



Print Page

*Last modified: Wednesday, April 15, 2009 11:04 AM CDT*

## **Professor a cave water expert**

By JOANIE BAKER, The Daily News, [jbaker@bgdailynews.com](mailto:jbaker@bgdailynews.com)/783-3234

Chris Groves' love of water has gone from his professional research involvement with the United Nations to a personal level, and hundreds of orphans in China may benefit.

For more than a decade, the geography professor at Western Kentucky University and director of the school's Hoffman Environmental Research Institution has been leading research on karst water landscapes.

Like much of Bowling Green, karst areas have underground water supplies with rivers running through large caves, like Mammoth Cave.

Fortunately, Groves explained that this area of Kentucky can find drinking water supply in a secondary source, the Barren River, while people in other karst areas, especially China, struggle to obtain the water from underground.

Groves said nearly a fourth of the world's population gets its drinking water from karst areas.

For several years, Groves has worked with the United Nations program United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which encourages collaborative studies between different science efforts throughout the world.

Under the International Geoscience Program umbrella, Groves works with scientists in other karst regions, including China, Spain and Slovenia as part of the Global Study of Karst Aquifers and Water Resources.

In February, Groves, who now serves on the board of governors for the IGP, traveled to UNESCO headquarters in Paris to present research the program has completed, including its use of fluorescent dye in streams to determine where water eventually comes out.

But the research took a different turn - Groves adopted two daughters from China in recent years and learned the orphanage where one had been living did not have access to clean water.

Groves decided to get involved when he learned the children were being given untreated water - with animal and human waste - with their formula, as caregivers did not have time to boil all the water before feeding them.

Groves said he and his wife learned of a foundation called "A Child's Right," and are working to improve the water conditions by developing treatment systems for more than 102 orphanages.

"For me, I'm very tied between my personal and professional interest in my career," Groves said.

That interest started when Groves moved from Maryland in 1981 to attend WKU because of his desire to study caves.

Groves has been teaching at WKU since 1991 and said aside from having the opportunity to reach others internationally, he has enjoyed giving local students the opportunity to have the same extended outreach.

"I try to get students involved as much as possible," he said. "I really think there's people at the university working to make international reach a reality."