

The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

Summer 2016 · Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children · www.sharingfoundation.org

Special wheels widen the horizons for Horn Panha

by Jennifer Mendelsohn and Korey Lee

Sometimes sad stories have happy endings. Several years ago, an infant named Horn Panha was admitted to Kantha Bopha Hospital. As is often the case with handicapped children in Cambodia, his parents were unable to care for him and his disability. Fortunately for Panha, arrangements were made and he was welcomed into the extended Roteang Orphanage family.

Diagnosed with cerebral palsy, Panha was nonetheless a happy child, lovingly cared for by his nanny Chin Chanthan. At nine years old, he had grown and gotten stronger, but it was becoming increasingly difficult for his nanny to carry him everywhere. TSF desperately wanted to increase Panha's mobility so he could more easily join in the children's activities.

Thanks to the persistent efforts of TSF longtime supporter Marybeth Savage, we acquired a brand new custom Tilt-in-Space Stroller for Panha. In April, we brought the stroller, an oversized luggage item covered with fragile stickers, from New England through Hong Kong to Phnom Penh. Upon arrival there, In Country Director Elephant, with a little finagling, squeezed the chair into his car for delivery to Roteang Orphanage.

As usual, our visit to the orphanage began on the veranda with lots of children warmly greeting us. We had brought them some toddler toys and clothes, but our most important gift was the special stroller for Horn Panha. Superintendent of Building and Grounds Pen Ron unpacked the box and put it together in no time with many teenage boys anxiously looking on



and providing assistance. It is always rewarding to watch our orphanage children help one another, but particularly so to see those boys concerned about the comfort of one very handicapped child.

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Elephant had suggested that we might try the stroller the next day. However, a moment later we noticed the chair had been brought inside and Panha was already in it! His nanny came out on the veranda pushing him with the children following behind. He had a huge smile on his face and looked so happy! It was

a jubilant parade of very excited kids led by Panha, the star of the show and grand marshal. Then Panha looked at us saying, "aw koon" (thank you), pressing his hands together. It was so completely spontaneous and we were so grateful to be there to deliver such a life-changing gift.

With this chair and a recent assessment by the Perkins International School, TSF believes they can expand Panha's horizons. There are no special accommodations for handicapped children in the public schools of Cambodia, but TSF is pursuing some physical therapy and special education for him. Although not very verbal, Panha is bright and manages to communicate in many ways. With his chair, he is now able to sit upright at table height, or be tilted back for maximum comfort. He can rest comfortably in the cool mesh fabric, and be easily transported to join in the fun at the orphanage. His nanny, Chin Chanthan, is excited that he can even travel beyond the orphanage gates!

There are many people who made this special gift possible for Panha, including his longtime sponsor, Marguerite Shaw, who passed away last year, providing for him even after her death. Now we are quite certain that she is still smiling, seeing his new wheels and the road ahead for him.

You can view a video of Panha in his new chair at sharingfoundation.org. □

Jennifer Mendelsohn and Korey Lee are longtime TSF board members.

Turning a trove of photos into a treasure

by Charles Bagnaschi

The Photo Book Project's original purpose was to assemble personalized photo histories for each of our Roteang Orphanage children. When they leave our care, we want them to have a photo album so they can see their development over the years and remember the children and caregivers who will always be their family. While this sounded like a straightforward project, it quickly led

to a larger challenge in both scope and purpose.

Over the years, TSF had accumulated a trove of children's photographs, some were used in newsletters or sent to sponsors, many more were filed in envelopes. The photos were a tremendous resource but without organization, difficult to use. I wanted to create a system so the photos could be easily retrieved and preserved far into the future.

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Notes from the President

by Ann Trudeau

The Sharing Foundation's mission is to help meet the physical, emotional, educational and medical needs of orphaned and seriously disadvantaged children in Cambodia. Our goal is to help prevent some of the problems associated with poverty by developing programs to improve the health and welfare of these children and their families.

We are fortunate to have many people working to achieve that goal. Our supporters include sponsors of individual children, donors to the general fund or to a specific project, craft sellers, experts that lend their advice and knowledge, and fundraisers of all ages.

Weaving all of these supports together, working continually behind the scenes, is a group of dedicated volunteers, our board of directors. Their names are always included on our website and on the back page of this newsletter.

Some of the board members have served since the founding of the organization. It is with sadness that with this issue we say farewell to Kathy Recknagel who is stepping off the board. Kathy has been part of The Sharing Foundation since the organization began and has assisted in so many ways, writing thank you notes, serving as treasurer, sharing her valuable insight as a nurse, helping with the immunization program, selling crafts, and always contributing in a thoughtful and caring manner.

While we will miss Kathy, we have been fortunate to welcome two well qualified members to our board. At this time, I would like to introduce Charles (Chuck) Bagnaschi and Linda Clark, who joined the board last year.

Chuck, an electrical engineer, has had a strong connection with Southeast Asia since serving with the U.S. Army in Viet-

nam in the late sixties. In 1981, Chuck and his wife Jean adopted an infant from Colombia, S.A. Dr. Nancy Hendrie and Judy Jones were the first to care for the new arrival. Over many years of caring for the two Bagnaschi children, Chuck and his wife Jean learned a great deal about The Sharing Foundation.

In 2014, Chuck and Jean visited Cambodia with a group of TSF supporters from Carlisle and Concord. It was a transformative experience and Chuck, eager to do more, joined TSF's Board. With his love of photography, he has tackled the enormous project of combining years of photos of the orphans, by child, so they will each have a photographic record of themselves, an enormous gift frequently not available to orphans in any country (see story on page 1).

I am extremely grateful to have a board that works so diligently, in concert with our staff and donors, to fulfill the mission of TSF.

Linda Clark also closely followed the beginnings and growth of TSF through Dr. Hendrie, her pediatrician. Linda visited Cambodia in 2014 where she was introduced to many of the Sharing Foundation projects, spending time at the orphanage, teaching an English class in the evening, and traveling to Beng Krom to see the immunization program in action. The highlight of her trip was meeting the young high school woman that she has been sponsoring. Linda was deeply moved by the work TSF is accomplishing, and particularly impressed with the Cambodian children's appreciation for education. Perhaps that is because Linda's career was in education.

Linda owned and operated a preschool in Natick and then moved to Carlisle to become director and head teacher of the Red Balloon Nursery School. She has taught kindergarten and second grade at the Carlisle Public School. Along with classroom teaching, Linda was an early literacy consultant for Tufts University for 15 years.

Since joining the board, Linda has shared her professional expertise, focusing on literacy in the TSF programs, working to establish libraries in the schools we support, and finding Khmer books to fill them. Khmer books are scarce so she is tackling that challenge with vigor! Linda is married to Bill, has three children and a grandchild. It's not surprising that among her hobbies is a love of reading!

I am extremely grateful to have a board that works so diligently, in concert with our staff and donors, to fulfill the mission of The Sharing Foundation. □



Volunteer Needed!

Do you love to put puzzles together and do creative layout? The Sharing Foundation Communications Committee is looking for someone to lay out the TSF Newsletter three times a year. We currently use InDesign but we are open to other publishing options. If you might be interested, please contact Laurie Simons at info@sharingfoundation.org.

Join in a young Cambodian's life

Vitou was abandoned in Kampong Cham province and brought to Roteang Orphanage by neighbors when he was only one year old. He has thrived at the orphanage for the past 14 years but his sponsor is no longer able to support him. We would like to find someone who is willing to sponsor him financially, and also correspond with him each quarter. Since Vitou is about to enter high school, we believe that he is capable of sharing his life in writing and learning from those who care about him.

The cost of sponsorship is \$1,200 per year, which can be paid yearly, semi-annually or quarterly. This figure is based upon orphanage costs, including food, clothing, staff, maintenance of the facilities, medical needs (including a doctor who visits three times per week), school supplies, uniforms, and school transportation for the older students.

If you might be willing to join The Sharing Foundation in supporting Vitou, please contact Sally Stokes at orphanage@sharingfoundation.org. □



Trove of photos

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Digitizing the photos was the obvious first step. After collecting photos from many sources, I scanned hundreds of paper photos and imported them into Apple Photos. That program is versatile and its generic formatting will allow files to be maintained on Windows computers as well. I named a photo file for each child, making it easier to organize and search photos. However, because many of the photos go back years and carry no identification, the ongoing challenge is to attach the correct name to each face. In addition, I encounter variations in the spelling of children's names, adding another layer of complexity. As I slowly identify each photo, I embed a digital "tag" which can include one or multiple names, the date and location of the photo, and more.

After working on the project for over a year, the digital collection has grown to almost 3,000 photos. Now, when board members visit the orphanage, they photograph each child and, since virtually all current photos are digital, I can easily add them. Our TSF photo library allows board members to connect the children's names with faces and, more importantly, to follow the growth and development of each child.

For me, this project has been very rewarding. I've learned about our resilient children and worked with dedicated

Doing their share អរគុណ (aw koon) Thank you!



Making music for Roteang

In gratitude for the care she had received at Roteang Orphanage as an infant, Kim Knauft gave a solo voice concert last March and raised over \$600 for TSF. Now 15 years old, "Kimcheang" explains:

"I wanted to do something meaningful for Roteang and TSF because they took such good care of me when I was a baby. My voice/piano teacher, Sandy Simpson, and I worked hard to prepare the music for the concert, and decided to make it a fundraiser for TSF. I asked for the money to be used in the way that would help the children the most. My family and I are traveling to Cambodia this summer and I'm looking forward to visiting Roteang to see how I can help TSF more."

volunteers who have provided numerous photos and spent hours identifying faces. I consider this a "living project", one that will continue to grow, and I look forward to presenting that first album when one of our children leaves the orphanage nest.

If you have any photos of orphanage children that you would like to share, please contact me at photos@sharingfoundation.org. □

Charles Bagnaschi is a TSF board member.



The photo albums will show how children like Dalika have grown and matured over their years at Roteang Orphanage. At left, Dalika as an adorable 6-month-old soon after her arrival at the orphanage; in the center, as a fun-loving preschooler, posing in her red tee shirt with her buddy; and at right, now 9 years old, pleased to be part of an orphanage celebration!



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Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children

The Sharing Foundation

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Our Mission

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Would you sponsor a hard-working student?

TSF wants to greatly improve the educational opportunities for high school students. Board members interview incoming candidates, in English, and select for sponsorship only those who are hard-working and whose families cannot possibly afford the smaller classes. Sponsored students are expected to work hard in their classes and take the national graduation examination after 12th grade. They know that if they pass, they can attend university, supported and paid for by TSF.

To sponsor one high school student costs \$300 per year and covers "small group" classes, uniforms, supplies and transportation to school. Sponsors are expected to write their student four times a year, and in return, they receive a handwritten note from a very grateful youth. If you are interested, please email Rick Recknagel at highschool@sharingfoundation.org

The Sharing Foundation

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The Sharing Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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