

# Andy & Jennifer May

## International Campus Ministers to **THAILAND**

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## GRAPEVINE UPDATE

### **Cow Yai Weekend, November 2008**

Another great retreat weekend has come and gone! This year, our topic was "Treasure," specifically, "What do you treasure?" and "You are God's treasure." Of course, since we are obsessed with pirates (not real ones or the ones in Pittsburgh), we had to have a pirate theme. It was quite fun with a scavenger hunt to go along with it. About 20 students, and all had a great time.



Cow Yai National Park is one of the most beautiful places in the world. It is a protected tropical rain forest

with a highly diverse ecosystem. It is not uncommon to see wild elephants in their natural habitat, but none of us have been so lucky. Wild monkeys, however, are plentiful and friendly. The tranquility of Cow Yai is about as opposite as you can get from busy college life, so the get-away is welcome. After our fun time in the park, we had an opportunity to hear testimonies from Milk (a Thai who is now a Christian) and Will (an exchange student) around the campfire, and a devotion from Greg about all of us being God's treasure. I was able to share with the students by leading campfire songs and a Sunday morning worship time. Each of us led a small group of discussion on the weekend's theme, and it was a great opportunity to hear the students' perspectives and share directly how God sees them. We pray God would add His blessing to our efforts.

Cow Yai Weekend is our biggest event of the year and provides momentum for The Grapevine's ministry. Our exchange students leave in December, so strengthened relationships formed between staff and students at Cow Yai to build a foundation that will last throughout the rest of the year.

### **Goi**

Remember Goi? She was our first Thai intern from last year. She has returned from her time in the US, and we have hired her back as a full team member on The Grapevine staff. She was such an asset to The Grapevine when she was our intern, and we are happy to have her back for another year. We cannot stress enough just how important it is to have Goi on the team. Goi is Thai and this affords her advantages that none of us Americans on the team will ever have. Goi has a personality that allows her to easily connect with students and provide a comfort zone that welcomes many students into The Grapevine. We wish we had five more people like her! Her Thai is much better than ours too.

### **Christmas Party**

Of course, Christmas is our favorite time of year because we have an opportunity to share the meaning of the birth of Christ with students. In Thailand, Christmas is seen as a foreigner's holiday and is not celebrated by anyone other than Christians. However, most shopping malls decorate for Christmas with hopes of cashing in on the worldwide commercialism that goes along with it. Other than the story of Santa Claus, Thais really don't know much about Christmas. This year at The Grapevine, we divided up the nativity story, assigned the parts to groups, then had each group "interpret" what the story meant through a skit.

It is always funny and interesting what students will come up with. This has been a highly effective way to share the Christmas story, and is a great way to get students involved in the celebration. It is a moving experience for



us to share in the students' interaction with this blessed event. Some of the students have shared they are also touched by the experience.



### International Day

Last year, Raef and I (Andy) were invited to International day on campus. It was fairly low key. We ran a booth featuring The Grapevine's activities, gave out brownies and t-shirts, and played the ever popular *Dance, Dance, Revolution*. Surprisingly, this made enough of an impact

that we were invited back again this year. This year, however, it was a much bigger event. We were assigned an entire group of students, most of whom were complete strangers to us, to help us run the "American" booth. Our theme was "Black America" to go along with Black History month. Most Thais only know American pop culture, so we saw this as an opportunity to teach something more important about American culture. We participated in their "talent" show as well. Michal Ruth and Greg sang the old spiritual "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." My portion was a guitar session in which I

totally butchered Jimmy Hendrix's interpretation of "The Star Spangled Banner." It was glorious. It was a great opportunity that gave The Grapevine a little more exposure on campus.



### Beach Party

Because our exchange students return to the US in December, we try to offer a few special events for the remainder of the semester. One of those events this

year was Beach Night. Since we really couldn't take The Grapevine to the beach, we decided it would be fun to bring the beach to The Grapevine. Some of the activities included beach balloon volleyball, a sand castle building contest, group beach games, and, of course, karaoke! It was a fun evening, and we had a great turnout with about 15 students. We actually had a hard time getting people to leave because they wanted to stay after hours.

### Love Banquet

Every year, The Grapevine activities come to an end around Valentine's day, as this marks the closing of the semester and the beginning of the Thai summer. This is the time when we have our annual Love Banquet to officially end our programming for the year. This year, our Love Banquet was the last of a four-part series about love we had been teaching during the previous weeks. The theme was "Love Actually is ... A Choice, Action, and Powerful." We showed a video spoof of the movie "Love Actually" featuring Jen and me. We thought it was funny.



Like Cow Yai, the Love Banquet is one of our most important events. It caps off our programming and leaves an impression that lasts throughout the summer. Please pray for our students over our summer, that God would watch over them. Pray that the students would see His presence in their lives.

### Student Leaders

Another milestone for us this year has been the addition of three Thai student leaders. Milk, Bank, and Jen (we call her little Jen) are The Grapevine's student leaders. They are all Christians, and we believe part of our discipling them is giving them ownership of ministry and service. We are very excited to have them with us, and have already seen God at work in their lives as they serve at The Grapevine. At the end of April, we are planning a student leader retreat designed to build relationships and talk about what it means to be a servant in the Kingdom. We have dreamed and prayed for God to raise up student leaders to serve the next generation of Grapevine students. This is new territory for us at The Grapevine, and we need all the prayers and support we can get. We believe it will greatly enhance the Kingdom to have Thai student leaders serving at The Grapevine.

### Leading Worship at Church

Our church, the Muang Thai Church, asked us to run their normal Sunday service a few weeks ago.

We were honored to serve the church in this way and excited to get to share a little Grapevine with our home church. Greg preached, and Mic and I led worship. We introduced some new songs, made lots of noise (Thais have a saying “Mai Dang Mai Sanook,” which means “If it’s not loud, it’s not fun.”), and praised God all at the same time. We would like to make this a regular occasion because it was just so much fun.

### Roiet Academic Camp

Our Thai church community, the Muang Thai Church, holds an annual academic camp for rural children of Thailand. Again this year, The Grapevine joined in teaching English for 30 school-aged children. It was another great experience – we really had a lot of fun!

I had the opportunity to teach advanced English every day to the students preparing for college. They were all very motivated and interested in learning as much as they could about English. Over the last four years, I have had several opportunities to visit the village where these students live and have developed a great



relationship with them, so it was really fun. We look forward to this camp every year.

I am extremely encouraged that at least three of the students in my class will be attending a university in

Bangkok, and in fact one student will be attending the top university in Thailand! Depending on their decisions, these students might actually be joining The Grapevine’s ministry – what a great connection! I’ll explain why this is significant. The church has an ongoing, academic based ministry in Roiet province, located in the rural area of Thailand. The English Language Center’s goal there is to improve the academics of a very poor area of Thailand. In fact, they have empowered some of the students who attend to test high enough to attend the top schools in Thailand. If any of these rural students attend Thammasat, they almost certainly will attend The Grapevine. This is one of the reasons why we are always happy to help the church’s academic ministry in Roiet

because it contributes to the overall effectiveness of the Kingdom. The opportunity to directly extend the church’s ministry, especially one that we contributed to, in this way completes the cycle of ministry. Pretty cool stuff.

### THE MAY FAMILY

Jude is growing up fast! I have always heard new parents say this, but as a new parent I finally see that it is true. Jude has been an indescribable joy in our lives, and we believe he is God’s blessing to us. Jude began to walk at around 10 months and has kept us on our feet ever since. We celebrated Jude’s first birthday in February! He was very excited about all the attention and toys, but not so much about the ice-cream cake. Whose kid is this?!?! We certainly helped him out with making sure the cake was eaten.



That being said, we want to share that it has been a major transition for us to

move from a couple who are both in full-time campus ministry, to a family in which I remain a full-time minister and Jen is a full-time mom and part-time minister. It has taken a lot of adjustments for us, and with a new baby on the way, we know there are many more to come. Your prayers and support have meant a great deal to us, as we are making these changes far from family and friends. God has shown us in many ways, which we have shared in the past, how much “ministry” there is in being a family who witnesses.

Jen is through her first trimester, which as many of you know, was a much more difficult one this time around. It has not been easy for our family to function at full capacity for a few months. But, thankfully, God has brought us through that difficult time, and Jen is feeling much better with more energy. Thank you for partnering with us in prayer, and we ask you would continue throughout this pregnancy.

*Andy & Jen*

Andy, Jen, and Jude May