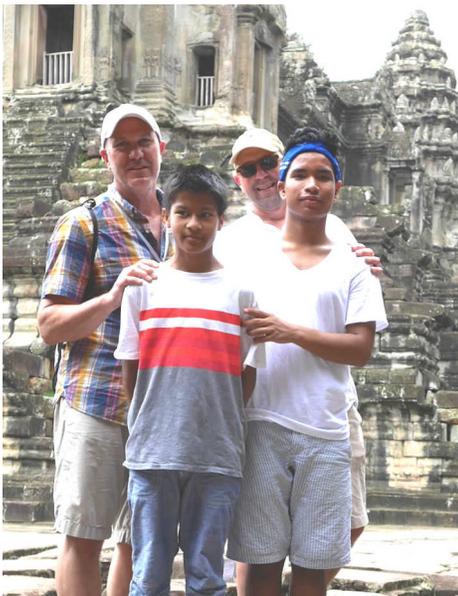


The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

Fall 2014 · Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children · www.sharingfoundation.org

Returning to Roteang: a voyage for three families, a dozen years after adopting

At the end of June, three adoptive families had the good fortune to travel to Phnom Penh and the surrounding area. The group included six adults, two of whom are TSF board members, and six children, ranging in age from 7 to 17, some of whom had been adopted from Roteang Orphanage.



Tim and Jonathan enjoy the sights at Angkor Wat with sons Ben and Jesse.

"We all looked forward to the opportunity to return to Cambodia, to do so with other adoptive families, to see the TSF programs in action, and to be accompanied by TSF's Founder, Dr. Nancy Hendrie" said parent Deb Nelson, TSF Vice President. "Dr. Hendrie was there on the porch of Roteang Orphanage when our baby was placed in our arms. Returning there was like coming full circle!"

What follows are some of the impressions from both adults and children who shared that memorable journey.

Did you do anything to prepare for the trip?

Jesse, age 15: My parents told me and my brother that it would be very different than the US, and they also told us that, because we are from Cambodia, people would try to talk to us in Khmer. We knew we would be going back to the orphanage

and that it would be very emotional, but my brother and I were very excited.

What factors influenced the timing of your return to Cambodia?

Jen: For me, it was the chance to bring both of my children to Cambodia before my son went off to college and to revisit the orphanage where I first met my beautiful daughter. When Claire came to us, it was December 2001 and Dr. Hendrie was preparing for the first anniversary of Roteang Orphanage.

Ingrid: We felt the children were at good ages, 7 and 12, when they would be able to take things in, and remember them later in their lives.



Deb and Ingrid revisit the orphanage with their daughters Linh and Vanny.

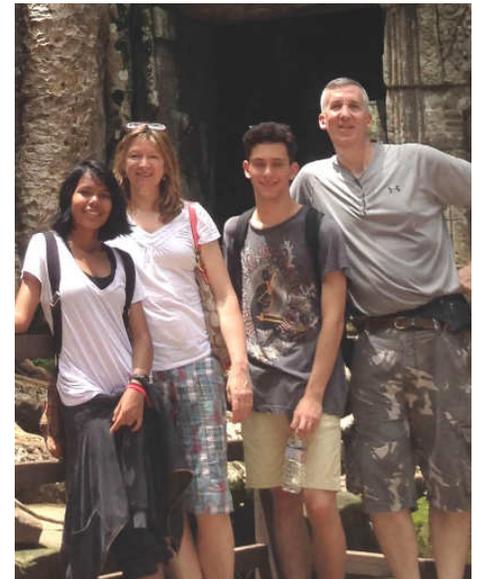
What was it like for you to be back in Cambodia?

Jen: When I first came back to the US with my daughter, I yearned to return to Cambodia. The country and all of the work of TSF had made such an impression on me. My participation on the Board for TSF was a connection to my daughter's birth country. To finally return 12 years later, with my children, was in a way surreal. Elephant was a driver and just starting to work for the Foundation in 2001. Now he is our capable in-country director. Phnom Penh has changed so much with the construction of new buildings, heavy traffic, motorized tuk-tuks,

more paved roads and traffic lights. Yet, much is still the same; there is still so much that is needed to improve the lives of most Cambodians. From the TSF staff to the everyday people, I fell in love all over again with the Cambodian people.

Jesse: I was adopted as a very young baby, seven months old I believe, so I had no memory of it whatsoever. But it was fascinating to hear my father tell me things he remembered and how things have changed. We also had many photos of his travels so it was cool to look at how 15 years could change so much in a country like Cambodia.

Ingrid: We saw a lot of development in July 2014 and less overt poverty. Nothing could compare with the thrill of when we adopted Vanny. However, the beauty and kindness of the Cambodian people was ever-present on both trips.



Jen visits Ta Prohm temple with her daughter Claire, son Kyle, and friend Blair.

What most impressed you about the TSF programs?

Deb: I loved seeing how well all the children were doing. Their smiles never seemed to leave their faces. We did face paint on the porch of the orphanage and the children crowded around with such joy. Also, when we visited with them at their dorms, the university students were so proud and so earnest about all

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Notes from the President

by Ann Trudeau



Incoming President Ann Trudeau with orphanage children.

I was introduced to The Sharing Foundation in 2005 when I met the founder, Dr. Nancy Hendrie, at the Rotary Club of Concord. Less than a year later, my family and I were in Cambodia, at the Roteang Orphanage building a playground. There we found the children were clean, well fed and most importantly, loved. I learned that the goal for the orphanage was to ensure that the children's needs were taken care of, and to help them become productive members of their community. Since that trip, I've been an ardent TSF supporter, and after four years on the board, it is my privilege to take the reins as President.

A recent New York Times article by Poypiti Amatatham and Thomas Fuller highlighted some orphanages in Cambodia where the owners were self-serving and the children often neglected. Although there are some profiteering orphanages, I assure you that the Roteang Orphanage and the children there are nothing like what Amatatham and Fuller describe. In addition, there are other orphanages run by responsible Cambodians and non-profits that are truly saving children's lives. The Sharing Foundation supports some of them by building facilities, keeping them in good repair, as well as providing uniforms, and other necessities.

Because of the continuing generosity of our donors, TSF can serve more than these Cambodian orphans. With the advice of local officials and our trusted Cambodian staff, we have developed a range of programs. We have 42 high school children being sponsored in their studies, 40 college students attending

university in Phnom Penh and living in our two dorms, and over 400 children attending our English language school. We have installed safe water tanks, immunized children in three villages, and through our sewing center, provided over 1,500 uniforms every year so children can attend school.

As a responsible board, we must continually assess these programs and reflect on whether we are succeeding in our mission. One of the most rewarding results has been to watch our college graduates, three of whom now work for us, and the many who have formed an alumni association to help our new college students negotiate their first year. This is long-term, lasting success.

The 72 children in our orphanage are getting older and we have fewer new babies. As they reach an age when most orphanages would discharge them without support, we are thinking about their futures. What about those for whom college is not a good fit? We have a new baby girl, Srey Leak, who is blind. How can we best assist her?

These challenges and those we face to maintain all of our programs are a real opportunity to make a difference. I look forward to embarking on this journey, working with you to continue the mission of The Sharing Foundation and, together, making a difference in the lives of Cambodia's children. □

Wanted: Sponsors for two resilient orphans

by Sally Stokes

Eight-year-old **Thorn Reaksmei** came to Roteang Orphanage at six months of age, suffering from malnutrition. His mother was extremely impoverished and his father left her when she was three months pregnant. Reaksmei's mother was unable to care for him and brought him to the orphanage, hoping for a better life for him.



Thorn Reaksmei, 8 years old.

Now Reaksmei has successfully completed second grade at the orphanage "at home" school and will be entering third grade at the Roteang village school. A well-mannered child, Reaksmei has many friends at the orphanage. While he enjoys puzzles, blocks and books during the after-school enrichment time, he's also happy hanging out at the orphanage playground and running into the orphanage soccer matches.

A new little boy, **Mun Mengheang**, born on May 12, has arrived at the orphanage. Mengheang suffers from a palate defect. While in Cambodia in June, Dr. Hendrie took Mengheang to see Dr. Mok Theavy at the Khmer-Russian Friendship Hospital. Dr. Mok's assessment is that Menheang's palate is not too severe, although he is also missing his uvula. Dr. Mok will begin surgery on him at about nine months of age. The biggest issue right now is severe malnutrition. The doctor provided Menheang's nanny with a squeeze-type



Mun Mengheang, 3 months old.

feeder so she can feed him every two hours during the day and every three hours at night to "beef" him up.

If you would like to sponsor one of these children, the cost is \$1,200 per year, which can be paid annually, semiannually, or quarterly. This covers the child's food, clothing, medical care, his nanny, schooling, and the ancillary people who keep Roteang orphanage in top condition. You will be rewarded with a quarterly update and photo and the assurance that you are helping create a brighter future for a wonderful child. Please email Sally Stokes at orphange@sharingfoundation.org. □

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of their achievements. We shared their joy and pride at building brighter futures for themselves.

Claire, age 14: I enjoyed the dance performances at the orphanage and have special memories of helping to put glitter tattoos on the kids at the party.

Kyle, age 17: I especially enjoyed going to the water park with the kids from Roteang Orphanage and will have good memories of the fun we had there together. I was very impressed that TSF was sending kids to University, giving them the opportunity to succeed and get a better job.

Blair: The traditional dancing was a highlight. I will always remember that

child who we sponsor, Sunthea. She was such a sunny child to be around. With great pride, she showed us her room at the orphanage and some of the neat drawings she'd done. When we went to the water park, many times Sunthea would go to the top of the slide, wave to us, and then slide down. It was such fun watching her!

Vanny, age 12: I really liked seeing all of the TSF projects. It was nice to see what a great impact they all were to the kids in the orphanage and in the village.

Ingrid: I remember the faces of the nannies which reflected kindness, motherly pride and protectiveness toward the children.

Did you do other things in Cambodia?

Jen: While in Phnom Penh, our family participated in a cooking class which included a trip to the market, cooking, and then eating traditional Cambodian dishes. At the market, we learned about local fruits, vegetables, spices and even sampled Durian fruit.

We also visited Siem Reap and explored the temples. The history and achievements of the Angkor empire are so amazing that we were in awe. I hope that my daughter came away with pride and appreciation for her culture and country.

Linh: I liked all of it. I liked going to Angkor Wat and I liked that we got to see Sunthea, who is a girl at the orphanage. She was very nice.

Kyle: I'll always remember visiting the temples of Angkor and seeing the amazing



Kyle shares a splash with the orphanage kids at the water park in Phnom Penh.



Sunthea is all smiles when receiving a hug from Vanny, her sponsoring family sister.

TSF has a multitude of ways of helping the Roteang community. I will also cherish the spirit and strength of the Cambodian people and appreciate this in light of their daily life circumstances and how difficult that can be.

Jesse: I thought that the schools were incredible. Education is a very valuable need in a child's life and it's sad that it isn't available everywhere around the world. I will never forget the time we took a ferry to Beng Krom and there were hundreds of kids lined up. TSF had given the school a playground that they were putting to good use. We then gave them school uniforms and the moment was amazing. I had never in my life realized how one thing can really change someone's life.

Linh, age 7: I enjoyed the orphanage and seeing the dancing.

Deb: It was a delight to meet the

scale and detailed craftsmanship that went into building religious structures over 1,000 years ago without modern day tools or technology.

Claire: I enjoyed the temples and shopping at the Russian Market. We also had fun in Siem Reap at the Phare circus and on Pub Street. I came home and am now attending circus camp for two weeks!

Deb: We went to the circus in Siem Reap where at-risk teens learn acrobatics.

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Deb and Linh make glitter tattoos with the orphanage kids.

Hard-working high school students + TSF program = opportunities for success

by Rick Recknagel

The Sharing Foundation would like to accept ten qualified ninth-graders into the high school program and we are looking for sponsors to support them in this endeavor. The program enables students to attend school, rather than work in the fields, and provides additional instruction to improve their chances for success.

The cost of the program is \$300 per year, which covers the student's small group classes, uniforms, transportation to and from school, and supplies. The sponsors and students are expected to correspond four times per year. This communication includes a letter, typically a page in length, and a couple of pictures, if the writers so desire. Representatives from TSF then hand-deliver the letters on their quarterly trips to Cambodia.

The high school sponsorship program currently has 42 students. We hope that 12 of them will pass the Cambodia national and the ACE English exams this summer, thereby qualifying for university sponsorship.

One senior wrote to his sponsor, "This year is very important for me. I hope I can pass the national exam suc-

cessfully because I want to continue my studying at the university. I want to get one job that I want to do. I want to get good salary from my job so support my family. And I am thankful for your supporting me to study until now. I think if you don't help me, I won't study until now. Thank you that you always help me and worry about me."

Most of the Sharing Foundation high school students live in the Thom Commune, Roteang Village, Kean Svey District or adjacent village of Doun Sor. To be eligible for sponsorship, they must have attended the TSF English program for at least two years and received a recommendation from both his or her teacher and the head of the program. In



Some of the 50-plus students in a typical Jayavarman VII High School classroom.

addition, all students are interviewed by a TSF board member. We are looking for consistently hard-working, though not necessarily top-achieving, youngsters who could not otherwise afford the opportunities that a sponsor brings.

If you think you might be interested in sponsoring a student, please contact Richard and Kathy Recknagel at highschool@sharingfoundation.org. □

Help us to make the wheels on the bus go 'round

by Nancy Hendrie

On June 26, we piled 21 of our older kids from Roteang Orphanage, two caretakers, and a driver into each of our two small vans and went to the water park. The kids had a terrific time and it was well worth going, but they were packed into the vans like sardines! Thanks to our ongoing support, the teens have grown up tall and healthy, and even our ten- and twelve-year-olds are big and take up a lot of space in the vehicles.



One of the old, small Roteang Orphanage vans.

We clearly need a vehicle larger than our two small vans. We must regularly take groups to the Canadian dental program, drive our HIV youngsters for their medical visits in the city, and we would like to take groups of our 72 orphanage residents, with some caretakers, on an occasional jaunt.

Our orphanage youngsters love a field trip as much as American kids do, but only rarely do they have the opportunity to travel outside our compound, located in the rural village of Roteang. As they get older, we think it is important to expose them to their country's important places, like the Royal Palace, the National Museum, and Living Arts Performances, all accessible in Phnom Penh, as well as maybe, just once, a trip to the beach.

We also use our vans every weekend to bring many



The type of larger bus that TSF hopes to purchase.

of our 40 university students, all young adults, back from the city to Roteang village to be with their families, and to inspire the younger students with what is possible in the greater world of Phnom Penh.

Our vans are over 20 years old and on borrowed time. We would dearly love to have a 24-seat bus that could easily transport 50 people at once, without unsafely jamming them in. A used bus, about ten years old, is available for \$22,000. We have the right driver, a good maintenance team, and a new Bus Fund with \$7,500 already collected or pledged. Would you, your church, or your school like to help? We want the wheels on the bus to go 'round and 'round for the kids from Roteang. □



Left: Denise Gosch, a third grade teacher from Lakeland, FL, led her 13th annual drive for TSF to raise the money for the new bathroom at the Roteang School. Denise promised every child at St. Paul Lutheran School that their names would appear on the new bathroom building if they worked to raise the funds needed. It was a bit daunting when she presented a list of 125 names! The assistant groundskeeper from the orphanage lettered it, and dutifully got all the names on. In the photo, Cambria and Tiah Gosch are peeking out from the new, completed bathroom!

Right: Greg and Muggsie Rocco traveled to Cambodia and Vietnam last January with the First Religious Society in Carlisle. Muggsie explains, "It was a wonderful trip. We were very impressed with The Sharing Foundation programs and loved seeing the kids and how they are thriving. Greg's 59th birthday occurred while we were there and I had not brought a gift. After seeing items that had been donated by FRS folks, I asked what was needed. Greg was very happy to receive the Greg Rocco Happy Room, the first bathroom available to everyone at the farm school."

Returning to Roteang

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It was a terrific program, filled with lots of aerial stunts. Also, at the National Museum, we went to a room with 1,000 Buddhas. I'd never seen anything like it and it so moved me.

Jesse: A moment that was quite emotional was when we went to the orphanage where my brother was adopted from and we happened to run into his nannies who remembered who he was after 13 years! At the orphanage, interacting with the kids and having them show us around their rooms was so fun. I have never seen so many smiling kids in my whole life. Even though many of them didn't speak English, that didn't stop us from having a good time together. It was sad to leave them, it really was.

Throughout the trip I had my camera and documented every moment with photos and video, planning to make a documentary about my experience. The project is currently in a huge stage of editing but when it is finished, I hope that I can get the film to the kids and the nannies at the orphanage because I

know how much fun the kids had laughing and smiling in front of the camera.

Did anything surprise you about your trip?

Kyle: Cambodian society is very traditional and women have fewer rights than in the US. It is still a very male dominated and patriarchal society.

Ingrid: There was a torrential down-pour that began when we were with the children at the water park. It didn't

stop and resulted in record flooding in the streets of Phnom Penh. Children were swimming and cavorting in the streets. When our tuk-tuk finally got to the restaurant, we had to wade through knee-deep water to get in.

Jesse: My parents had told me a lot about Cambodia, but my

dad also mentioned that you really don't know how it is until you get there. And he was right. Hearing about a place, compared to actually being in that place, is very different and it can sometimes be a huge shock. It was definitely a shock at some level, but I was ready and prepared for what we experienced in Cambodia. The feeling is very hard to explain; it's just something you need to put yourself in and experience yourself. □



Ben visits with two of his former nannies at Roteang Orphanage.



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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.



Do you love our crafts?

The Sharing Foundation is always looking for new venues to sell our crafts from the Sewing Program in Cambodia. If you have an event through your church or other organization where you would like to sell our crafts, we would love the opportunity. If the event is local to one of our board members, we can join forces. For more information, please email Korey Lee at crafts@sharingfoundation.org.

The Sharing Foundation

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