

ECO-TOURISM AND DIVE TRAINING CENTER

Objective/ Principle Charter:

Create income/jobs for displaced workers directly affected by the Tsunami disaster
Provide on the job training to create a new pool of marketable talent and skill
Engage young Thai people to rebuild their industry and strengthen their community
Mentor a group marketing initiative to generate new tourism in the region

The Program

This is an open enrollment program for young Thai dive professionals, men and women, who have lost their jobs, their personal equipment, and in many cases their loved ones, in the Tsunami disaster. This program will provide immediate income, expand their skill sets, and allow them get involved in the process of long term disaster relief for the region. 25 people will be selected from the applicant pool to enter the program, they will be paid a living wage to attend, but must continue to demonstrate the ability, the desire, and the commitment to learning in order to progress through the steps of the program. The program will focus on giving young Thai men and women new skills to raise their collective and individual stake in the tourist industry. There are 3 focused areas of training in the program.

1. The first will be a marketing initiative project to bring new tourism to the area. The selected group will learn to use their own story and the story of the program itself to gain media attention, and to mass-communicate with a targeted international audience. They will work together to start a tour booking agency for hotels and dive operations that support the school.
2. The second focus will be on coastal environmental education and coral reef conservation effort. The group will learn from community experts and be required to participate in volunteer efforts to clean, protect, and re-generate damaged dive site areas. They will be encouraged to study and be active in community discussions and policy making about the coastal environment as we rebuild. They will build a portfolio of knowledge about the local environment and learn to use that knowledge in leading tours.
3. In the third focus, the group will participate in seminar-based learning on a variety of subjects relating to the dive center/hospitality industry. Topics will include, Basic Computer Operation, Language Studies, Equipment Repair and Maintenance, Safety, Expert Hospitality Service, Retail Management, and Leadership skills. The group will be evaluated for aptitude and desire and be given the opportunity to pick a special interest and learning project. Our hope is to create a mentor program and internships with our supporters, and have individuals re-enter the industry with a higher expectations and participation in the tourism industry.

Our belief is that we can create a high caliber pool of talent, which will include all aspects of the tourism industry including not only dive training, but also eco-tour leadership, guest services, and preparation to step in to management level and/or specialist positions as well.

The group will begin on their first day by creating a CV/Resume, which they will continue to enhance as the on-the-job training program progresses. At the end of the program they will have a document charting their experiences and professional growth. In the first 4 months of the program, the group will hear from a broad spectrum of experts in the tourism industry and participate in leadership and team building exercises. In the remaining 2 months individuals will pick specialty projects and solicit mentors from the staff and community. This part of the program will be designed to focus on individual interests and aptitudes of the group. They will all present their final projects to their fellow colleagues in a seminar much like the ones they will have seen given by community experts.

The program will seek to gain initial funding from the pool of money donated for the purpose of long-term disaster relief. We are seeking to gain industry support and invite a variety of people to give focused seminars in their area of knowledge. We expect to work with the DOTC, TAT, PADI, Biodiversity Center, Tourist Rescue Center, and Local Decompression Chamber, as well as all the major dive tour operations interested in participating. We expect also to have support and expertise from the local resort community to draw from, and we are courting two expert management and leadership trainers from the United States to give their time.

As a major draw for high quality tourism, the dive industry brings substantial revenue to Phuket, and is an industry deeply wounded by the Tsunami disaster. Many current dive professionals are out of work and need help, and need to be given ways of helping rebuild what has been lost. This is a chance for Thai people to gain a larger stake in the industry and to participate at higher level. It is also an opportunity for dive tour operators who must lay off personal to keep their staff actively learning and growing and paid, while they rebuild. Companies with displaced staff and financial hardships can submit applicants they feel would do well in the program and re hire them as the industry heals. Our expectation from such operators is that any person encouraged to apply is hard working, honest, and has the ability to commit to the program for its duration.

All participants will be required to sign code of conduct, and statement of intention forms, promising to give their best abilities and desire to the program and to others in the program. They must agree to be team players and support one another in learning. They must commit to the full term of the program. When they complete the program they will receive a 6 month certification ticket issued by the program and will build their exit resume or CV throughout their course of study. In the close of the program, we will then provide job placement workshops to the group, and assistance as needed to find work.

The long-term ambition of the program will seek to continue its charter by becoming self-supporting. In the initial charter, we will form a partnership with the hosting facility of the program. There are many resort operators who are currently empty and seeking ways to market and fill their rooms. Our young team will essentially earn their keep by creating bookings with their marketing work for the resort that hosts their program.

There is the possibility of expanding the program into a foundation that depends on the operation of a graduate-run dive tour operation. The idea is to create a partnership/internship in a for-profit eco-tourism center. Individuals that have graduated from the program, would then seek to give back to the incoming group, by using their skills in a real world operation, and then re-enter the dive tour industry with some real world accomplishments and pride. The new group would help to market the eco-tour operation and assist in providing a customer base to the graduates. The program then has an alumni support system, and built in internship in the real world. There has been interest expressed by some very well respected resort operators on the island to support the program as it progresses, and we are looking forward to achieving that partnership over time.

Time frame.

We will launch the program at the start of low season in May. By this time we hope to have our curriculum of on the job training designed and scheduled, and our hosting facility set up and ready to accept applications. We are currently working on financial planning and fundraising and hope to present a comprehensive plan within the next few weeks. The scale of the program is flexible depending on support.

What we have already accomplished

We have raised nearly one quarter of the necessary capital to begin.
We have presented the project to the Director General of the TAT.
We have expertise in strategic marketing and mass communications.
We have expertise in dive tour management and retail merchandising.
We have expert computer skills, including presentations and graphic art.
We have 3 dive instructors, one MSDT, one IDC staff, one Master Scuba Instructor
We have a journalist and Public Relations specialist.
We have the commitment of several industry experts for seminars.
We have the attention of several high caliber media outlets.

What we are currently working on.

We are meeting with funding sources and making presentations.
We are enlisting experts willing to commit to conducting seminars.
We are meeting with representatives from many governmental tourist agencies.
We are communicating with many environmental groups and agencies.

We are designing the program and curriculum
We are meeting with potential hosting sites and exploring relationships
We are talking to Apple Computer and Hewlett-Packard for possible computer donations
We are making financial projections.
We are selecting a board of directors from the community
We are aligning our program with the stated aims of the resolution entitled the Phuket Action Plan for long term economic recovery adopted by the delegates of the Emergency Council of the WTO on Feb 1st, 2005

What we need:

We are looking for increased start up capital
We are looking for expert Thai/English translation services
We are looking for an expert Thai/English language teacher.
We are looking for donations in the form of computers and learning materials.
We are looking for a hosting facility for the program.
We are looking for ground swell community support and discussion.
We are looking for additional commitment from industry professionals for seminars.
We are looking for donations of dive gear and/or special educational pricing.
We are looking for institutional support from other educational facilities.
We are looking for the dive industry to support us and help rebuild a stronger community

For more information on this project please contact:

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