

The Chang Family

and the

Woodpecker Association

MUIEN HOME EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION



Bethany (left 3)



Woodpecker House

June 2012

I stepped off the train at Guan-Fu, a small town located in the East Ridge Valley of Hualien, and was enveloped by a soft cool breeze blended with the smell of raindrops and fresh green grass. "Wendy!!!!!!" I turned at the sound of my name, and was engulfed in a warm hug from Bethany, home-schooling mother of two and founder of the Woodpecker Life Association; her elder son Samuel, whom I grew up with in a home-schooling camp, stood grinning beside us. After getting in the car, Bethany started sharing about her day and the ministries they're doing around the villages. Despite having worked the entire day at their newly opened restaurant, her enthusiasm was so contagious that I felt like I was there experiencing everything with

her. I have always remembered Bethany as being passionate, energetic, and spontaneous. Being an organized person and used to doing things according to

As one of starting families of Mujen, The Chang family and its Woodpecker Association is helping people in Hualien area. Mujen Home Educators Association, established in 1998, has around 200 members in Taiwan. Our vision is to "strengthen the marriage, unite the family, and educate godly offspring"

schedule, I knew I was up for a big challenge working at the Woodpecker in Guang-Fu for a

month. As we rode through the dark streets, I took a deep breath and prayed that it'd be a boon, a chance for me to better myself and become flexible during unexpected surprises.

The Chang family is one of a kind. Andrew, the father, was born and raised in Hualien, 50% aboriginal blood running in his veins; while Bethany, the mom, grew up in Hong Kong and speaks fluent English. God's perfect plan brought them together, and they started a family in Taiwan. Samuel and his younger brother, Bezaleel, have been home-schooled since they were young, and have experienced some quite fascinating adventures. Andrew, a lover of the wilderness, took his sons to climb Mount Jade, the highest summit in Taiwan, and bike around the island while they were still in elementary school.

Two summers ago, they undertook the challenge of biking along China's famous Silk Road, covering over 4,000 km under the scorching sun in order to raise money for needy families in Taiwan. Moreover, the two brothers often accompany their parents on village visits and participate in the numerous ministries that they have. Due to these experiences, Samuel won 2nd place in the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards and had a chance to visit Washington D.C. Despite these achievements, they are humble and down-to-earth, only wishing to fulfill God's plans for them. Whenever I spend time with their family, their passion and dedication are contagious and always inspire me to do more. Bethany started the Woodpecker Life Association in 2004, when she led a group of story mothers to enter local campuses and teach children about good character qualities and Christianity. Step by step, through Bethany and her family's commitment, the ministries developed and expanded into broader territory. The Woodpecker Life Association's mission is to help needy aboriginal families and teenagers who don't have enough resources and are lacking foresight and motivation. For many years, the aboriginal people in Taiwan have been oppressed and undermined by others, and Bethany yearns to help them realize their true potential and worth.

Five years ago, when I saw the Woodpecker's work for the first time, all they had was the second-hand ministry. It started when Bethany read about an unfortunate little girl diagnosed with Hirschsprung's Disease in the newspaper. Desperately wanting to help, she decided to gather

second-hand items and sell them at the local night markets, in order to donate 3,000 NT dollars every month to the needy family. Since then, they've continued to sell pre-owned goods at the night market, and as more and more people donated, the Woodpecker's Second-Hand Store was birthed. Different from the night markets, the store boasts more intricate merchandise, and is a great spot of outreach to the local citizens, as they are attracted by the low prices. "Through opening a store like this, we get to know the people around here, engage in conversation, build relationships, and eventually lead them to Jesus," Bethany told me one day on the van.

Now, as I come back for the second time, they have opened a café and a restaurant. And indeed, both of them are miracles that God gave, more than any mortal mind could understand. Both the Casa Restaurant and the Café started with absolutely nothing. But by God's grace, people with different talents and passions were brought along the way, and slowly piece by piece the magnificent puzzle was finished. The Casa Restaurant, located in the famous attraction named GuangFu Sugar Factory, is a great outreach to outsiders and tourists, who swarm the Sugar Factory on weekends and holidays. Casa, with windows on all four sides, must have leaders and responsible workers who can serve as good testimonies to whoever happens to stop by. The Woodpecker's Garden, in contrast, is located in a tiny village where not many know about it. Instead of being in the spotlight, the Garden serves as a stage to cultivate those who are interested in culinary studies or are passionate in cooking. While

working there on Wednesdays, however, I came to witness for myself that "God brings the right people at the right time", as Bethany always told me. After hearing experiences of having no customers at all during the week days, I wasn't expecting any the first day I was at the Garden. As I was working on a cake to bring to the village kids, a couple suddenly walked in. While I prepared their food, they introduced themselves, and it turned out the husband was a tour guide for foreign visitors to Taiwan, and he thought the Woodpecker's Garden would be a great place to stop by! Collapsing onto a chair after they had gone, I thanked God for the amazing lesson learned.

Like always, the goal of these two restaurants is to aid the local teenagers in discovering their own talents and worth. They do not wish to make earning money the top priority, but rather equipping these kids to be leaders and helping them gain skills to pursue their dreams in the future. One eighteen-year-old boy who works there came from the Faith Hope Love Boy's Home, a center for boys who have criminal records, and instead of going to jail, are sent there to be "reformed". He used to get in trouble all the time, and was considered hopeless by all those around him. However, after several months of working at the Woodpecker's Casa, he became mature and responsible, even able to handle troublesome customers and go an extra mile. It is changes like these that keep Bethany and her partners going, believing that even more can be done.

One of the biggest ministries Bethany hopes to start soon is the Barnabas House Mission School. There is a lack of mission schools

in Taiwan, and Bethany wants to raise up teens and train them to not only build up their own character, but learn to reach out and impact others. Everything is still in a nascent stage, but like every other ministry that the Woodpecker has established, I believe that the Barnabas's House is going to be up and running very soon.

One of my absolute favorite moments during the month was visiting the aboriginal kids of MaYuan village every Wednesday, teaching them songs, telling them Bible stories, and simply spending time with them and sharing our love. Bethany has been working with MaYuan village for over five years, and she's seen tremendous growth and transformation take place in these kids and teenagers. One boy, Steven, used to be the "bad kid" around the village; raised by a single mother, he would swear, bully others, and drink until he dropped unconscious on the streets. After attending the meetings with Bethany on Wednesdays, however, he slowly began to shed his old habits and

eventually became a Christian. He became confident and influential, inspiring his friends to lead a new life, too. With his English skills, he has helped out at numerous Woodpecker events, translating and finally finding his place in this world.

If there's one thing I learned during the short stay with the Woodpecker's, it is that everyone is capable of changing the world, bit by bit, little by little. It may not be converting everyone to Christianity, or becoming famous like Jeremy Lin; in fact, what you do may even go unnoticed by others. But as it says in Matthew 6:19-20, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth....but keep on storing up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal." Bethany herself spent seven years praying and handling all the work on her own before God sent people to help her and enlarge the ministry. If there's one thing I know, it is that people can be changed, no matter

how destitute or corrupt their current conditions may be.

The short month at the Woodpecker's was a stepping stone on my road to maturity. For the first time, I learned to live by myself, to be responsible for my own decisions, and to impact others. And I am confident that the training I received there will shape me into a more caring and aware person, always putting others before myself. One day, when I too am doing great things for God, I will remember Uncle Andrew's hard-working spirit, Aunt Bethany's overflowing passion and love, Samuel's faith in God and his encouragement, and cute Bezaleel's independence. But moreover, I will remember all the ministries at Woodpecker Life Association and the people who've dedicated their lives to it. When I go back there next time, I am sure I will be surprised by even more ministries, and Bethany will drive me in her van and share with me all the wonderful things that God has accomplished.

written by Wendy Chen, one of homeschool graduates in Mujen



Woodpecker Life Association

About

Woodpecker Life Association is a non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the lives of the tribal people in Hualien County, Taiwan.

Mission

Our mission is to improve the livelihood for the people of eastern Taiwan. We work tirelessly to bring education, skills training, service learning and cultural preservation to the communities located in the greater Hualien area.

We envision the people of Taiwan, including both aboriginal and Taiwanese, as an empowered, successful people group who understand their extraordinary value, God's plan for their lives and live according to His purpose

