

Fort Worth couple encourages missionary families

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

CHIANG MAI, Thailand-Five years ago, when self-described "homebodies" Kimberly and Ross Tatum of Cross Point Fellowship in Fort Worth committed to volunteer with the member care and wellness ministry for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions field personnel, they never imagined the experience would transform their worldview and give them an international platform for their profession.

Member care and wellness is the CBF Global Missions program of supporting field personnel by matching them with mental health professionals and physicians who volunteer their services.

"We were not the type who traveled all over the world," said Mrs. Tatum, a licensed professional counselor and former school counselor. "But we prayed about it and felt like it was what God was calling us to do."

"It has been an exciting way to get to support missions," said her husband, a child and adult psychiatrist with a private practice in Fort Worth. "We're using our skills to encourage wellness in field personnel."

After four international trips to work with field personnel, the Tatums experienced a first on their way to a team meeting in Thailand. This summer, they presented play therapy to a group of Thai parents at one of Bangkok's most prestigious schools.

Play is a way for children to act out their experiences or express their feelings, Mrs. Tatum explained.

"For children, toys are their words and play is their language," her husband added. "It can have a great effect on the parent-child relationship."

Through their connection with fellow Baylor University alumni working in Bangkok, the Tatums were invited to speak at the school in Bangkok. Expecting about 30 to attend, the Tatums spoke to more than 350 concerned Thai parents, as well as Thai health care professionals.

As member care and wellness volunteers, the Tatums stay in regular contact with field personnel across Asia to help them care for themselves so they can remain physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy in working among the most neglected in often-isolated areas.

Member care and wellness currently has a full complement of professionals volunteering their services and a waiting list of more who are willing to serve. Member care and wellness is staffed by a team of 12 volunteer counselor couples, including licensed professional counselors, psychiatrists and a professor of pastoral counseling. Field personnel also are served by five physicians, one dentist and one volunteer who focuses on serving children of field personnel.

In addition to the member care team, 25 more individuals form a network of resources for field personnel. These include professionals such as lawyers and financial experts who are available to answer questions and give advice when needed.

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