



## Consulate General of the United States of America Chiang Mai, Thailand

387 Wichayanond Road, Chiang Mai 50300, Thailand

Tel: (66-53) 107-700 Website: <http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov/>

Press Release

September 1, 2010



### **U.S. Highlights Ethnic Culture, Awards US\$77,928 Grant for “Preservation of Akha Culture” at Baan Doi Chang, Chiang Rai** *Grant is largest awarded in East Asia this year for cultural preservation*

Today (September 1, 2010), U.S. Consul General Susan N. Stevenson, representing U.S. Ambassador Eric G. John, presented a grant for US\$77,928 to preserve Akha culture under the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

Also attending the grant ceremony were, U.S. Cultural Attaché J.P. Schutte, Mae Sruay District Chief Officer, Thai government officials, Baan Doi Chang community leaders and over one hundred villagers. Consul General Stevenson presented a symbolic check for the grant to Mr. Jianhua Wang, Regional Coordinator of the Mekong Akha Network for Peace and Sustainability (MAPS) under the Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT). The Consul General also joined the Akha Swing Ceremony and watched a traditional Akha cultural performance.

The U.S. Consul General, who began her assignment in Chiang Mai in August, said, “I am delighted to visit Chiang Rai during its 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and especially for the chance to visit Baan Doi Chang and witness traditional Akha culture. The grant we presented today will support documentation of Akha cultural rites, as well as literacy training and cultural and educational programs for Akha youth. The United States is proud to play a role in promoting cultural and ethnic diversity in Thailand. This project to preserve Akha culture benefits not just the Akha people, but the whole world.”

Consul General Stevenson also called for interested cultural organizations in the region to submit proposals to the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. More information can be found on the U.S. Embassy’s website.

The project is located at Baan Doi Chang Village, Wawee Sub-District, Mae Suay District, Chiang Rai province. The village of Baan Doi Chang – one of Thailand’s largest Akha villages -- is one of the few that still practices traditional Akha culture. While in the past Doi Chang villagers cultivated opium and practiced “slash and burn” agriculture, crop substitution programs have encouraged them instead to grow coffee and other highland fruits and plants.

The Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation was established by the U.S. Congress in 2001 to support efforts of countries worldwide to rescue cultural heritage in danger of being lost forever. Thailand has been awarded a total of ten grants, including this one. Several projects are in the North, such as the preservation of Wat Baan Koh mural painting, Lampang Province (US\$52,800); the Ban Rai and Tham Lod rockshelters in Mae Hong Son (US\$34,600); and community-based preservation of traditional houses in the historic city of Phrae (US\$20,000).



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### **About the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation:**

The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation was established by the U.S. Congress in 2001 to provide direct grant support to cultural heritage preservation projects in many countries. To date, the Ambassadors Fund has supported more than 550 projects worldwide, totaling more than \$20 million. Funded projects include technical support for the restoration of historic buildings; assessment and conservation of museum collections; archaeological site preservation; documentation to save threatened traditional crafts; improved storage conditions for archives and manuscripts; and documentation of indigenous languages.

Since its inception, the Fund has helped preserved Thai cultural heritage nationwide:

- 2001: Kamthieng House Preservation at Siam Society (US\$5,000)
- 2002: Preservation of the Antique Textile Collection of the National Museum Bangkok (US\$13,500)
- 2003: Preservation of Traditional Thai Textile Patterns and Weaving Techniques at the Golden Jubilee Royal Goldsmith College, The Grand Palace (US\$22,500)
- 2004: Preservation of Southern Thailand's Architectural Islamic Heritage through Digital Database Archive and Traveling Exhibition (US\$9,345)
- 2005: Preservation of the Mural Painting at Wat Baan Koh, Lampang Province (US\$52,800) \*
- 2006: Archaeological Heritage Management at Ban Rai and Tham Lod Rockshelters, Pang Mapha District, Mae Hong Son Province (US\$34,600) \*
- 2007: Survey and Inventory of Historic Buildings on Northern Charoen Krung Road, Bangkok (US\$15,900), and Conservation of Mural Paintings (Hoop-Tam) in Mahasarakham Province (US\$34,000)
- 2009: Community-Based Preservation of Traditional Houses in the Historic City of Phrae (US\$20,000)

*For further details, please contact:*

Worawan Thanamongkol (waewWOW)

Public Diplomacy Assistant

U.S. Consulate General, Chiang Mai

Office: (053) 107-772 Fax: (053) 234-475

Website: <http://chiangmai.usconsulate.gov>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/chiangmai.usconsulate>