

The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

Spring 2013 · Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children · www.sharingfoundation.org

Roteang turns 13, kids are growing



Roteang Orphanage kids enjoy the water park just outside of Phnom Penh.

by Nancy W. Hendrie

January is now my favorite month: the opportunity to see the progress of The Sharing Foundation's projects in Cambodia, now 15 years old, and to visit my favorite youngsters.

It is hard to believe that these boys and girls, most of whom arrived at Roteang Orphanage as sick, skinny infants, are now vibrant youngsters.

I wanted to see our Orphanage children first. It is so hard to believe that these boys and girls, most of whom arrived at Roteang Orphanage as sick, skinny infants, are now vibrant prepubescent youngsters — a few are already real young men and women! We only have a few younger children, mostly our multi-handicapped children, each with his or her own doting, full-time nanny.

As we see our young people grow and mature, we will need to consider whether it is time to add to our Orphanage population at the young end; Elephant gets requests, but we have not taken on new children for a long time, with 73 youngsters still on our roster. We are often

asked, "When do we send grown kids away?" The answer is we won't, until and unless they are ready. Obviously, our goal is to help them become independent, productive adults, but Roteang is their home. They will always be welcomed back, and we hope to have some weddings at some point.

Roteang Orphanage itself is in excellent shape. We have stressed maintenance from the beginning, and everything is kept clean, painted and leak-free. Peng Ran and his staff of two do a great job of maintaining all of the buildings and grounds in this tropical climate!

The children are likewise in great form. At one visit I watched a preschool group making puzzles while children's songs played in the background, and a computer group under the tutelage of Kong Maneth, one of our own college graduates, worked in the great room of Mary Jane's House. In the backyard, a spontaneous dodgeball game by a bunch of energetic boys was going on, while the second-grade teacher patiently worked on forming complex Khmer letters with her class in our home school. Half an

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Creative fundraising makes 2 new playgrounds a reality

by Mary Hult

The Sharing Foundation has been a longtime supporter of kids in the extremely poor village of Beng Krom, supplying uniforms so they can attend school and recently administering their first immunizations. Last year, TSF asked for help to build a playground so that the thousands of children in that village might have a safe place to play.

At the same time, the playground at the Roteang Village, which is at the center of so many TSF programs, had become rusted and rotted beyond repair, after years of use in the rainy and humid climate.

While playgrounds in the US are frequently taken for granted, TSF was fortunate that donors from Ohio to Massachusetts to New Hampshire, saw the value in those play spaces, and initiated three unique fundraisers to make those new playgrounds a reality.



Beng Krom school girls love their new playground donated by TSF supporters.

Turning Pastries Into Playgrounds

The Sharing Foundation came into Alice Webster's life a number of years ago when she and her husband were visiting their daughter and her husband in Jamaica Plain. One evening they wandered into a new, very small shop on Centre Street which sold fancy desserts. As they shared

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Notes from the President

by Sally Stokes

Thanks to the support we received from all of you, 2012 was another successful year for The Sharing Foundation! In addition to meeting the needs of our ongoing projects – the orphanage, farm project, sewing school, English school, high school and university sponsorships – we were able to complete two items on our Wish List.

Our first wish was fulfilled by a generous gift from Tom and Ann Bates of Atlanta which enabled us to immunize all of the children in the poor village of Beng Krom against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B. This effort that will save lives as well as suffering for many years to come.

Our second wish was granted when three groups raised enough money to build two community playgrounds, as well as maintain them long into the future. At the beginning of 2012, we had been asked to fund a playground at the Beng Krom village school. While

looking into that project, we discovered that the playground at Roteang village school was terribly rusted and in need of repair and/or replacing. These playgrounds serve as important centers for recreation in their rural villages and we appreciate the creativity and hard work to fundraise for them.

During 2012, the Board spent a great deal of time working with the Executive Service Corps, a group of senior-level executives who volunteer their time to provide high-quality, affordable consulting services to nonprofits. As a result, we have added more structure to our Board of Directors and created a new set of bylaws and policies to be well positioned to face the future.

The Sharing Foundation celebrates its 15th year in 2013 and during those years, Cambodia has seen much change. Our plan for this year is to reassess each of our projects to ensure that we are making the greatest impact possible for

the well-being of Cambodia's children. For example, our orphanage population is getting older, with an average age of 8 or 9, and we must anticipate their changing needs. As Dr. Hendrie outlines in her story in this issue, the farm project is a program that has been greatly affected by the increased industrialization in Cambodia. Our primary goal of that project has always been to keep the children of those very poor farmers in school. The solution that made sense a number of years ago, might or might not be the best solution to meet this goal going forward. However, our hope is to determine how we can most effectively address these issues in the coming year.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, and I believe I also speak for the thousands of children whose lives have been improved by TSF, I would like to thank you for your trust in us over the past 15 years, as well as for your generous support. Please, come visit us in Cambodia and see what you've helped us to accomplish!

Roteang turns 13, kids are growing

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hour later, a dozen lively youngsters in their blue and white school uniforms came bursting onto the orphanage grounds at the end of their school day in the local public school.

Four of our nine teachers are our own graduates, returning after college to teach in the school where they once learned English!

An assignment this trip was to reorganize the living spaces, to get the girls settled in Mary Jane's House, and also to get the boys to understand that everything there was off limits to the males, except for the bathrooms during computer classes! Buying the furniture was the first step. There is a "furniture street" in Phnom Penh, and Elephant and I spent two days haggling over the design, costs and delivery expectations for our order. Next we went to the "mattress street" and arranged for 20 thick cotton mattresses to be made to order in the next ten days. At the fabric market, we bargained over 30 meters of cotton for sheets, to be cut and hemmed at our sewing school. Each day subsequently, we returned to the furniture store to follow up on the progress of our beds and desks.

In the ensuing days, we went to the English school to observe a few classes.

Mam Sary continues to run this program very ably, and more and more of our students pass the Australian exams in English, one of the prerequisites for TSF sponsoring their college education. It is remarkable that 450 junior high and high school students, both our own sponsored students and many others, come every day after their Khmer school day to learn English! And it is wonderful that four of our nine teachers are our own graduates, returning after college to teach in the school where they once learned English!

The farm program is in transition at present, as there are great amounts of construction going on in Phnom Penh City, and most of the men have left farming for construction jobs there, even though it means abandoning their families for months at a time and living on building sites. Pay for construction is about \$4.50 a day, as opposed to the \$2-3 a day one earns farming. We're left with only women to work the fields, which leaves us short when we need



New furniture is made ready for delivery to the girls' dorm.

heavy work to be done. We are anxious to keep the farm school, serving over 185 children a day, and the concern is that if we do not offer the farm jobs, these illiterate families for the most part will stop allowing their children to go to school and "rent" them out for farm jobs elsewhere. The land owner has sold the land out from under us several times, causing us to move to another plot and do the heavy

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Creative fundraising for new playgrounds

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a piece of cake, the proprietor initiated a "conversation" which was essentially an explanation of and tribute to The Sharing Foundation, to which, it turned out, he had a deeply personal connection. At the time, they had never heard of it, but by the time they left, this eloquent man had persuaded Alice that it was something she wanted to be part of.

Fast forward to fall, 2012. Alice was back in Ohio and anticipating a "significant" birthday. She knew that her four wonderful children would want to mark the occasion in some way. She also knew that she did not want/need any more "things". The TSF newsletter with the article about the rusty and dangerous playground equipment had recently arrived. Alice gave a copy to each of her children with the suggestion that a contribution to help fund the new playground was the only thing she really wanted. As they are all parents, she knew this would appeal to them, too. She promised to match whatever they gave.

"To see the pictures Sally sent me of the children enjoying the new swings and slides reinforced my pleasure at being able to be a small part of this effort," Alice said. "It was the best birthday ever!"

Initiating a Hunger Feast on Cape Cod

Back on the East Coast, the "Hunger Feast" was the idea of John Gates, age 14, who was adopted from Cham Chao orphanage in Cambodia by Rita O'Donnell and Stephen Gates. On February 18, over 100 people joined together at the Unitarian Universalist meetinghouse in

Falmouth, MA to learn about world hunger.

Diners were randomly assigned to one of four social classes representing the distribution of wealth in the U.S. Meals were customized to social class and the youth group members served as ushers and waiters.

The interactive evening, sponsored by the youth group, included a month-long art exhibit on food and hunger, as

well as a "recession", forcing diners to leave their meals and move down one social class. The highlight of the evening, however, was hearing Bopha Samms, a TSF Board member, speak so movingly about her experience of hunger during the terrible years of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.

The evening concluded with a taste of Cambodian food for all, provided by Bopha's restaurant, Stir Crazy.

In addition to being thought-provoking, the event raised \$2,300 with donations from participants, the UU Fellowship of Falmouth Board, the family and friends of John Gates, and the Man Au Duong family of California who had been refugees from the Khmer Rouge and sponsored by the Falmouth Congregational and Unitarian Universalist churches.

Collecting Pennies for a Playground

Up in the Greater Seacoast area of New Hampshire, a group worked together to make pennies add up for a playground. From the time their children were very young, a number of families with adopted children born in Cambodia gathered as a playgroup every month. As the kids grew and interests changed, the group stayed in touch, gathering when able,



Happy Beng Krom school boys swarm over their new jungle gym, made possible by TSF supporters.

and sharing the joys, concerns and gifts of parenting.

When they learned about the need for playground equipment in Cambodia, the adults knew this was the perfect project for their group. The idea was eagerly embraced by all of the children (ages 8-15) who immediately began generating ideas on how they would raise "Pennies for a Playground".

Emma S. and Ratana designed labels for 100 coin containers distributed around the community. Sammy coordinated a "Hat Day" at Shapleigh School where kids had to pay \$1 to wear a hat. At Heronfield Academy, Emma B. and Maya asked the kids to contribute for a "Dress Down Day," while at the Dover Middle School, Kunthea baked and ran a bake sale, and the Diversity Project at the Cooperative Middle School sold raffle tickets. Sakhan hosted a drive asking neighbors to contribute to the cause, and Emma S. and Ratana collected donations during a talent show at the New Franklin School. Students and faculty supporting the cause at the Nettle School also joined in to raise funds.

Together, the kids far exceeded their original goal of \$650, raising over \$2,500 to build a beautiful playground. Parents and children had good reason to be proud of their "Kids Helping Kids" endeavor.

Thanks to Alice Webster, Rita O'Donnell, and Lisa Dennison for their contributions to this article.



Hunger Feast organizers John Gates and Brittany Woodruff of Falmouth, MA, worked tirelessly for five months to make the event a success.



Three of the older Roteang Orphanage girls are delighted with their new dorm furniture.

Roteang turns 13

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labor of preparing a new piece of land for farming. We have considered buying a plot of land, but the farm land owner wants to sell the land for an exorbitant amount.

These youngsters are very happy with their lives, and treat each other and their adult caretakers with great kindness.

But to return to my favorite Orphanage kids, we had two big events in January: our annual birthday party, and a field trip.

Our 73 children really look forward to the party. It started this year with the 30 or so children involved in the dance group, costumed in handsome outfits made by our sewing school, performing multiple fantastically coordinated traditional dances. Their rhythm and synchrony was impeccable, and spoke of much practice. Afterwards we all adjourned to the verandah of the boys' building for a huge sheet cake with beau-

tiful flowers and decorations, as well as soda (not otherwise seen at the Orphanage), huge elephant-ear cookies, dragon fruit and rambutans, another popular fruit. There were huge quantities of food, but it seemed to disappear in one happy moment! The children all rambunctiously sang Happy 13th Birthday to Roteang, and each got a small gift from TSF.

The other special event was taking 35 of the older children to the water park outside Phnom Penh. We had done this once before, two years ago, and at that time the children were very tentative about the big (though shallow) pools. No one wanted to try the slides. This time they threw themselves into the pools with great delight, and went up and down the multiple slides with terrific smiles and whoops of pleasure. Inner tubes added to the fun, and even when some kids were obviously cold in the water, no one wanted to miss a minute. To top off the day, we stopped for ice cream on the way back to Roteang — ice cream be-

ing unheard of at the Orphanage where there is no freezing capacity. It was a great afternoon, and the kids were still talking about it days later.

The furniture for the girls' dorm finally arrived the morning we were leaving, and the 26 girls and five nannies were moved into Mary Jane's House. The younger girls, downstairs, will continue to sleep on mats on the floor, as many Cambodians do. Everyone is pleased with the arrangement. An anonymous donor just provided beds in the boys' dorm for all the boys age 12 and up, so the boys too are moving on and into new furnishings.

It is such a pleasure and a privilege to spend time with these youngsters. They are very happy with their lives, and treat each other and their adult caretakers with great kindness. There is a feeling at all of the TSF projects in Cambodia of everything being busy but calm, with people really appreciating what they have. I can hardly wait for next January and a return trip.

Nancy W. Hendrie is the founder of The Sharing Foundation.



The annual birthday party is always a very special event.

Two charming Roteang Orphanage children need sponsors



Sok Chan came to Roteang Orphanage at four months of age, malnourished and HIV ab+. She had been left with the Maryknolls, who sent her to us to get the best care. After six months, she was fine, and her HIV test was negative. Now an active nine-year-old, Sok Chan attends third grade at the village school and participates in our traditional Khmer dance classes. She was very excited to have moved into a room in Mary Jane's House with a few of her many friends at the orphanage.



Seven-year-old Preap Chamroen is a charmer. He was born to a young garment worker. His father abandoned his mother when she was four or five months pregnant, and she just could not raise him and keep her job. She ended up abandoning him, and he was brought to us. A lovely, happy little boy, Chamroen attends first grade at the orphanage home school. He loves cars (of course), books, soccer and the orphanage playground.

The cost to sponsor each child is \$1,200 per year, which can be paid quarterly. This covers food, clothing, medical care, nanny, school, and the staff who keep Roteang orphanage in top condition. You will receive pictures and an update four times per year. If you are interested, please email orphanage@sharingfoundation.org.

St. Paul students turn pizzas into furnishings

by Nancy W. Hendrie

Denise Gosch is a dynamo. A third-grade teacher at St. Paul Lutheran School in Lakeland, Florida, Denise has come up with a dozen original projects in a dozen years to support TSF and has succeeded every time, with the help of her students and their mission projects.

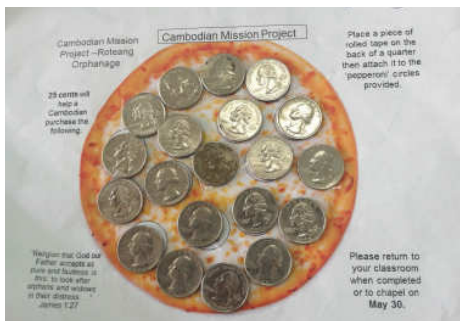
Last year, the 35 third graders put their hearts into raising money for beds, desks and chairs for the girls at Roteang Orphanage. Our orphanage kids have always slept on mats on the floors, as is common in Cambodia, but they are growing older, have homework to do now, and have a beautiful building, Mary Jane's House, to live in.

The St. Paul third graders sold Little Caesar's pizza kits at the school, and many of the other 350 students pasted quarters onto "pepperoni" on cardboard "pizzas" which were made for the event. Each filled "pizza" meant a \$5 donation to TSF.

In all, the children raised \$1,950, which was carefully spent in Cambodia on 20 beds, 20 cotton mattresses, 13 wooden desks and 13 wood chairs, plus 12 "cubbies", colorful two-shelf storage cases for books and clothes. Our Roteang girls were thrilled when they occupied their new rooms with excited giggles and thanks.

Denise Gosch's daughter, Cambria, a current sixth grader at St. Paul and a former resident of the Roteang Orphanage, eagerly participates in the projects each year and loves giving back to a place that gave her such a great start in life.

In May 2013, Denise and Cambria will come up with Project #13 to raise money for their Cambodian friends. This time, Dan and Tina Johnson, Cambria's Godparents, will match the money raised by the children of St. Paul. TSF is looking forward to working with them to determine which project will have the greatest impact on the lives of those in Roteang Orphanage.



Each "pepperoni pizza" raised \$5.00 for TSF.

Generous employer and Cambodian workers join forces to support TSF



Thanks to New Age employees Nang Chhoeung, Thanh Ma, Sokea Vann, and CEO Ken Baker.

by Mary Hult

When four large donations arrived from new donors in Pennsylvania, The Sharing Foundation learned about a company with an interest in working for the greater good and some of their hard-working Cambodian employees who want to help the less fortunate in their homeland.

NewAge Industries, a plastic tubing manufacturer located in Southampton, Pennsylvania, recently gave its employees an opportunity unprecedented in the company's history. Each of the company's 100 employees was invited to select a charity to receive a \$500 donation, to be paid by the company.

According to a spokesman there, many of the employees are from Cambodia and, when given this opportunity, they did some online research. They found

the website for TSF and a group of them wanted to support its work in their native country. As a result, TSF was honored to receive the generous gifts of \$500 each from Nang Chhoeung, Sokea Vann, Thanh Ma and an anonymous donor.

"The donation program is just one of the ways that NewAge Industries helps our communities," according to a letter from Ken Baker, CEO. In addition to supporting local clothing and food drives, a Toys for Tots program, and semi-annual Red Cross Blood drives, they also help to support a rural school in Cambodia.

The Sharing Foundation is grateful for the spirit of giving at NewAge Industries which inspired the employees to select the kids in Cambodia as the recipient of their gifts.

Mary Hult is editor of The Sharing Foundation Newsletter.



3rd graders in Florida make "pepperoni pizzas" to raise money for Roteang Orphanage furniture.



Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children

The Sharing Foundation

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Our Mission

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, in consultation with Cambodian community leaders, programs to improve the health and welfare of these children and their families.

The Sharing Foundation

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

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New playgrounds from TSF supporters!

Thanks to the generosity of TSF supporters, the first playground ever brings joy to the children in Beng Krom, and children in Roteang can enjoy their playground again after some much needed repairs. See the story in this issue.