



2018 Year-End Review

Sports Friends' mission is to equip churches to make disciples of youth through strategic sports ministry.

sports-friends.org | We are a ministry of **SIM**

To Our Partners

You've probably heard the phrase, "playing the long game". It's often used in a sporting context to describe someone with a long-term game plan: someone who tries to think beyond the present moment, and who is persistent yet patient in the hope of achieving their goal.

Sports Friends' work is built on the deep power of relational disciple making, and that takes time! We believe in "playing the long game", investing in God's people so that they can continue to use sports to disciple their communities long after we've gone.

This long-term, long-suffering patience is also demonstrated in our coaches: whether it's the soccer coach in Thailand who persevered for five years before seeing any fruit, or the netball coach in Malawi who ran training for three players in the sweltering temperatures of the hot season. These coaches are the very heart of Sports Friends, and we give thanks for their faithful service to the Lord.

As we reflect on another year of the Sports Friends ministry, may the statistics and stories that follow cause us to praise God for His goodness and faithfulness!

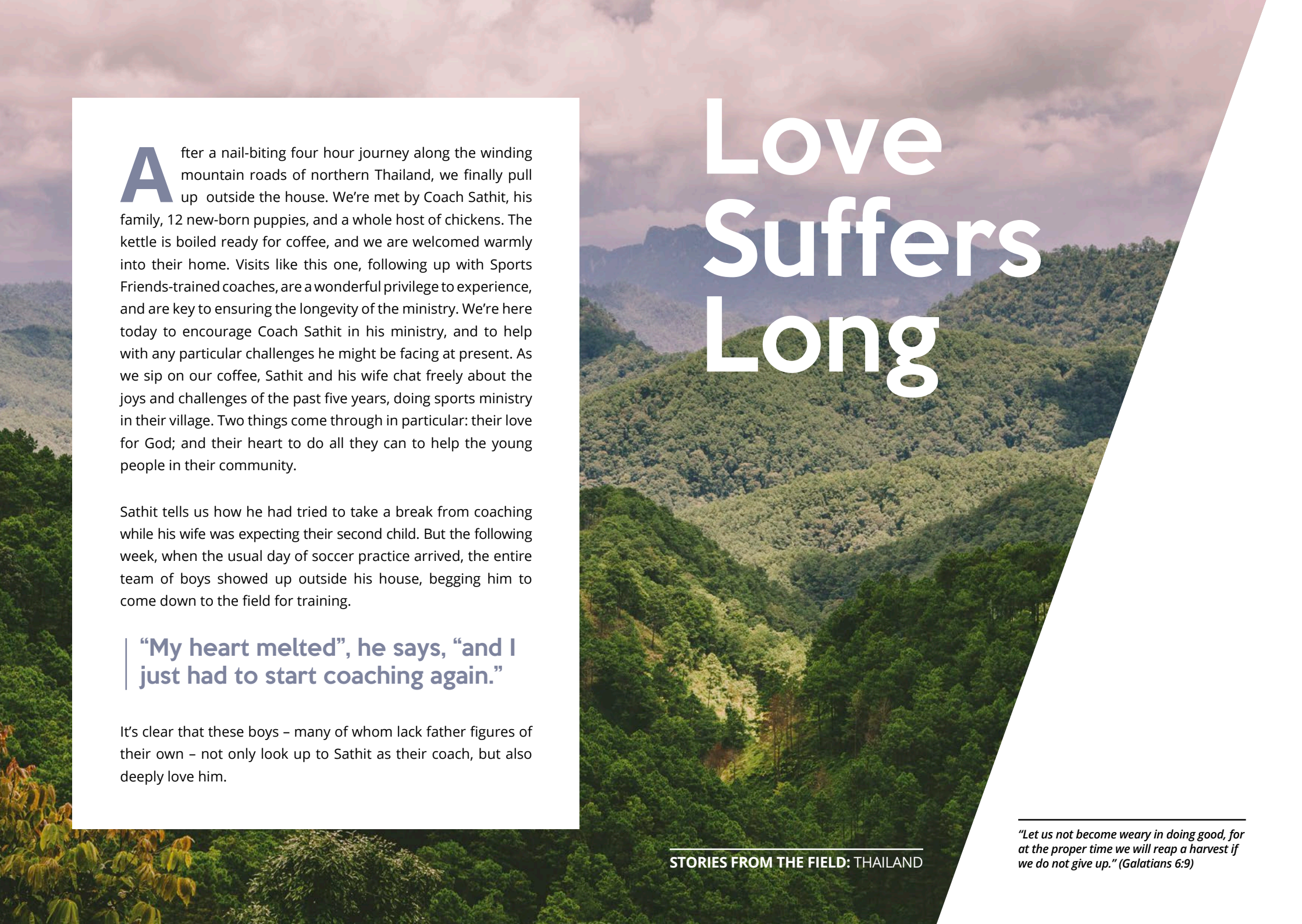
Thank you for another year of your partnership in the gospel!

Blessings,



Tripp Johnston

Sports Friends Co-Founder and International Director



After a nail-biting four hour journey along the winding mountain roads of northern Thailand, we finally pull up outside the house. We're met by Coach Sathit, his family, 12 new-born puppies, and a whole host of chickens. The kettle is boiled ready for coffee, and we are welcomed warmly into their home. Visits like this one, following up with Sports Friends-trained coaches, are a wonderful privilege to experience, and are key to ensuring the longevity of the ministry. We're here today to encourage Coach Sathit in his ministry, and to help with any particular challenges he might be facing at present. As we sip on our coffee, Sathit and his wife chat freely about the joys and challenges of the past five years, doing sports ministry in their village. Two things come through in particular: their love for God; and their heart to do all they can to help the young people in their community.

Sathit tells us how he had tried to take a break from coaching while his wife was expecting their second child. But the following week, when the usual day of soccer practice arrived, the entire team of boys showed up outside his house, begging him to come down to the field for training.

“My heart melted”, he says, “and I just had to start coaching again.”

It's clear that these boys – many of whom lack father figures of their own – not only look up to Sathit as their coach, but also deeply love him.

Love Suffers Long



Coaches like Sathit are the heart of the Sports Friends ministry. As we listen to how God has been at work through his soccer ministry, Sathit shares the story of Somchai, a young hill tribe boy who had hung around on the field for weeks, watching Sathit coach his team. Eventually Somchai plucked up the courage to ask if he could join in, and Sathit said he could.

Of all the kids on his team, Sathit admits thinking that Somchai was the least likely ever to be interested in matters of God or faith. But he was wrong.

For four years Sathit faithfully shared the gospel message with Somchai, using soccer as a tool to teach, to challenge, and to encourage. In the fifth year, Somchai came up to him after practice and asked what he needed to do to become a Christian. Sathit didn't think he was serious, so told him to go home and pray about it, and they would talk again next week.

“I had told him about Jesus for four years and he never seemed to take any notice, so I thought he must be joking!”

The next week, Somchai came and asked him again. Sathit felt a growing confidence that his desire was genuine, but told him once more to go home, pray about it, and come back to talk to him next week if he was serious. All that week, Sathit prayed earnestly for Somchai, too.

On the third week, Somchai came to him after practice and asked him again, and this time Sathit knew he was serious. Right there and then, on the edge of the soccer field, they knelt down and Sathit prayed with Somchai to accept Jesus into his life as his Lord and Savior.



A few months later he was baptized, just before he was due to move away to the city to study. Sathit understands the importance of discipleship: that it takes time and effort to be transformed by God. So, as more of his team were growing up and moving to the city for their education, he set up a social media group so that they could keep in touch and he could pray for each of them regularly.


“I told the kids – don't think of me as your teacher, but think of me as your brother. Because if we're brothers, I can pray for you and help you with what's going on in your lives.”

Sathit regularly received requests from the team which he would bring before the Lord, but one day he was touched to see that Somchai had sent a message asking if there was anything he could pray about for *him*.

“I gave time and energy for so long and got nothing back,” Sathit says, “but God was working the whole time”.

Sathit ministered faithfully for four years, but it was in the fifth year that the fruit came. Praise God that he had the faith to persevere!

Join us in praying for Sathit, and others like him, that just as God suffers long with us, so our coaches would also lovingly and patiently suffer long with the young people God places in their paths. ■

A group of young people are playing soccer on a dirt field in a wooded area. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down the length of the field. The ground is uneven and covered with dry leaves and twigs. Several players are visible, wearing various colored jerseys (red, blue, orange, black). Some jerseys have numbers like 5, 7, 3, and 41. The background is filled with tall, thin trees and dense foliage, creating a dappled light effect. The overall atmosphere is one of active participation in a team sport in a natural setting.

**More than
265,000
young people
are being
ministered
to by more
than 12,000
coaches.**

California, USA

We are excited to be pioneering sports ministry efforts to reach out to middle eastern refugees. Our prayer is that this will equip the church to build deeper connections with the least reached peoples whom God is bringing to the doorsteps of our churches in America.



Charlotte, USA

In 2018 we celebrated 15 years of Sports Friends! We also strategically reviewed and evaluated the ministry, setting new priorities, and expanding our International Support Services Team to develop additional capacity for the many opportunities of growth that the Lord is opening up.



Perú & Ecuador

Perú hosted our second Epic Trip, giving participants a chance to engage in the Sports Friends ministry on the ground and also tackle the Inca Trail, one of South America's premier physical challenges. We are also exploring opportunities to expand the ministry into Ecuador.



Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is caught between escalating insurgent violence and widespread social discontent. Even so, 2018 saw the expansion of initial efforts here, and we pray that sports will continue to be a tool for peace amidst the instability and unrest.



Kenya

Ministry in Kenyan refugee camps continues to expand. We are privileged to be training new coaches inside these camps to be agents of God's love in the hard places of our world. We also continue to facilitate camps for youth with physical disabilities: sharing God's love with those who are often hidden and forgotten.



Southeast Asia

In parts of Southeast Asia, authorities heavily monitor all Christian activities. Despite increased persecution against Christians, in 2018 we were excited to hold a camp for young people in one of these regions.



11 new churches planted, thousands of youth coming to faith each year.

Coach Trainer Mentorship Program launched in Africa and Asia.

Short-termers served in 7 countries including Thailand, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana & Perú.

The Heat Is ON

Jesus said: "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who do not need to repent."
(Luke 15:7)

How would you like playing your favorite sport when the temperature is 118°F? Blistering heat is just one of the challenges that coaches like Mary face in the remote villages of southern Malawi. Other Sports Friends netball coaches might get 15-20 girls at every practice, but in the extreme climate of Mary's village she usually gets only half that number. However, Mary knows how dangerous it can be to compare the apparent "success" of your ministry with what others are doing. Instead she simply chooses to focus on whoever God brings to her each day.

One day in mid-October, temperatures were soaring to a sweltering 118 degrees, but Mary faithfully went down to the field as usual to coach. She waited, and then saw three girls coming her way. After a simple training session in the blazing sun, Mary sat down with the girls under the shade of a nearby tree and began to share the message that she had prepared for the day.

Because of the high temperatures, God led Mary to share from the Scriptures about the reality of hell and how even these temperatures are NOTHING compared to what is to come for those not found covered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Coach Mary finished by talking about the magnificent and saving love of God. She told the girls how He does not rejoice in the death of the wicked but rejoices when even one sinner comes out of the darkness and into the light. She also shared how this amazing gospel radically transforms our lives and enables us to **"have life, and have it to the full"** (John 10:10). Sweating profusely, Mary finished her time of teaching and looked up to see all three girls weeping.

Coach Mary listened as the three girls explained how they were sex workers, and how they had been earning their living by prostitution. The girls told Mary how empty they felt and how they were tired of living this way.

Today, they are born again Christians and are plugged in to the local church – the same church that Coach Mary is a part of. Please pray for these three young ladies, that the darkness of their pasts would have no hold over them. Praise God that He does not give up on anyone.

And what an example Mary sets us! What a great reminder not to focus on numbers for the sake of numbers, but to be faithful in the daily grind of being a light for Him, wherever He has put us. ■

Financial Report

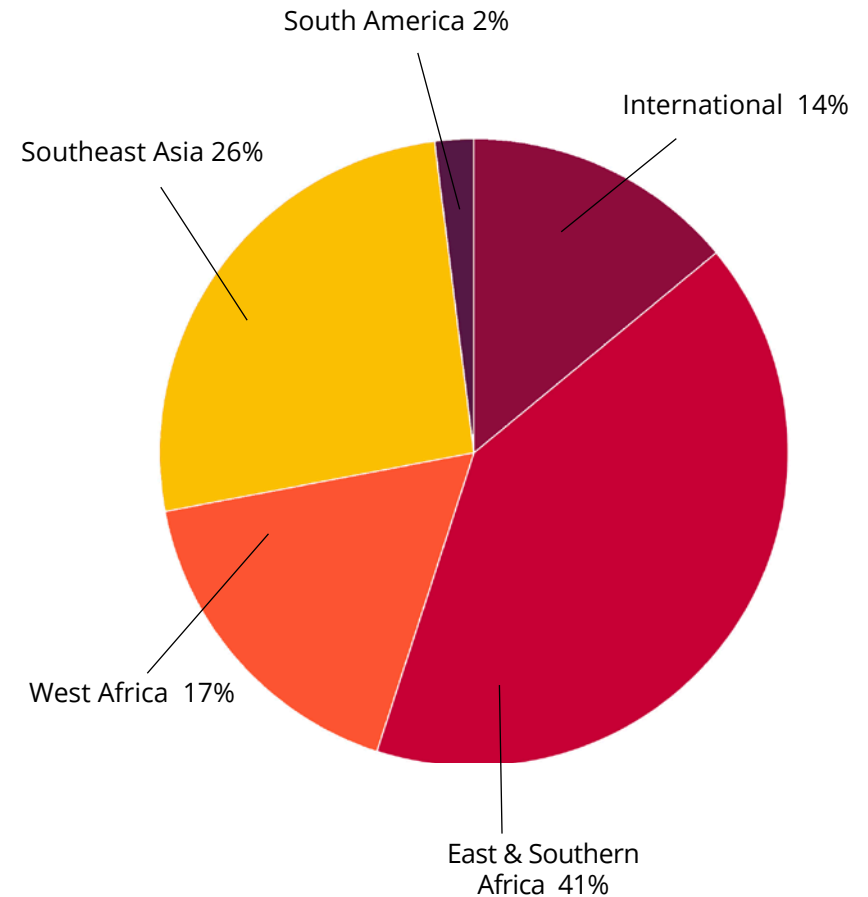
For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018

Total revenue from donations:	\$765,889
Expenses:	
Sports Friends program expenses:	578,215
SIM administrative expenses:	110,971
Sports Friends promotion & fundraising expenses:	16,965
Construction costs at Camp Langano:	7,993
Total expenses:	\$714,144
Surplus funds carried forward to next year:	\$51,745

Our annual ministry cost is **less than \$4** per youth participant

We are 100% funded by contributions of friends like you!

2018 Program Expenses By Region





sports-friends.org/pray



sports-friends.org/go



sports-friends.org/give



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