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# DR. MARK CHIN- PLASTIC SURGEON

**A**s a member of the First Chinese Baptist Church, for Dr. Mark Chin, missionary work is second nature. Due to the unusually high number of medical professionals in the congregation, philanthropic trips are frequent for the group. Chin has shared his talents on two separate trips to Thailand in 2006 and again in 2008. His next mission will take him back to Thailand, as well as into Burma, known as Myanmar. With Chin's skill set rooted in plastic surgery, he is accustomed to making clients feel more confident and more beautiful. When he goes overseas however, the needs of the people are entirely different from his day-to-day job requirements. In these poverty-stricken lands, he operates as a general doctor, ready and willing to help anyone with any ailment, as resources will allow.

"We go to provide these villages in Thailand Laos, and Myanmar access to medical or dental care," he says. "For example, in Thailand there are a lot of hillside tribes. The Akha tribe [members] aren't recognized as citizens, so they don't have access to a lot of community services. They are born in the hillsides and die there."

Chin says that the church group does have some connections with Medical Ministries, but they are mostly self-supported. They raise funds that allow a team of around 20 people to go, and they bring all of their own pharmaceuticals, surgical supplies and dental supplies. The optometrist brings frames and glasses so that they can grind them on the spot, providing better sight instantly for someone in need.

"We have been to prisons, schools, and hillside communities," he says. "We have to take four-wheel drives into the hills because they can't come to us. We set up shop there. The first trip I went on in 2006 we treated 800 people, and the one I went on in 2008 we treated nearly 2,100 people. We hope to achieve at least that on this upcoming trip."

Chin says that he treats people with broken teeth and strained bodies. Back pain from fieldwork, parasites and malaria are commonplace ailments among the people. As a surgeon, Chin would like to work in a hospital environment so that he could do more extensive procedures, and it is certainly one of his goals.

Chin attributes his calling to serve to growing up in the church. He says giving service to someone in need is entirely different than being paid for something. "I don't think the services I give are technical, but yet to them it's really rewarding," he says. "For example, if they have a growth on their face and it's blocking their vision, it's going to

continue to grow unless someone cuts it out. Those things are relatively simple for me to do, but if they don't have access, then it just continues to grow. It can be debilitating or it can affect them if left untreated.

"We're supposed to serve and we have to get out of our comfort zone," he continues. "It was exciting to go with the church because we were a team that worked very well together. I think if you have certain gifts and you are able to share them, it's really rewarding."

Chin describes the amazement he felt while observing the attitude of the people he encountered. Against all odds, they were seemingly untroubled. "Everything is relative," Chin says. "You can have nothing and still be at peace. I think that happiness is not just having everything. They humbled me by saying in their meager existence that they were still happy."

In Communist Laos, Chin says that he didn't exactly feel threatened, but they had to be very cautious, especially around the military. He anticipates that his upcoming trip to Myanmar might prove to be more threatening.

"They have civil rights issues over there," he says. "I'm looking forward to doing more surgical procedures, though. I feel like it makes an instant change."

A lot of times Chin is conflicted by the fact that they are not able to do everything for everyone. He encountered a mother holding her son who was unable to walk. His siblings had experienced the same thing, and died. The desperation of the mother teamed with the limited resources of the group, made the situation seem impossible. However, Chin

was able to aid in orchestrating a wheelchair to be sent and delivered to the boy. Many times, Chin points out, it is those small gestures that make a huge impact in the lives of these people.

"I think it's nice that Fresno as a community has a lot of people who are under the radar and go unnoticed," he says. "But, it's not to be noticed. We do it because we're supposed to. I think Fresno should be proud of our health community; there are lots of organizations that are able to give and help. We have local and charitable organizations, but certainly we can reach out of our comfort zones. I think we should all do that every now and then."



Photo Provided by Mark Chin

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**DR. MARK CHIN**