

GIST World Friends Korea IT volunteer group won the NIA Director's Award (Grand Prize in Activity Video Category)

- The 'Jeongsu' team was dispatched to an ethnic minority school in Vang Vieng, Laos, for four weeks between July and August to carry out various social contribution activities such as IT education, Korean language and cultural education, etc.
- GIST Development Foundation also donated items such as fans and school supplies to students in Laos



▲ GIST 'Jeongsu' team is taking a commemorative photo after winning the grand prize in the video category at the '2023 World Friends Korea IT Volunteer Group Performance Report Contest'. (From left) students Su-yong Heo, Woo-jin Jeong, Ji-won Jeong, and Ah-young Cho

The Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST, President Kichul Lim) announced that its World Friends Korea IT volunteer group, comprised of undergraduate students, successfully completed volunteer work in Laos and won the National Information Society Agency (NIA) Director's Award.

NIA held the '2023 World Friends IT Volunteer Group Performance Report' at Seongam Art Center in Seoul on Thursday, November 30, and invited a total of 209 volunteer members, including offline volunteer teams and online volunteer teams, from six partner universities, including GIST. Awards were given to teams with excellent performance and a disbandment ceremony was held.

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At GIST, a total of 12 students from 3 teams selected this year participated in the Vientiane Capital Skill Development Center and the Digital Government Center for 4 weeks from Monday, July 17th to Friday, August 11th. ICT education (drones, Python, AI), cultural education (K-POP, food making, traditional games, etc.), Korean language education, etc. are provided at three institutions in Laos, including Government Center and Vangvieng Ethnic School. After completing volunteer work, they returned to Korea on Sunday, August 13th.

The GIST-NIA jointly dispatched World Friends IT volunteer group included a total of 116 student participants as of last year, starting with Vietnam in 2014, Moldova from 2015 to 2019, Panama (online activities) in 2020, and Bhutan and Vietnam (online activities) in 2021.

In 2023, the 'Jeongsu' team won the grand prize (activity video category) for submitting a video of the World Friends IT Volunteers' activities to the contest and provided PowerPoint, Excel, Python, and AI training, Korean language training, and cultural education to 30 students at the Vang Vieng Ethnic Minority School.

The 'Jeongsu' team was named after 'Integer' because the integer data type 'int' is 4 bytes in programming languages, and the team was composed of four computer experts: Su-yong Heo (School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, IT), Woo-jin Jeong (School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Cultural Korean), Ah-young Cho (School of Materials Science and Engineering, Cultural Korean), and Ji-won Jeong (Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences, IT).

The 'Jeongsu' team wanted to record their experience in Laos, so they prepared with their friends and composed videos and photos of their class lessons and received good results in the contest.

Su-yong Heo (School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), the team leader of the 'Jeongsu' team, said, "While staying in Laos for a month, I experienced poor facilities and communication problems, but I studied the Lao language so that the classes could be delivered well, and I had conversations about my career while eating with students every lunch hour. I was very proud that students were interested in Korea and had dreams of working in the IT field, and I learned that educational volunteer work was helpful and important in bridging the gap in students' education."

President Kichul Lim said, "We will continue to send IT volunteers to many developing countries to contribute to bridging the global information gap and strive to spread GIST's excellent research capabilities. We hope that through this activity, GIST and Laos' educational and research institutions will continue with exchanges and maintain a close cooperative relationship."

Meanwhile, the GIST Development Foundation donated KRW 1 million worth of goods, including 30 portable fans and school supplies, to students at the Vang Vieng Ethnic Minority School, hoping to help students in need grow into healthy members of society.