

Schools

STUDENTS OF THE WORLD Summit Christian Academy boosts international program

By TRACI ANGEL
Special to The Star

It's the inner-city kids from Milwaukee that Chi Young Moon recalls when he remembers his high school experience.

He and other students from Summit Christian Academy took their senior mission trip to spend time with the troubled kids. They went camping, ate s'mores and splashed in a water park.

"The most shocking of all was that every single one of these kids personally knew someone who had been murdered," Moon said. "It was a really meaningful experience."

Reaching out to others ranks high among Moon's favorite moments at Summit Christian, where he graduated earlier this year as the school's first international student to attend for all four years.

His milestone also highlights the school's ongoing push to welcome students from other countries.

Part of the school's mission statement is to make foreign students and global learning part of its curriculum, said Kathy Tharp, the international program director.

Starting this fall, the school is offering an introductory Chinese course as an elective.

"One billion people in our world speak Chinese, twice the number of those who speak English," Tharp said in a news release.

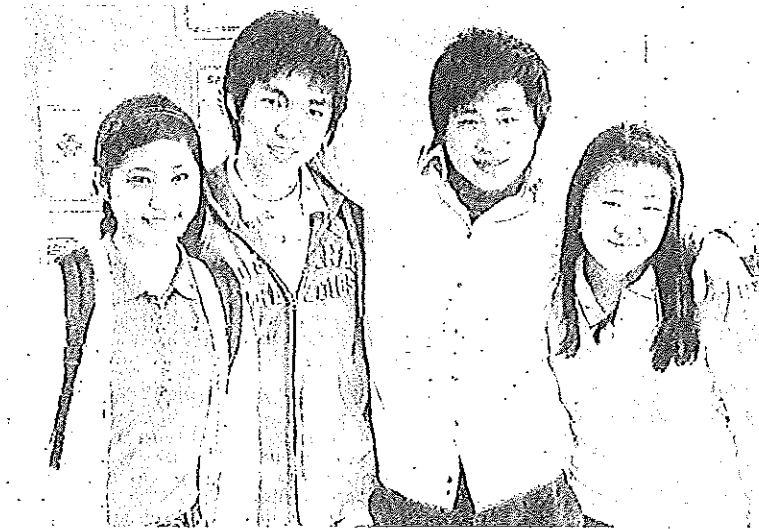
International students from that country are expected to play a role in the classroom.

Fourteen international students attended last school year, and the number was set to increase to 20 for this school year, Tharp said.

"The fact is that our world is just smaller and smaller," Tharp said.

An international program is beneficial for domestic students and those from abroad, she said.

Foreign students gain college preparatory experience and a chance for dual-college credit



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KATHY THARP
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM
DIRECTOR AT SUMMIT
CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

Four students who attended Summit Christian Academy last year, from left: Susi Song, Gyujoon (Guy) Hwang, Myeongsu (Kim) Kim, SooJin (Aria) Kim

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if they want to continue studies at an American university. They also receive Christian teaching as part of their education.

Local students gain a worldly perspective from peers who can teach them firsthand about life and culture overseas.

This year the school is welcoming students from Germany, Switzerland, Spain, South Korea and China.

Tharp, who was hired in May, has become Summit Christian's main ambassador. She has spent time in language schools overseas, including in Brazil.

The school works with foreign exchange programs and also accepts students who stay with relatives here.

"I am going to pursue more direct contact and still use organizations that contact us," Tharp said.

She said she wants to look for the "cream of the crop."

For the international students, attending Summit Christian can mean an education that is vastly different from what they'd receive at home.

"My parents wanted me to

have better opportunities for myself and experience different things," said Moon, who chose to study engineering this fall at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

In South Korea, students work on school for 12 hours a day and lack access to sports or other extra-curricular activities, he said.

Moon liked the smaller size—just over 50 people in his graduating class.

"I got really connected to everyone," he said.

Moon excelled at Summit Christian Academy. He scored 33 out of 36 on his ACT exam and finished with a 4.08 GPA. He graduated with 33 dual college credit hours. He participated in student government and theater and became a stage manager.

"Chi immediately felt accepted and loved at his new school," said his aunt, Pamela Yi, with whom he lived during his schooling. "He also obtained a great mentor and friend in his Bible teacher, Mr. Stan."

The international students find themselves ambassadors for their countries, both to



Chi Young Moon graduated last spring from Summit Christian Academy.

their peers and to their host families.

Gyujoon "Guy" Hwang joined Heather Royce's family for his senior year at Summit Christian. Hwang became like an older brother to her son. The family took Hwang to Disneyland to expose him to

American novelties, and Royce experimented with learning Korean recipes.

"We tried to show him typical (American) teenage experiences and then tried to incorporate (Hwang's) international traditions into our family," Royce said.