

Foreign in-laws honored for contribution to Thai community development

www.chinaview.cn 2009-09-26 19:29:14

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BANGKOK, Sept. 26 (Xinhua) -- Three foreign men and their Thai wives were honored for special contributions to community development in northeast Thailand late Friday.

Karl Kunz from the United States, Ruben van Beek from the Netherlands, Wayne Pickering from the United Kingdom and their Thai wives received certificates of honor from Mongkol Surasajja, Buri Ram Province Governor, at a special event called "Buri Ram Civilization Opens to the World".

They were selected from some 1300 couples in Buri Ram province, of whom a Thai woman married a foreign man. They provide education scholarship to local orphans, seek support from volunteers of several countries for school renovation, teach English for local people, provide clean drinking water for schoolchildren and villagers.

Buri Ram is one of the largest provinces in northeast Thailand. Of its 1.5 million residents, 87 percent are engaged in agriculture, mainly rice farming.

"I came to Thailand at the age of 22 in 1969 and have been living here for 40 years, I love this land and the Thai people," Kunz, a Washington D.C.-born man said in an interview with Xinhua. "I would like to spend my rest of life here with my wife."

A recent survey showed that most foreign men are impressed with the simply way of life of Thai people, who in their eyes are kind-hearted and friendly. Almost 90 percent of them would like to live in Thailand during their rest of life.

Beek, together with his then girlfriend Sriya developed a project called "give-a-pig" in 2006 and provided over 400 rural families in northeast Thailand with a pig since then. Later, the plan

was developed into a foundation called "Help Organization Agriculture Thailand" or HOAT in January 2007.

Under the foundation, they also installed rainwater harvesting and purification systems in more than 10 schools in rural area and provided 1000 children with clean drinking water.

In December 2007, Beek and Sriya got married and held a beautiful wedding party.

"Our goal is to provide as many schools as possible in the northeast region with clean water," he said.

Editor: Xiong Tong

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