

SECRET LIFE OF COA MEMBERS

Changing Lives, One Bag of Coffee at a Time

For COA member Dr. Tommy Lim, traveling nearly 8,000 miles to Thailand changed his life. While on a mission trip with his church in January 2006, he discovered a new calling: the New Life Center.

The New Life Center supports ethnic minority girls and young women who are at risk for, or are victims of, labor exploitation, human trafficking, and sexual abuse. The young women rescued are brought to the center to learn a new way of life.

“These young ladies could easily have been mistaken for teenagers at the shopping mall,” says Dr. Lim. “Their life story is far from it. Their stories will vary, but the vast majority of them were caught in a vicious cycle of prostitution and forced servitude.”

In the hills of northern Thailand, many families have a difficult time making ends meet farming coffee, their main crop. With the survival of the family at stake, many young women move to the cities with hopes of getting better paying jobs than they could in the farming regions. Unfortunately, this has often led to prostitution and human trafficking. The women rescued are brought to the center and taught life skills such as sewing, office work, and cooking. Most of all, they are taught something that was taken away from them — their feeling of self worth.

“This is where my church, the First Chinese Baptist Church in San Francisco, comes into play,” says Dr. Lim. “We purchase coffee from the hill tribe farmers in northern Thailand, which we then sell to our church membership and other caring individuals from around the country. All the profit we make is



Dr. Lim, on the right, shown with the chief of the Ahka Village (middle) and Reverend Don Ng, shown on the left.

sent to the New Life Center to help them continue their work. Not only that, but by purchasing coffee from the farmers, they are less likely to need financial support from their daughters. This is our ultimate goal.”

But Dr. Lim isn't the only optometrist helping with this important cause — he has also received financial support from other optometrists around the country. “Optometry is a great profession,” he says. “But what makes a great profession are those people in it. I am proud to say that my optometric colleagues, as well as those in our industry, have shown tremendous support and generosity in making contributions to this cause.”

If you are interested in making contributions to the New Life Center, you can e-mail Dr. Lim at drlim@berryessaoptometry.com, or visit www.berryessaoptometry.com.

In Memoriam

Dr. Leo Becnel, of Windsor, CA

Dr. James Crosby, of Castro Valley, CA

Dr. Jeffrey Ling, of Riverside, CA

Dr. Mark Morris, of Tiburon, CA