



The Highlighter



U.S. Embassy Bangkok's Public Affairs Section Update
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Week ending January 27, 2012

“An Evening of Music & Magic” entertains, engages Thai students about studying in the US

Thai high school and university students in Hat Yai, Songkla, Chiang Rai, Phayao, and Chiang Mai were treated to “An Evening of Music & Magic” sponsored by EducationUSA the week of January 23. They saw rising musician Emily Elbert and well-known magician Krystyn Lambert perform and encourage Thai students to pursue higher education in the U.S. Ms. Elbert, a recent graduate of Boston’s Berklee College of Music, showcased her vocal and guitar skills by performing a set of original songs and a few covers – one of which was a crowd pleasing rendition of Michael Jackson’s “Thriller.” Ms. Lambert, currently a UCLA junior majoring in philosophy, delighted the crowd with her take on the linking rings and performed an escape routine.

Following each of their performances, which showed off unique aspects of American culture, the two fielded questions from students about how to go about choosing the right college, researching scholarship opportunities, and the expectations U.S. college professors have for their students. EducationUSA counselors were also on-hand to further engage those Thai students interested in beginning the U.S. college application process.

By the end of the week-long program, approximately 1,400 Thai students were exposed to a unique program which gave them the opportunity to view inspiring performances by up-and-coming young, American entertainers and get inspired about pursuing studies in the U.S. The program also received significant coverage from several Thai press outlets including Songkla’s *Southern Focus*, *Mango TV*, *Radio Thailand Chiang Mai*, the *Chiang Mai News*, and the on-line social journal *City Now*!





IO provides press support for VIP DC visitors

Embassy Bangkok's Information Office (IO) provided press support recently to VIP visitors. While transiting through to Burma, Senators McCain and Lieberman met with Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and Democrat Party Leader Abhisit Vejjajiva, and discussed recent political developments in Burma. A press conference for the senators before their departure to Burma was attended by such leading Thai and international press organizations as the *Bangkok Post*, *Matichon*, *Khao Sod*, *BBC*, and *Radio Free Asia*.

Deputy Treasury Secretary Neal S. Wolin met with leading Thai government officials and bankers to promote multilateral economic reforms undertaken for regional stability and global growth. He also underscored the U.S.'s support as Thailand continues its recovery from last year's flooding. IO arranged for the Deputy Secretary to be interviewed by *Thai PBS* before his departure.



Emily Elbert inspires Thai students to pursue musical dreams

In addition to participating in our "Evenings of Music & Magic," Emily Elbert took time to conduct master class workshops with Chulalongkorn University and Assumption University music majors on January 25-26. Ms. Elbert shared with students her musical techniques and arrangements which have helped her release two critically well-received albums of original compositions, and have allowed her to become a successful, independent musician performing around the world.

The sessions at Chulalongkorn University were an added delight as the workshops turned into an improvised jam session which saw Ms. Elbert and the students create new pieces on the spot.





Speeches boosts Mission's profile

On January 13, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Daniel Baer participated in our Mission's Embassy Speakers Program (ESP) by sharing President Obama's vision for human rights with 40 Thammasat undergraduate political science students. DAS Baer discussed ways in which the State Department is working with U.S. embassies and consulates to implement a new Presidential Memorandum recently issued by the White House regarding rights for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community, that directs all U.S. "agencies engaged abroad to ensure that diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons."



Embassy Officer John Gray spoke to a packed auditorium of Kasetsart University International Business students about the state of the U.S. economy on January 19. Mr. Gray began his presentation by giving an historical overview of the U.S. economy and highlighting the forces at play which are now transforming it into a service-based economy mostly concentrated in financial services, health, and education. He described the strengths, such as rule of law, innovation, and a skilled workforce, that make the U.S. economy strong and resilient. Mr. Gray also gave an in-depth analysis of the credit situation the U.S. is currently facing, and the steps that have been taken to resolve it. The presentation was followed by a lively Q&A period where the students asked Mr. Gray details about intellectual property rights, and the trade relationship between the U.S., Thailand, and the ASEAN community.

On January 23, University of California-Davis Economist Dr. P.L. Martin spoke to students, diplomats, and members of the academic community at Chulalongkorn University about the impact on Thailand of Europe's crisis and a slow economic recovery in the United States. Dr. Martin noted that recession in Europe in 2012 would present additional challenges for the trade-dependent Thai economy. However, Asia's large population and strong economic growth make the region attractive to U.S. and Western businesses over the long-run. As a result, Thailand and the rest of Asia will eventually become important drivers of global economic growth in their own right.

The following day, Dr. Martin spoke at Chulalongkorn's Asian Center for Regional Migration, where he discussed minimizing exploitation of migrant labor during times of crisis. Dr. Martin shared the experience of the U.S. as a country of immigrants, discussing the impact of economic recession on migration patterns, America's changing demographic profile, and the different approaches that states and the federal government have taken to integrate new immigrants into the United States.



EAP ELF's plan for the future

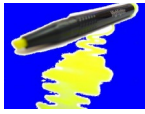
Twenty-one EAP English Language Fellows (ELFs), four RELOs, three RELO Assistants, one Sr. Fulbright Scholar, one Office of English Language Programs (OELP) program officer, and one OELP English Language Fellow program manager participated in the January 25-26 EAP English Language Fellow Mid-Year Meeting in Bangkok. The ELFs led and engaged in lively and substantive discussions regarding their current challenges and successes, and their hopes for the second half of their fellowships. One of the key issues brought up was how to sustain the work they do at their respective

host institutions once their fellowships are completed. Dr. Yilin Sun, a Sr. Fulbright Scholar in Taiwan, presented a dynamic session on maximizing soft-power, which helped the Fellows to strategize the way forward. Julia Walters, from OELP in State, pressed upon the attendees the power of reporting and highlighting the good work that is being done by the EAP Fellows. RELO Bangkok, RELO Beijing, RELO Seoul, and RELO Manila, and their respective RELO Assistants lent their collective experience and thinking to the discussions. The meeting ended with everyone energized for the second half of the academic year and ready to attend the annual Thai TESOL conference the next two days.

RELO Bangkok makes 32nd annual Thai TESOL conference a success!

Collaboration was the key that was highlighted at the 32nd annual Thai TESOL Conference that took place in Bangkok, January 27-28, and hosted over 700 participants, including twenty-one EAP English Language Fellows, as well as four RELOs and their Assistants. The Deputy Secretary General of the Office of Basic Education Commission in the Thai Ministry of Education, TESOL International President Christine Coombe, and other featured speakers focused on the topic of integration of the ASEAN community in 2015 and how important proficiency in English will be in making the mobile workforce of the ten member nations competitive. The conference sessions also looked at how teachers need to collaborate more to meet the needs of today's students in order to prepare them better for tomorrow's opportunities. The participant surveys showed that this conference, an incredible professional networking and development tool, was considered one of the best Thai TESOL conferences held to date.





“Save Mangroves, Save Our Lives” Project

On January 28, approximately 30 IVLP, Access, and YES alumni joined hands with 50 high school students from the Islamic College of Thailand to implement the “Save Mangroves, Save Our Lives” Project designed to help a local community fight coastal erosion along coastlines. The group traveled to Bangta-

boon Bay, Petchburi Province, to meet and talk to local residents

about the environmental problems present in their community, which include water pollution and land erosion. After an intensive brainstorming session, alumni decided that the best way to help the community and promote responsible management of the mangroves was to help plant mangrove seedlings in the ecosystem. “Save Mangroves, Save Our Lives” is one of seven winning alumni projects which were borne out of the Thailand Alumni Grant Competition 2011. Congrats State Alumni for a job well done!



State alumni share U.S. experiences with PD coordinator

On January 23, six State Alumni from five U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs, including IVLP, SUSI, YES, Southeast Asia Youth Leadership, and Global UGRAD, met with Mr. Selim Ariturk, Country Coordinator in EAP/PD for Mainland Southeast Asia, to share their experiences visiting and studying in the U.S. Alumni reflected on how this opportunity had changed their lives for the better. They also spoke to Mr. Ariturk about the activities that they have been involved in since their return from

the U.S. that have allowed them to share their newly acquired insight about the U.S. with their fellow Thai students, as well as encourage them to apply for the programs.



MLK's words still resonate!



Like



US Embassy Bangkok

"I am not interested in power for power's sake, but I'm interested in power that is moral, that is right and that is good." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

“ผมไม่สนใจอำนาจเพียงเพราะมันเป็นอำนาจ แต่ผมสนใจอำนาจที่เปี่ยมด้วยคุณธรรมและความถูกต้องดีงาม” – มาร์ติน ลูเธอร์ คิง จูเนียร์

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CSUSB makes return visit to SIFF7

California State University at San Bernardino (CSUSB) jazz musicians and dance troupe returned to Surin Rajabhat University to perform at the 7th Surin International Folk Festival (SIFF7) which took place from January 15-25. Cultural Attaché Michael Honnold gave opening remarks and introduced the CSUSB performers before their



inaugural January 17 evening performance. The students

performed three original, electrifying dance routines which brought the enthusiastic crowd out of their seats.



This is the second year in a row that CSUSB has performed at the folk festival with financial support from U.S. Embassy Bangkok's Cultural Affairs Office. The event helped support CSUSB's long-standing ties with Surin Rajabhat University.



Shannon & Matt Heaton Duo wow Isaan with Irish-American song classics

The Boston-based "Shannon & Matt Heaton Duo" performed Irish-American songs at an event designed to promote the soft opening of the new American Corner at Mahasarakham University on January 18. More than 400 university students filled the concert hall and immediately fell in love with what they heard. Ms. Heaton, who became fluent in Thai from a Rotary International exchange student

program in Thailand, took time to share with the audience the wonderful history behind the songs. She explained how this genre came into existence as Irish-immigrants to the U.S. adapted songs from their homeland to their new surroundings and incorporated musical structures they encountered from other immigrant groups to create a new, distinct and truly hybrid sound.

The duo delighted the audience further when they included a few traditional Thai song favorites in their last set. This included the crowd favorite "Lao Duang Duen," which received a standing ovation from the audience. The next day, January 19, saw the duo take part in Khon Khaen University's 48th anniversary celebration, where they once again wowed the audience with their selection of Irish-American and Thai classics.





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