



play around the world



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MEET THE TEAM

The 2022 PAW team is the first team to head to an international location, since, well, the pandemic started! This group of students are currently in Chiang Mai for the duration of their PAW experience. Despite this being an entirely female powered team, the students come from diverse backgrounds and experiences and all view play differently!

Let's meet them!

Lourdes Masa

Hometown: Calamba, Philippines & Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Degree: BSc in Kinesiology

Favourite way to play: Locomotor play!

I love the adrenaline of running around and getting exercise (without really feeling like you're 'getting exercise').

Most looking forward to during my PAW experience: Being immersed in Thai culture and getting to connect with the kids despite language and cultural barriers. I'm also really excited to explore and connect with the local community!



Pictured: Top Left - Courtnee Riou, Maritza Craig, Mary Ann Rintoul, & Lourdes Masa.

Bottom Left - Iris Ho & Heather Craig.

Courtnee Riou

Hometown: Edmonton, AB

Degree: Bachelor of Kinesiology, Adapted Physical Activity

Favourite way to play: My favourite way to play is being outdoors and running around, being free.

Most looking forward to during my PAW experience: I am most looking forward to being immersed in a new culture and learning new things. I also am very excited to play with the children and to learn more about free play.

Meet the Team Continued...

Maritza Craig



Pictured: The PAW 2022 Team at the airport - ready to start their journey!

Iris Ho

Hometown: Edmonton, AB

Degree: Bachelor of Kinesiology, Adapted Physical Activity

Favourite way to play: Imaginative play!

Most looking forward to during my PAW experience: Being immersed in a new culture and bring my learnings outside my degree into a new knowledge landscape..

Hometown: Lethbridge, AB

Degree: Elementary Education

Favourite way to play: When I was a kid, my favourite way to play was in our backyard on our trampoline. We had those bouncing balls that a person could sit on and bounce (like an exercise ball but with a handle) and would bounce on them on the trampoline. Today, my favourite way to play is through reading books.

PAW experience: I am most looking forward to working with children in a new culture. I really enjoy working with children as I find them endlessly entertaining and funny and I think it will be super fun to experience that inside Thai culture. I am also excited for the Thai food!



ATTENTION!

We are in search of some lost PAW pinnies (the blue ones with PAW logo) that seem to be off still playing somewhere!

If you happened to take one home after a playday and found it in your bottom drawer...please return when you're able.

Many thanks! PAW

Team Leader

MEET HEATHER!

If you've been around a while, you'll probably have met Heather in some capacity in relation to PAW. She has worn many hats over the years and has been a big part of having PAW move forwards year after year! This writer interviewed Heather, let's see what she said:

What year and when did you do your PAW experience?

My own paw student experience was in 2006. It's still hard to believe it was 16 years ago!

What was the most memorable part?

The most memorable part was the relationships and connections made with the kids, staff and my own team.

How long have you been on the PMC/what have been all of your roles on the PMC?

Hmm well I guess since it's inception! I have been secretary, leadership chair and community connections chair and am currently a member at large.

Have you been a leader in the past? Have you facilitated retreat in the past?

I was fortunate to be a leader in 2007! It was a great experience to see all the work that goes into PAW, grow my leadership skills, and most importantly support a team of students and be able to watch their growth!

I have also participated in retreat for a handful of years and did facilitate in 2018.

What do you think are the biggest strengths of the 2022 team?

The 2022 team have been so flexible and adaptable with all the uncertainties that came with this year, skills that will serve them well in Thailand

What are you most looking forwards to during this leadership experience?

I am really looking forward to rebuilding relationships and forming new ones. I also am so excited to see the team members take it all in and let their lights shine!xxx



Pictured: Heather waiting patiently for her team to meet her in Thailand - Heather did a lot of ground work to make sure that "the ball was rolling" (so to speak) for the team!



Overcoming Challenges

We're back...Playing around the world!

The last few years have been challenging as we navigated the pandemic; teams have not been abroad since May 2019. The most difficult aspect has been maintaining relationships over time and distance. All of our valuable partners worldwide were as disappointed as we were to not be able to join together in partnership for play. Messages came from many for safety and well wishes over the last two years. We treasure the people we have become connected to, and thought of them often.

In March of 2020, we had to suddenly cancel all 4 teams travelling to all locations (Peru, Cambodia, Thailand, NWT) because of Covid-19. Keeping our students safe, as well as our many partners, children and youth, was the priority. The 2020 team was devastated by the situation but thoughtfully dealt with the news and carried on with their degree programs, unfortunately without Play Around the World. I admired their resilience and fortitude moving forward and the creative way they chose to pivot the path of their immediate futures. Two students from the 2020 team stayed on to become the 'small but mighty' Team 2021 and completed their PAW experience in Calgary at Vivo Play Project with Anthony Bourque and his innovative crew. It was a different PAW experience than what they anticipated but rich with variety and the fortune of facilitating 'pure play' from administration and marketing to hands on play with children, youth and families. Big thanks for all the care and training by our PAW Alumnus Anthony!

This year we have a team in Chiang Mai, Thailand (see feature in this newsletter). For the first time since 2015 we are back, playing in Chiang Mai, currently at four new organizations and three that we served at in the years between 2005 and 2015. Even though retired, our long-time partner and friend Khun A is happy to have 4 more 'Canadian daughters' this year and her unwavering commitment to PAW is astonishing. So much of our program success is due to the many leaders who have contributed and oriented teams to their in-country location. Continued...

Overcoming Challenges

We're back...Playing around the world!

Continued...This year I was thrilled to have Heather Craig (Crowe) agree to lead Team Chiang Mai and reconnect us with previous partners as well as strengthen the connection to new ones. We were fortunate to make initial contact through my International Play Association (IPA) colleagues, specifically former president and friend, Theresa Casey, from Scotland. She introduced me to the Thai IPA branch lead and our connections to new organizations began. There are numerous 'behind the scenes' advocates for every child's right to play who contribute to the mission and implementation of PAW programs, year after year.

Maintaining contacts and relationship building in four countries around the world is always challenging but this year, much more so, as we deal with distance and time in addition to the barriers the pandemic has created.

Although we could not travel to our usual places, relationships continue, in hopes that we can once again have U of A students contribute far and wide and experience serving and learning in another culture different than their own.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Ann Rintoul



Mary Ann & Christina

Where are they now?

BROOKE BABLITZ
CAMBODIA, 2017

Hey hey hey! My name is Brooke and I was part of the PAW team that went to Phnom Penh in 2017! When I first applied for the program I had my fingers crossed that I would be placed on the team going to Thailand. I still remember getting the phone call on the LRT being offered a spot on team Cambodia! My stomach sank and I was full of nerves, but was still excited! I didn't get the country I originally wanted but I ended up getting introduced to another country I knew nothing about and totally fell in love! Spending time in Cambodia taught me to pay more attention to the small things in life and taught me that happiness can be found anywhere no matter how much or little you have. The Khmer people are so resilient, humble and kind, and I treasure the time I spent with them.



I was completing my Education Degree at the UofA when I applied for the program so all my experience and ideas came from the education field! When we finally got to country and were immersed with the kids, I remember being so stressed out that the play felt chaotic. I was so used to a school setting, where everything is structured! While PAW had taught us about the various types of play, I had never truly seen them in action. I quickly learned that organized play is not always the answer and these beautiful children were laughing, smiling and having the best time of their lives. What seemed unorganized and crazy brought so much joy!



Since returning to the classroom and starting my career as a teacher I've seen the value of free play and unorganized chaos. Each child has so much raw imagination, different interests and different comfort levels, and free play allows for every child to participate in a way that is meaningful for them!

I have taken a full 180° turn on my views about play and now encourage and push for more unstructured playtime in school. Continued...



Where are they now?

BROOKE BABLITZ
CAMBODIA, 2017

Continued...I knew deep in my heart that I would return back, and was given that opportunity as a leader for the 2018 PAW Cambodia team! Cambodia had become a home away from home and I was so excited to be able to take a new group of people there and share it with them! It was an amazing learning opportunity to take a new role, a step back and watch others navigate the challenges and triumphs of being in country and facilitating play! I got to reconnect with past children and staff at the NGOs we worked with previously and also got to meet and form many more relationships that I hold dear to my heart still to this day! Each year I envy participants who gets to go back to a country I consider to be another home.



Continued... PAW sparked my travel bug and I have not stopped since! The itch for adventure, new culture and continued learning drives me to keep going!

After returning home from my year as a participant in 2017 I stepped out of my comfort zone and completed my teaching practicum in Guadalajara, Mexico, and then took my first job abroad in Inverness, Scotland. Currently, I am teaching in Cairo, Egypt at an international school. So many of the lessons I have learned in my years with PAW have been applicable to my other journeys and have equipped me with the tools to navigate an ever changing world, no matter where I find myself!

For all participants this year and in the following years, my advice to you is to be present in the moment. Soak it all in and let go of any preconceived ideas or norms you bring with you! In a world where you can be anything - be kind and remember that the smiles of the children will warm your hearts for years!

Xx Brooke



Current Committee Members

Program Management Committee (PMC):

Program Director - Mary Ann Rintoul

Tracy Simon

Lauren Turner

Heather Craig

Brady Hughes

Samantha Goodwin

Kennedy Newton

Kenadi Kuzyk

Haley Hocken

Morgan Weir

Advisory Committee:

Royle Harris

Colleen Mooney

Katrina Maximchuk

Tannis Davidson

Henry Yip

Mary Ann Rintoul

2022 Leaders:

Heather Craig - Thailand

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