

## **Casting Crowns and Annie Moses Band win awards at Music Festival in North Korea**

The Grammy-award winning band, *Casting Crowns*, and *The Annie Moses Band*, received awards for their performances at the April Spring Arts Festival in Pyongyang, North Korea this month.

*Casting Crowns*, which performed at the festival for a second time, was awarded a gold trophy for their popular hit “**Lifesong.**” They were also commended by the festival committee members for their rendition of “White Dove, Fly High” in English and Korean. In addition many local people were interested in the *Casting Crowns*’ song “**East to West**” which they also performed at each performance.

*The Annie Moses Band* was well received by both the participants and by the Korean people who particularly appreciated their Korean Language rendition of the song “Forever In My Heart.” *The Annie Moses Band*’s classical-fusion ensemble “made a positive impression on the North Korean People,” according to the Organizing Committee Vice Chairman. They performed three of their songs and won an award for their song “**Glory Giver.**”

The Arts Festival in the DPRK is an international event which promotes independence, peace, and friendship through cultural and artistic exchange. 650 performers from 24 countries participated in the weeklong event of song and dance. Global Resource Services (GRS), coordinated the 32 member delegation. In the 27 year history of this event only 6 US delegations have participated in the festival. GRS has successfully coordinated 3 of the 6 groups and has been the primary US coordinator for the last two festivals.

Robert E Springs, Jr., GRS CEO, commented “I have been an eye-witness observer of the dramatic changes that have taken place inside North Korea over the last twelve years – this trip marked my 53rd trip -- and I heartily encourage this type of goodwill exchange. “ Eleven North Korean College Students from several universities acted as volunteer translators and guides for the group’s week-long visit.

In addition to participation in the festival activities, both Bands were selected to record their songs “White Dove” and “Forever In My Heart” at the Central Broadcasting System, the “Chosun Sori” (Voice of Korea). The recording studio director plans to play these two songs on the North Korean radio. The US Delegation visited the National Children’s Center for the Arts and played their instruments with the children. They also visited the Pyongyang Music College where two *Annie Moses Band* members and a Korean Senior Cello student performed a moving version of “Forever In My Heart” together.

The US delegation to the DPRK consisted of several families which included 9 children ages 5 through 17. “I had a chance to talk with many local people in the DPRK who either attended the concerts or watched them on TV and expressed their appreciation for ‘Americans sincerity

and kindness,” said Springs. “They were particularly moved by the family emphasis of our joint delegation. This year we were especially pleased to have four families, including my own wife and daughter, and the families of Mark & Melanie Hall (*Casting Crowns*), as well as Bill & Robin Wolaver (*Annie Moses Band*). Both children and the arts are very important in the Korean culture. We were there to engage the local people on the artistic level, family to family.”

“If we know anything from history, it is this: music can inspire thoughts and open minds far beyond the constricted political boundaries that citizens in many countries must face,” Springs continued. “People to people exchanges and working together to find real solutions are the keys to normalized relations. Any other motive only inhibits the advancement of increased openness. This GRS delegation was very successful and a part of our on-going programs in the spirit of goodwill and cultural exchange. “

Robert E. Springs, CEO & President for Global Resource Services ([www.grsworld.org](http://www.grsworld.org)), a humanitarian non-governmental organization, has worked in North Korea since 1997. For more information, please visit our website. More information about the *Casting Crowns* and *Annie Moses Band* trip will be posted soon on our websites.