

# Stories of Grace

Grace International School, Chiang Mai, Thailand

## GIS student testimonials

If you ask a graduate of Grace International School what he/she remembers about GIS, you might hear things such as:

- the uniforms
- The giant pool
- Senior trip to the beach
- Memorable pranks



GIS graduates

But hands down, the thing graduates remember most is their relationships with their friends and teachers. “The student/teacher relationship at GIS is unique,” says 2005 graduate Kennedy Horton. Many students recall the true care and concern teachers have for their students. Bethany Christian, 2004 graduate, recalls how former teacher, Anita Farr, consistently asked her what was going on in her life and how she could pray

she also took time for me after school and mentored me.”

Many relationships between students and teachers developed as they ministered together outside of the classroom. Bill Clark, a science teacher at GIS, has helped to facilitate ministries between GIS and orphanages in Chiang Mai. Former student, Rachel Aspinwall, worked closely with Mr. Clark in 2006-2007 to lead the student ministry at

Agape Home, a ministry which continues to be a vital part of GIS. “I was able to develop my skills as a leader, gain confidence, grow, and explore new opportunities,” recalls Rachel.

The teachers at Grace go the extra mile to help their students learn and succeed. Daniel Collingwood credits math teacher Elaine Robson with teaching him how to study. “I learned that study is actually useful!” laughs Daniel. “Miss Robson put all her time and effort into helping us understand concepts. She truly cared about us as people.” Daniel Bangcong remembers how his teachers believed in his potential. “It took me awhile to get the hang of things, but they believed in me and asked me to give 100% of my ability.”

For many teachers at GIS, teaching is more than a job—it’s a ministry. 2008

Graduate Sy Williams recalls the impact Matt Coe had on his life. “Mr. Coe was more than a teacher. He was also my coach and Bible study leader. It’s one thing to see a teacher teach, but it’s another thing to see him live it out every day. Mr. Coe is a man of integrity.”

When students come to Grace International School, they learn more than just facts and figures—they learn

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life lessons. For Sy Williams, Grace has lived up to its name. “The biggest lesson I learned at GIS is that failure isn’t final. God’s grace is sufficient even when I fail. My teachers have taught me that.”

## Agape Home Big Brother/Sister Ministry

Twice a month, you will find 120 orphans and GIS high school students chasing each other around a huge playground. Just by glancing at their faces, you can tell that they love every minute of it.

Mentally scarred, emotionally broken, and physically afflicted with HIV, children arrive at the Agape Home Orphanage starved for love and lacking consistent relationships in their lives. So in January 2006, the Big Brother/Sister Ministry was started by GIS graduate Rachel Aspinwall to change this. Every child at Agape Home over the age of four was paired with a “big brother” or “big sister” who would spend time with them on a regular basis.



GIS student with his paired brother.

The ministry began with 40 student participants and has grown to include almost 60. Since its beginning, shy and awkward relationships between “siblings” have transformed into crazy and fun-loving friendships. Some children even have trouble falling asleep the night before their sibling comes to visit because they are so excited to see them!

The Big Brother/Sister Ministry has shown GIS students how a little love can have an incredible impact on someone’s life. No matter what anyone has said or done to the children at Agape Home in the past, the children know that they have a big sibling who thinks that they are special.

## Thank you GIS!

I want to thank the teachers, administrators and staff at Grace International School, as well as those funders and prayer warriors who support the school, for providing a place where an expatriate child can grow and mature in many extremely important ways. For our family, Grace has been a place where...

Our children have discovered strengths they didn't know they had. At Grace, they

*"GIS is one very big reason why we have been able to live and work as expatriate"*

can try drama, join the jazz band, make things with wood, learn to use photoshop. They can pick up a new instrument and give it a try. The kids who are up for competition can join a sports team and the ones who want to exercise their bodies in



**Happy faces often found at GIS.**

non-competitive ways can enjoy intramurals. They can find out through teacher feedback that they're actually quite good at something like science or art when they otherwise wouldn't have known.

My kids have found friends among the student body who have become healthy and enjoyable peer groups and given them opportunities to grow into social maturity without feeling isolated. They can go to school in the morning with a sense of belonging. They'll even find their photograph in the school yearbook.

For a week or two after my kids learn a great new song in choir, I hear them sing-

ing it around the house.

Every fall at parent-teacher conferences, I see in my children's teachers a level of personal investment in my children's growth and maturity that once again surprises me.

Every now and again my kid comes home to dinner and wants to talk about what a teacher said in class. And my kids can honestly tell me that they like chapel.

I can expect that when I send my child to a school event, she will be in a safe environment.

Teachers ask about my child even after he's graduated and moved on. And he wants to keep a uniform shirt to take with him when he moves away to college.

Thank you so much for giving our family these kinds of experiences! GIS is one very big reason why we have been able to live and work as expatriates and still have children who grow up to be healthy and happy citizens of our home country. You have our sincere thanks.

Diane and Tom Tehan

## A story from a teacher

Patricia Giles first felt her God-given desire for mission work during her middle school years. "I felt sure the Lord was calling me to Africa. I was going to marry Tarzan and spend my life in the jungle, swinging from vine to vine, proclaiming Jesus to all who would hear!" So zealous was her calling, she and her best friend began preparing for mission work by sleeping on the floor and taking cold showers. During high school and college, God blessed her with many opportunities to go on short term missions trips. Each trip, He put more of a desire for the nations and for unreached peoples in her heart.

Patricia chose education as her college major. She loved children and knew that she would be able to use her degree in a variety of ways on the mission field. Upon graduation, she began to look for opportunities to serve the Lord overseas. One day, a family friend called

*"He has put me here for this time and there is no where else I'd rather be"*

and told her that he had met a group of Grace International School teachers at a conference and had been impressed by their commitment to their students and their calling. Says Patricia, "As a first year teacher, my friend felt like the community of GIS would be a supportive and encouraging environment for me. And I knew that the Chiang Mai missionary community would give me good exposure to what God is doing in this region."

Patricia is just finishing up her first year as a 1st grade teacher at Grace International School. She has been amazed by her students' love for prayer. She relates, "They challenge me in my own prayer life! They consistently remember to pray for people, even months after the initial request was made." One of her students, who comes from a Buddhist home, was reluctant to pray at the beginning of the school year. "Now," says Patricia, "she loves to pray for the Lord to give her a clean heart."

One thing Patricia loves about living in Chiang Mai is the opportunity to minister outside of the classroom. She makes weekly visits to an orphanage which cares for HIV positive children. "My work in Thailand has been multifaceted, going from my classroom to the street, to serving those who have dedicated their lives to Christ and His work, to those who have never heard the name of Jesus. I praise God so much for His lasting faithfulness and plan for me. He has put me here for this time and there is no where else I'd rather be."



**Patricia Giles**