

The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

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TSF-sponsored university graduate Soun Sokret addresses high school students in the Roteang village school in his role as alumni volunteer.

TSF university alumni establish a group to give back and help guide young students

by Kong Maneth, 2010 graduate of the Institute for Foreign Language

In our last visit to Cambodia, my wife Lee and I got together for lunch with all of our university graduates. To our surprise and delight they have established a "TSF Alumni Group" with the core mission being to give back to The Sharing Foundation and the children we serve. The following report is by Kong Maneth, a graduate sponsored by TSF who now teaches in our English and computer programs. — Dan Shepard

The TSF Alumni Group was founded in November 2011 by a group of university graduates who had all been sponsored through high school and college by The Sharing Foundation.

The purpose of this Alumni Group is to share the knowledge, skills, innovative ideas, and experience that we have gained with young TSF students and other Cambodians. This Group has three main areas of focus: the English program, academic consulting, and sponsorships. The role of our Alumni English Program is to help improve the effectiveness of English language learning. This program focuses both on high school and university students whose English level is still very low. The role of the Academic Consulting Group is to help students with academic consultation. That is, we will

assist Cambodian students with a wide range of academic problems. The role of the last group, Sponsorships, is to ensure good communication and positive relationships between our TSF graduates and their sponsors so that both sides can continue to know how things are going and what is happening to them.

Our very first project was a workshop, held on March 11, on "How to choose an appropriate subject to study at university." This first project was a pleasant success because a lot of high school students in the English Program at Roteang High School were interested, and as a result, they happily signed up for the workshop. The objective was to broaden the high school students' ideas about how to pick the subject they really want to study. We included ideas and tips to consider before making up their minds.

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What was really interesting was that our university graduates and senior

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Nancy Hendrie honored by AMA Foundation

On February 13 in Washington, D.C., The Sharing Foundation's founder, Nancy W. Hendrie, MD, was presented with the Dr. Nathan Davis International Award in Medicine by the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation. According to AMA Foundation President Owen Garrick, the 2012 Excellence in Medicine awards "honor heroes of the medical profession who go above and beyond the basic requirements of our practice in service to others." Dr. Hendrie's award includes a contribution of \$2500 to TSF. The following is Dr. Hendrie's acceptance speech, delivered to an audience of approximately 500 attendees:

I am very honored to be in this company and to receive this award on behalf of The Sharing Foundation.

It really does not take much medical expertise to see babies who are dying from diarrhea due to lack of simple hygiene like clean water and hand washing and to do something about it. It takes no real medical skill to find a village where neonatal tetanus is a significant killer and fix the problem. It takes no great talent to reach out to HIV-infected kids, infected at birth through no fault of their own, and locate the antiretrovirals and lab follow ups that can give them nearly normal lives.

Education is really the crux of the matter, especially for girls in Cambodia

I loved practicing pediatrics in Massachusetts for 26 years, with parents and children who were bright and perceptive, but the second part of my life in the backwaters of Cambodia has been much more rewarding.

It turns out, of course, that education is really the crux of the matter, especially for girls in Cambodia. Going to school is a most dearly wished for privilege, which only about half of children experience, and even those who go drop out on the average after Grade 6. Their destiny is then to marry early, have babies early, work on the farm for a family income of 1-2 dollars a day, and repeat the cycle

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Notes from the President

by Sally Stokes

As of February 1st, we have completed one year of transition in leadership of The Sharing Foundation. The Board made a conscious decision a year ago not to begin any new Cambodian projects during this period, but to spend the first year concentrating on redistributing all the work that Dr. Hendrie has done in the past and building a governance structure to carry us into the future.

Using technology to improve our communications and accountability continues to be an important goal. During this year, we managed to migrate to a new, web-based database which is a powerful aid in maintaining records as our supporters have grown extensively and our Board members are spread over such a wide geographical area. Two of our volunteer board members are to be applauded for their tireless efforts to get this job done. In addition, another volunteer board member built an inventory system to track our craft items as they come and go.

Since we have not yet completed our work toward organizing for the future, we will continue this effort during the next year. I, personally, am proud of the fact that we have remained an all-volunteer organization during this transition period, and I would love to see us continue on as such in the future. However, I do recognize that many of our Board members work and are adoptive parents with busy lives, and many are also members of that so-called "sandwich" generation, which limits the time they are able to devote

to the Foundation. We are now working collaboratively to determine the best way to move forward while maintaining the spirit of the past.

As we gain confidence in the transition, I would like to see us take on a couple of new projects this year. Whenever I travel to Cambodia, I am struck by the new buildings, parks and upscale shops that have appeared in Phnom Penh since my previous trip. There are even some traffic lights and road dividers now to force traffic into only two directions on some of the streets! However, when you get out into the countryside, things remain the same year after year.

There are two initiatives that I think would make a significant difference. For a number of years, we have delivered school uniforms and supplies to the grade school in Beng Krom, a very poor village on the other side of the Mekong River from Roteang. The principal there has requested that we build them a playground similar to the one we built at the Roteang village school many years ago.

In January, we stopped to check out the Roteang playground for comparison before taking the ferry to Beng Krom. Although the playground looks great from a distance, we discovered as we got close up that it has rusted out in a number of spots to the point that it is now getting to be dangerous for the barefooted children climbing over it. So aside from building a new playground for Beng Krom, we will have to try to replace some of the equipment at Roteang.

In addition, later this year I would very much like to try to begin to immunize the children of Beng Krom against DPT and Hepatitis B as we have the children of Roteang village. These projects are new initiatives and we are hoping they might



At the Roteang village school, corrosion on the playground equipment, provided many years ago by The Sharing Foundation, makes it potentially unsafe for school children playing in bare feet.



A cement block at the base of an old slide makes for a hazardous ride.

appeal to individual donors.

We are so thankful to have had the generous support of all of you in the past, and we hope you will continue to help us improve the lives of children in one of the poorest countries on earth.

Hendrie honored

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with poverty, poor medical care, and often early disease and death. Education for both boys and girls results in later marriage, and later, and fewer babies, and a rise out of abject poverty with some knowledge of how to care for yourself and your family.

I adore our Cambodian kids — no Game Boys or Wiis, only a rare black-and-white TV run off a car battery — and how appreciative they are

I adore our Cambodian kids — no Game Boys or Wiis, only a rare black-and-white TV, run off a car battery — and how appreciative they are for medical care and improvement in nutrition, schooling and immunizations. It is I who have been blessed with a wonderful life, to have been able to be part of it, even for the few — about 1,500 kids a day — we care for. We have paid no American here or abroad, and the generous donation attached to this award will make a real difference directly for more children in Cambodia.

I thank you very, very much.

Kids delight in classes, trip, & party as Roteang Orphanage turns 12



Roteang Orphanage kids feed an elephant at Phnom Tamao wildlife refuge.

by Nancy W. Hendrie

Returning to Roteang in January this year was a wonderful, heartening experience. Of course the kids were taller, and even more verbal than when I left them a year ago, but their smiles, and handshakes (they like shaking the American way) and hugs were just as genuine.

The children in the dance classes, dressed in costumes just finished that day by the sewing school, had prepared a whole program for me and they expertly wove their way through the Blessing Dance, the monkey dance, and the farmer dance where Chan Piseth was the out-spoken moderator. My favorite dance has always been the pole dance, where two children hold the poles and clack them in and out, up and down, while others dance complicated steps in and out, risking their ankles, but with great finesse. Our children did this fluidly, and obviously with great fun. The fish dance performed by some of our girls, with large hand painted fish tails tied to their backs, finished the performance perfectly. The large classroom in Mary Jane's house was just the right venue.

We all then headed over to the verandah of the main building, where head nanny, Sina, and her crew had laid out the huge birthday cake Elephant and I had brought, along with cut up apples, oranges, and dragon fruit. Elephant-ear cookies and canned soda are an additional treat the children have come to count on for our annual birthday-for-all celebration. After a loud rendition of Happy

Birthday to Roteang (number 12, in fact) some older kids, chosen by Sina, got to blow out the candles and help serve. It was great, with more songs and general merriment.

A few days later, Elephant and I took 34 orphanage children on a skip-school day to the wildlife refuge at Phnom Tamao in a rented bus and our ancient orphanage van. The children had voted that this was their favorite place for field trip, and the nannies had decided every-



An orphanage girl proudly performs the fish dance.

one over 6 years could go. We spent the whole day tramping on the paths in the extensive park, and enjoying box lunches of pork, rice and pickles.

Unlike American wildlife centers, there is little separation of animals from visitors, and we had to remind the kids to keep their fingers and shirts from reach of the baboons and monkeys, and stay back from the sun bears. They marveled at the huge, slow python, admired the snow leopard, and lion, and ducked and ran from the ever-present deer and deer-like mammals looking for handouts. The grand finale of the day was seeing the giant elephants, and then having a special performance by an elephant who kicks soccer balls, dances, bows, and crunches sugar cane, which we bought in profusion so the kids could get up close to feed him.

I spent several other afternoons at the orphanage, now caring for 73 children. The new preschool teacher and her assistants were always as busy as the children there, with painting, puzzles, music, sewing, paper cutting and other projects. Our home school now has only 12 first graders, and 5 second graders, as the children move on to the public school (which we support heavily) when they reach 3rd grade.

The fish dance performed by some of our girls, with large hand painted fish tails tied to their backs, finished the performance perfectly

Kong Maneth, one of our top high school and university graduates, teaches English in our home school, as well as computer classes for the orphanage kids, and also for our village youth. We use the MIT beginner computers with the smaller children, and regular desk tops, bought in Cambodia, for the youth. Maneth also teaches now in our after-school high school English program, which serves over 400 village students daily. Peng Chanphearom, and Sin Vuthy, also highly skilled college graduates now, who got their start in TSF English school and computer school, also are now teachers in our TSF English school.

There is not space to detail all the things I saw on my trip, and how pleased I was about almost every detail —the quality of maintenance was very good at every project site, and morale seemed universally high. Mom Sineath, our really excellent farm project manager

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Doing their share...

The Sharing Foundation donors demonstrate both inspiration and originality in the ways that they show their support.



Julia Minsky-Kern, Lexington, MA

"For my Bat Mitzvah project, I chose to collect money for Cambodian children who don't have the privilege of going to school. In order to go to school there, a child needs a uniform, which costs money that many families cannot afford. Here in the U.S., we tend to take education for granted. In Cambodia, children in school are privileged. Imagine not being able to go to school because you couldn't afford a uniform. I decided I would do my best to try to raise as much as I could, and help children become educated in my home country.

"A mitzvah project is an action taken to help heal the world. I decided to do this project because I believed that it was the best way for me to help the world — to help the children in the country that I'm from. If I hadn't been adopted, I would have been uneducated as well.

"Each uniform costs \$6. For each \$6 I collected, a Cambodian child was given a chance to go to school. To raise the money, I drew note-cards. Many people bought the cards, while other very generous people just gave a donation. In the end, I raised just under \$1,600. I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to help out so many children, and to have had so many people willing to help me raise money for children in need of education."

David Geltman, Jamaica Plain, MA

"On a Saturday night in February, 2011, our house was filled with music and comedy as we hosted a talent show to raise funds for The Sharing Foundation. The idea came to us as we surveyed our friends and family and realized there were many who had talents, but who did not often have the chance to show them

off. In fact, it does not take a lot of talent to perform; it only takes fearlessness. Thus, one friend sang a favorite TV commercial jingle from his 1970s childhood. Other acts were more serious, like the mother-daughter trumpet and piano duo.

"One feature that makes the evening fun is that it is multigenerational. The kids start off the program with everything from magic to unaccompanied voice performance and end the first half with a teen rock band. After intermission, the adults take the spotlight with music, readings, and Monty Python skits. With plenty of food and drink to keep everyone fueled up, spirits are high and people are in a generous mood. It is a fun way to build community and raise money."

Molly Erya Jacobs, Altamont, NY

Our thanks go to Molly Erya Jacobs who donated \$70 dollars to TSF in honor of her 14th birthday. Molly writes: "As I get older, I'm realizing that receiving items for my birthday isn't that important to me anymore. This year I've decided that I want to make a difference in the world. The gift that I wanted this year was for my friends to make a donation to The Sharing Foundation. And it was the greatest gift to me because I'd know that someone in Cambodia is getting a chance to live the life that they deserve."

Wyoming Elementary School, Millburn, NJ

The Student Council of the Wyoming Elementary School in Millburn, New Jersey, sent us an enormous box of dental supplies with the following note: "For our organization's primary fundraisers this year, we ran bake sales, guessed the location of a logo and picture from The Sharing Foundation, and collected dental health items for the orphanage. We hope

this donation of \$350 and assorted supplies can help children in Cambodia."

Samantha Fox, Wellesley, MA

"As a senior at Wellesley High School last spring, I planned a senior project based on community service. Because my younger brother Geoffrey was adopted from The Sharing Foundation orphanage in Cambodia, the organization is incredibly important to my family and me.

"My friend Lizzy Welch and I used our senior project to plan a fun event while supporting TSF. We decided on an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast on May 7, 2011, at the Milestone restaurant in Wellesley, with proceeds going to TSF. We charged guests \$10 at the door, and the restaurant manager was kind enough to give us the space for the morning and provide us with unlimited fresh pancakes. The week of the breakfast, we posted flyers all over town with information about TSF and the Milestone event.

"That morning, we arrived early and decorated with balloons and streamers. I placed information pamphlets about TSF on every table, as well as pictures of my family and me during our trip to Cambodia three summers ago. Lizzy and I were nervous that after all of our hard work, not many people would come to the breakfast. However, we were pleasantly surprised. Almost all of our friends from school showed up, as well as friends from sports teams, our families, and many family friends. Also, the few people who couldn't make it to the breakfast still gave us donations for TSF.

"In the end, we raised \$500. It felt great to know that all of these people supported us and wanted to help, and we realized that working for a cause we truly believe in motivated us to make the breakfast a success."

Samantha, Lizzy, Geoffrey, with family and friends



Roteang Orphanage turns 12

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for 10 years now, has had to start this project over for the third time, as the farmland we were renting was sold. It is really too bad, as each time he and the farmers start with clay filled soil and work to develop it, and when it is really productive, the owners sell it out from under us. It means finding new land to rent, and starting over with first building a new school, not a small project in itself,



On a recent visit, Sally Stokes and Ellen Huber of Carlisle, MA brought jump ropes for the orphanage kids. Their new experience resulted in lots of energy, smiles, and laughter.

TSF alumni group

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students from different majors played a role as skillful presenters and talked about what they have studied at university in detail. It was crucial for students because they could learn ideas related to university majors that they had never known before. This knowledge can help them think carefully before they decide. (Look before they leap.) After the presentation, we interviewed a few students about what they had learned from our workshop. With smiling faces and without hesitation, they answered proudly that they had learned a lot, and it had really changed their thinking as well as widened their minds. They told us that the ideas from the workshop would guide them to the right destination.

Finally, we would like to pay our warm respects to TSF founder Nancy Hendrie, all board members, and donors who struggle to help Cambodian people. We do appreciate your devotion and willingness to change the world.

though the school is thatched or metal roofed and has only 2 rooms.

The school is actually the most important part of the project, as it has consistently, with the same two good teachers, educated almost 140 children daily for over 10 years. The children come from illiterate families where schooling before was unknown. Many of our "farm schooled" children now go on to the public school, several have made it to our high school English program, and two to our University sponsorships.

All talked about what they would be doing, or destined for, without their educations. They are all acutely aware that TSF has utterly changed their futures.

We need, at some point, to bite the bullet and buy land ourselves, so we can stop moving. The problem is that the cost might be \$75,000, or even more, for 10 acres!

The other outstanding event of my

reunion trip was a totally unexpected, incredible reception put on by TSF university students, past and present. I thought I was making my usual visit to one of our dorms, and there were all the young people, over 60 in total, when I got there! They were each wearing a "We love TSF" t-shirt with our logo, and they presented me with a video they had made, with each small group talking about what a TSF education, from high school through college meant to them. Many mentioned the letters and financial support from their sponsors throughout the whole process. But most significantly, all talked about what they would be doing, or destined for, without their educations — work in the fields, maybe the garment industry, maybe as moto bike repairers, or common laborers. They are all acutely aware that TSF has utterly changed their futures.

It was a fabulous trip back, even if not as an "official" Board representative. It made very clear that the work to develop all the programs, beginning in 1998, has been totally worth it.

Two high schools students need sponsors

We are looking for sponsors for two hard working young men — In Heng Ly, age 15, and Lum Vibol, age 16. Both are currently ninth-graders at the Roteang Middle School.

Sponsorship of a Sharing Foundation high-schooler covers textbooks, teacher fees, paper and writing tools, school uniforms, food at school, and transportation from and to Roteang village each day on the moto-trailer. The other important ingredient is that each child has a specific sponsor, to whom he or she writes four times a year. Sponsors in turn, write back to students with letters of encouragement and family news. The positive effect of the letter connection is inesti-

mable, as evidenced in the TSF alumni group article on page 1.

To have one's own foreign sponsor who believes in them is vital because all of their previous experience has led them to believe they might only become a subsistence farmer or fisherman. The students come to see "the letters from America" carried back and forth on the quarterly TSF oversight trips as their chief motivating reason to work hard, to make it through high school, and maybe even into a university in Phnom Penh.

The cost of sponsoring a student is \$300 per year. If you are interested and would like more information, send email to: highschool@sharingfoundation.org.



In Heng Ly



Lum Vibol



Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children

The Sharing Foundation

P. O. Box 600, Concord, MA 01742

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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 is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Mark Your Calendars!

TSF invites parents who have adopted a Cambodian child, and who have made or are contemplating a trip to Cambodia, for an evening of conversation and Cambodian food in Waltham, MA.

Monday, April 30, from 6 to 9 pm

Elephant Walk Restaurant
663 Main Street, Waltham, MA 02451

To sign up, and for more information, see:
www.elephantwalk.com/benefit/sharingfoundation.html

The Sharing Foundation

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