



MISSION: Tim Gorski, left, Valerie Austin, Nick Manning and Aleks Rosenberg will travel as guests of the Thai government to film a documentary about the tsunami disaster. **Staff photo/Angel Valentin**

Filmmaker wants to help tourism

■ TSUNAMI

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teacher at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Gorski is working on his Master of Fine Arts degree at the Miami International University of Art and Design. He recruited professors Nick Manning and Aleks Rosenberg to help with the film.

Joining them will be Valerie Austin, a hypnotherapist, and part-time Fort Lauderdale resident who was in Langkawi, Malaysia, during the disaster. Austin hopes to train local survivors in self-hypnosis, which she believes will help them eliminate any remaining fear and complete the healing process. The men will film some of Austin's work and use it as a segment in the documentary.

"This is a paramount event and it's going to be real challenging," Rosenberg said. "The disaster is enveloping every aspect of things over there, but we are focusing on the resilience of the people."

Tourism, one of the top three industries in Thailand, along with textiles and agriculture, is also looking resilient, Thai officials say.

It generated \$8.9 billion in 2004, according to Vasu Thirasak of the Tourism Authority of Thailand in New York. This

year, Thai officials are expecting 13 million visitors, up 1.3 million from the 11.7 million who visited in 2004. That translates to about \$12.4 billion.

That's good news, and while Thirasak says visitors are no longer holding back from traveling to the region out of fear, any post-tsunami image appeal helps.

"[Gorski] contacted us and asked whether it would be a good idea," Thirasak said. "We said of course, let's do it. It's really great."

The Tourism Authority is helping arrange interviews and accommodations for the group, and Thai Airways has sponsored the flights for the first of an expected three trips. The university is letting the group use some of its equipment and is chipping in with \$4,700 for the first leg of the trip. The filmmakers and Austin will cover the rest of the expenses, expected to be a couple thousand dollars.

The group will first meet with officials of the tourism authority in Phuket to see what they would like from the film. They will then travel to the Khao Lak National Forest, where most of the non-governmental organizations have set up, and begin filming. The group also plans on spending one week exploring areas of the country that were not af-

ected by the tsunami as well as returning to Koh Phi Phi.

"This is very important and as topical as you can get," said Manning, who has worked on documentaries in India and Indonesia. "How people survive is very interesting."

Gorski said he wants to follow some of the personal survival stories throughout the three trips. He wants the third trip to be on the tsunami's anniversary, Dec. 26.

Once the documentary is completed, Gorski hopes to pitch it to the National Geographic and Discovery channels, as well as the Public Broadcasting Service, he said.

Thirasak applauds the group's efforts and encourages others who want to help, telling them: "Go, enjoy yourself and spend some money. Local people are looking forward to greeting and welcoming tourists."

And that's just what Gorski wants.

"We want to entice people to go to Thailand," Gorski said. "They are beautiful people."

For more information about the documentary, visit www.culturalfilmfund.com.

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