

*The Mekong River – Slide Thirty Six to Forty Three*

This beautiful temple is in Luang Prabang in Laos. The handmade glass carvings on the outside of the temple are gorgeous. The Buddhist monks live in this temple. A monk only eats once a day. They depend upon the kindness of other people, to offer them food, medicine, and all the material things they need. They practice loving-kindness to all living things. They do not kill insects or any living creature. 95% of all Thai people practice the religion of Buddhism.

*Spirit Houses – Slides Forty Four and Forty Five*

These beautiful spirit houses were everywhere in Thailand. We loved them! In Thailand, almost every house and store has a spirit house. They are built, so when you move into a house, you give the spirits a new house to live in. You offer flowers, candles, incense, etc. to the spirit house to keep the spirits happy so they don't bother you!

*Slide Fifty One to Fifty Two*

Schools in Thailand were very friendly towards us. We took off our shoes before we went into the classroom. The students were very excited about learning English. They work very hard in Thailand in school. The teachers were very friendly. Students learn the same subjects we learn in school.

*Slides Fifty Three to Fifty Six*

In Laos, the women weave beautiful silk skirts on their loom. This is a picture of the grocery store, where you can buy things to drink in little plastic bags.

*Slide Fifty Seven to Seventy-Five*

These slides show the beautiful Temple Doi Suthep, which is located on the top of a mountain near Chiang Mai. It is so gorgeous, it was breathtaking! The people ring bells, pray and bow to the Buddha. This temple is 600 years old. The many positions of the Buddha, the reclining Buddha, and other positions teach people to practice kindness, love, and happiness for all human beings. I did not want to leave this beautiful temple. There were so many beautiful murals, showing the teachings of the Buddha.

*Slides Seventy-Six to Ninety*

These slides depict the Mekong River, very sacred to the Hmong people. Many Hmong people died crossing the Mekong River after the Vietnamese war.

We enjoyed staying over night with a Thai family. We also visited a high school. These teachers are “wai”ing us, or saying hello in Thai. Let's practice saying this now.

We visited a tribal village in Northern Thailand. This slide shows a “shaman”. Similar to the Hmong people's shaman, this man helps heal people when their spirit, mind or body is sick. The shaman let us come into his house. The people in the village were very kind and friendly to us.

*Slides Ninety One to One Hundred and Eight*

This slide shows the border between Thailand and Myanmar. Then we visited a beautiful new white temple. The children there had not ever met anyone from the United States. Don't they look like our students here at Frost Lake? We also visited the Royal Villa garden.

*Slides One Hundred Eight to One Hundred Twenty*

We visited more wonderful schools in Thailand. All the students wear uniforms. So do their teachers. Then I gave an offering to a Buddhist monk. At the Buddhist University, we learned about the Buddhist religion. When we went to the Golden Triangle, where Laos, Thailand and Myanmar meet, we traveled on the Mekong River. END OF SLIDES.

After the slides are presented, I read the story of Hanuman to the students. Most Hmong students have seen this story on a Thai video, in the Hmong language.

The other component of my Fulbright project is to paint a geographic mural of Thailand and Laos. Often, in the United States, our large “landlocked” geography informs us about our cultural and linguistic ability. It is noted that our students often perform poorly on standardized tests on geography. This mural will be a proud reminder of the geographic and cultural heritage of our SouthEast Asian students.

The mural will be drawn and painted by students in grades four, five, and six, in collaboration with the Art Specialist. Students in the intermediate grades will fill out a survey, to chart where they were born, in Thailand or Laos. In the spring, during our evening showcase event with families, we will have a special ceremony to unveil the mural. We will invite distinguished guests from Lao Family Community, and the CHAT (Hmong Center for Hmong Arts and Talent) – to attend this event. These organizations are listed on the world wide web, under these names. We will increase our awareness of how many of our students were born in Thailand and Laos. We will celebrate the cultural bridge that being Hmong American can mean in our school.

The other component of my Fulbright project is a work in progress. I am in the process of writing a children’s play from the book Hanuman. Frost Lake Magnet School of Technology and Global Studies has just received a federal Arts-ABLE grant, which will fund the production of this play. I will submit the script for this work in progress when it is completed, which should be by the end of December, 2003. The production will occur Spring of 2004.

The rationale for the production is to increase the oral language skills of our English Language Learners, as well as emphasize a unique, sacred piece of SouthEast Asian literature to our school population. With our arts grant, we will be able to create fantastic costumes and stage sets. I will be happy to forward a video of this production in the future. Others may contact me at my web site address if a need exists.

Arts-infused education is a best practices, research based exemplary program that has been proven effective in addressing the specific needs of students at risk of academic failure. This professional movement, to infuse the arts across academic content areas, will be required in every St. Paul Public School in the future. My Fulbright project hopes to inspire arts-infused education in other schools.

Thank you for providing me with the greatest educational experience of my life, the Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad program to Thailand and Laos. I only wish I can help other educators, who wish to share in this Fulbright project. They are welcome to contact me.

