

## Oakmont man establishes Christian global community

By [Rex Rutkoski](#), VALLEY NEWS DISPATCH  
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South East Asia Prayer Center

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### About the writer

*Rex Rutkoski is a Valley News Dispatch staff writer and can be reached at 724-226-4664 or via [e-mail](#).*

In many ways, Oakmont resident Mark Geppert's life has been a literal leap of faith.

After active military duty in 1970, he sold insurance and owned Cosmo's Pizza in Murrysville, then took that first springboard into uncharted spiritual waters, responding to a call to ministry.

After completing Bible school and licensing, he and his young family left Oakmont to begin mission work in Guatemala in 1976 with the support of Oakmont Baptist Church.

Today Geppert spends about 75 per cent of the year away from the Alle-Kiski Valley, traveling in Asia and Latin America as he oversees an organization that he founded in 1991 -- the South East Asia Prayer Center -- which is changing lives and giving hope to many.

This veteran of 35 years in international mission work has authored four religious books -- including "The Attack Lambs," which has been translated in to 10 languages.

As president of the Center, Geppert logs more than 150,000 miles in visits to at least 10 countries each year, intent on demonstrating that the power of prayer is more than just a theoretical exercise.

In fact, the South East Asia Prayer Center, whose support includes Alle-Kiski Valley residents and churches of various denominations, is committed to changing lives through prayer, channeling resources into humanitarian projects, establishing prayer teams that take the message of Christian faith to those who have not had the opportunity to hear it and nurturing new ministries worldwide.

"We are a Christian global community presenting the love of Christ on the platforms of health, education, parenting and micro-economics," Geppert says.

Those goals translate into very real, very human terms, including experimental farms in Laos, impacting hundreds of families, to lessons in marketing and how to use money wisely.

In Cambodia, where the center has its largest human resources, it is winning respect and encouragement even from the government. The nation's leaders are impressed with the Christian-based educational system, rooted in academic excellence and high morals the center is establishing in this country where Buddhism is the official religion.

The center responded to the minister of education's invitation to reform the educational system by creating a model school in the rural area. "(Former Valley High and Riverview High principal) Rick Rosenberger (of New Kensington) stepped up and designed the program and we instituted it with the help of people from our Singapore Church," Geppert says. It has been a learning and growing process each year.

"Rick's educational program has lifted national standards. There are not sufficient words to express how very much we appreciate his hard work," Geppert says. (Rosenberger now works with Light of Life rescue mission.)

"We have been consistently number one in academic achievement, and the government wants us to replicate that school in 24 provinces."

Geppert very much would like to do that if the money can be raised. "That is our greatest need. There is a tremendous sense of urgency, as the girls who do not get an education and proper moral training will end up in the flesh trade in Thailand, and also are shipped to other nations for prostitution," he says.

The center subsidizes teachers, making them accountable for lesson plans, academic performance, ongoing education and bible training.

Education also is crucial for a "very serious AIDS situation" in Cambodia, he says.

In addition, the prayer center cares for orphans.

The sponsorship is \$40 per month, with the full amount going to the ministry to



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