The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

Holidays 2012 · Helping to Care for Cambodia's Children · www.sharingfoundation.org

All Beng Krom kids receive immunizations, thanks to donors

Registered nurse Kathy Recknagel administers a shot in Beng Krom as Dr. Ney looks on.

by Kathy Recknagel and Sally Stokes

Earlier this year, we hoped to raise enough money to begin to immunize a portion of the children of Beng Krom Village against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and hepatitis B. We anticipated that this would be a multi-year project, that we would begin with the youngest children and then raise enough money each year to cover more of the older children. However, thanks to a very generous donation from Tom and Ann Bates of Atlanta, Georgia, we were able to immunize all Beng Krom children under the age of 18 this year.

Beng Krom is a very poor village across the Mekong River from Roteang Village. Over the past several years, TSF has helped the village with a variety of projects — donating school uniforms, adding water collection systems, and providing latrines for the school. Now the Foundation is helping to protect their children from four very serious diseases.

These immunizations are particularly important in Cambodia. Hepatitis B is endemic in Southeast Asia. Although it is transmitted in the same way that the AIDS virus is, the hepatitis B virus can live outside the body for at least a week. As a result, it can be transmitted from mother to child, or through close contact with family members or friends. Infection with the hepatitis B virus can cause chronic infection, which can lead to cirrhosis and liver cancer. These immunizations will prevent this suffering for the children of Beng Krom village.

In preparation, Dr. Ney, our Roteang Orphanage physician, along with a group of volunteer medical students, took the rickety ferry across the Mekong River several times to take blood samples from the Beng Krom children. They tested them for hepatitis B antibodies, and if positive we would not administer that immunization to them. Upon our arrival, we were pleased to learn that a lower percentage of children tested positive than we had encountered when doing immunizations in Roteang Village in the past.

We were ferried across the Mekong with Dr. Ney and the med students to administer the first round of the three-shot series. It was amazing to see the parents, mostly mothers, bring their children to be immunized. We are never sure what kind of response we will get when we begin to offer these immunizations, but we were very pleased this time around. Although many are illiterate, the parents really seemed to understand the importance of protecting their children from these diseases. In fact, Beng Krom apparently consists of an upper and a lower village, and we had to restrict the shots to only one of the villages because the response was so great.

We saw the Foundation's work come full circle once again.

Because of the large number of children, organization was key. We administered the immunizations at the Beng Krom primary school where a large information board listed each child's name and the station at which he or she needed to register. Upon registration, each child was given a slip of paper noting his name, age and which vaccines he was to receive. The paper was presented to Dr. Ney, who in turn asked the medical students to prepare the necessary vaccines. The shots were administered by Kathy, a registered nurse, and the medical students. Luckily,

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These volunteer medical students assisted in Beng Krom. Dr. Ney is second from left, and Tep Vuthea, who grew up at Roteang Orphanage, is third.

University graduates express thanks for their lives forever changed

2012 university graduates, from left: Cheng Ramo, Uch Sas, Sreng Pheakdey, Elephant, Kathy Recknagel, Mam Sary, Khet Chantola, Sally Stokes, Pov Sokry, Ban Kosal, Chheng Sopheap (not pictured)

by Kathy Recknagel, TSF Board Member

In October, TSF held a ceremony at the One World School in Roteang Village to celebrate the graduation of the fourth group of TSF-sponsored university students. In spite of the fact that King Norodom of Cambodia had recently died and celebrations were to be kept very low key, we still managed to honor the accomplishments of the graduates in style.

"Now I can earn money to help my mother and brothers. It's a lucky time for me."

The orphanage dancers performed a variety of their traditional dances. The graduates' families, villagers, high school students, and former university graduates were in attendance to show their support.

Two of the university graduates, Ban Kosal and Sreng Pheakdey, addressed the crowd, saying how truly grateful they were for having all of their basic needs met so they could study hard and accomplish their goals for a good education. They described the university as "a nurturing environment" where they learned to "live together, become friends, and mobilize each other to do well."

Both students talked about how their lives and the lives of their families were forever changed. Sreng Pheakdey proudly stated, "Now I can earn money to help my mother and brothers. It's a lucky time for me."

TSF President Sally Stokes told the graduates that they truly do have two families — one biological family in Cambodia and one sponsoring family in the U.S. "Both families have worried some, and watched with pride as you have grown and learned." Sally explained the only thing TSF asks is that, when they have succeeded, they give a little back to those who are less fortunate.

Some of them are already thinking about that. Both speakers mentioned their desire to teach at TSF and to contribute to its library. It's a lucky time for the Foundation.

The following sponsors supported these graduates throughout their college careers and through high school as well. We sincerely thank them for their boundless generosity.

Sreng Pheakdey:	The Stebbins-Blumenthal Family of Lexington, MA
Ban Kosal:	Santha Parke and Brooke Schnabel of Williamsburg, MA
Uch Sas:	Harvey and Julie Silberstein of Northampton, MA
Pov Sokry:	Jim and Susan Carson of Albuquerque, NM
Khet Chantola:	Patricia Sara Reinstein of Lexington, MA
Chheng Sopheap:	Bernie and Hannah Alicandro of Princeton, MA
Cheng Ramo:	Ruth Leuenberger and Deb Etlinger of Northampton, MA

Bright college student needs a sponsor

A dedicated freshman college student from Kampong Speu Orphanage needs a sponsor. Sum Sophara, 18, is currently attending Norton University in Phnom Penh and living in the TSF dormitory. However, Sophara has no means of his own, and needs a sponsor to be assured of continuing his education. He is studying Information Technology, has a good command of English, and plans to become a Web developer.

Sponsorship of a college student partially covers the cost of tuition, textbooks, school supplies, food, and rent for living in a dormitory provided by TSF. The remaining cost per student is funded by TSF.

A very important program benefit is that the student has a specific sponsor, to whom he writes four times a year. Sponsors, in turn, are expected to write back to their students with letters of encouragement and family news.

The positive effect of the letter connection is priceless, as affirmed by all students who have been through the college sponsorship program. The students see these "letters from America," delivered on the quarterly TSF oversight trips, as an important motivation to study hard, complete a university program, and graduate with pride.

To have one's own foreign sponsor who supports them is vital because their previous life experiences have led them to believe their only realistic prospect is to become a subsistence farmer, laborer, or peddlar.

The cost of sponsoring a college student is $1000 per year. If you are interested and would like more information, send email to:

college@sharingfoundation.org

Sum Sophara, 18, would like a TSF sponsor.

Remembering Mary Jane Gearns — a very special friend of TSF

by Nancy W. Hendrie

On August 31, The Sharing Foundation lost one of its most steadfast friends. Mary Jane Wahl Gearns, 81, succumbed to cancer at her home in Garden City, Long Island, New York. She had become knowledgeable about TSF when I met her in Africa while we were each traveling with a grandchild. We made several more adventurous trips together with various grandchildren in the following years.

Mary Jane, an intrepid explorer, was intrigued by TSF and wanted to come to Cambodia to see everything for herself. In 2008 she made her first trip, bringing her daughter Mary Gail Gearns, son-in-law David Russo, granddaughters Sarah Russo and Colleen Gearns, grandson Mathew Gearns, and daughter-in-law Carolyn Gearns. The family saw all the projects, and the granddaughters became very interested in helping at the preschool. The following summer, Sarah and Colleen came back and stayed for an extended time to work at Roteang Orphanage.

She was truly a pioneer, and loved pioneering projects, especially helping less advantaged people.

Meanwhile, Mary Jane Gearns, back in Manhattan and Long Island, came up with multiple ideas for fundraising and made them happen, including speaking opportunities for me at The Metropolitan Museum, at Hofstra College, and at the Garden City Hotel. For several years she sponsored an extravagant shopping adventure at the Americana Manhassett Mall and invited all of her many friends to come and buy, with a percentage of each purchase going to TSF. She involved friends and relatives in her enthusiasm for supporting the Foundation.

In 2009, Mary Jane enabled TSF to build the girls' dorm at Roteang Orphanage, christened "Mary Jane's House" in her honor. We were thrilled when she returned for its opening, and she was happy too when the children of the orphanage presented her with flowers, sang "Mary Jane, Mary Jane, we love you" and led her by her hand into the new building for an inauguration featuring a Cambodia dance performance by our own orphanage children, costumed by our TSF sewing school.

Mary Jane was a wonderful friend of mine, and of TSF. As an experienced businesswoman — she remained on the Board of Wahl Clippers, her family's company, to the end — her experience and advice were very helpful to us too. Mary Jane Gearns earned a Master's Degree from the University of Notre Dame, becoming the first female layperson to receive a Notre Dame degree. She was a true pioneer, and loved pioneering projects, especially helping less advantaged people.

Mary Jane Gearns in Cambodia in August, 2009, at the grand opening of Mary Jane's House.

At her funeral in New York, Mary Jane was remembered for her intelligence and for her many kindnesses, not the least of which was designating memorial gifts to The Sharing Foundation. We will miss her very much, but smile each time we see happy, well cared for children burst from Mary Jane's House at Roteang Orphanage. The possibilities for their own ground-breaking education and adventures are fitting tributes to our very special friend.

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

Orphan Ken Samay needs a sponsor

Until adolescent Ken Samay came to live at Roteang Orphanage, she lived a very hard life. You may have read about her family in a prior newsletter. Samay's father died about 5 years ago of genital cancer, and her mother died soon after from a seizure disorder, probably worsened by alcohol. We tried to support the three younger children with food assistance, school supplies and uniforms. Mom Sineath, head of our farm project, has been trying to make sure the kids go to school, but there has been a lack of interest.

Of the Ken children, Samay is interested in school and has made friends with the older girls at the orphanage. She has now moved into the orphanage, attends school, and participates in our traditional Khmer dance lessons. We are hoping that the structure of the orphanage will set her on the right path and give her a brighter future than she was headed toward before.

If you would like to sponsor Samay, the cost is $1,200 per year, which can be paid quarterly. This covers her food, clothing, medical care, her nanny, and school costs. You will be rewarded with a quarterly update and picture. For information, email:

orphanage@sharingfoundation.org

Orphanage provides structure for Ken Samay.

~ Volunteers share their time and talents ~

For movie time during their recent visit, Sally Stokes and Kathy Recknagel (left) brought popcorn as a new treat for the kids. It's a toss-up which they liked more—the movie or the popcorn.

David and Lisa Ryan and family of Janesville, WI, brought a colorful parachute to Roteang Orphanage, a delightful novelty which the children enjoyed (above).

Barbara Howland and her daughter Laura (above) of Carlisle, MA, taught the orphanage kids how to make bracelets. They expected the bracelet craft would be for the girls and had planned another activity for the boys, but the boys would have none of it. They wanted to make bracelets too, and came up with creative ways to anchor the bracelets as they worked (below).

Laura Watson with head nanny Sina, Elephant, and orphanage kids (above).

A taste of Singapore and architecture for one lucky student

by Sam Putchai, Norton University student

Interning in Singapore was a great opportunity that Dr. Nancy Hendrie, TSF and my sponsor Dr. Virginia Latham gave to me. My first impression is the beauty of Singapore where the environment is green and very clean, there is no traffic congestion, people walk safely on their way, buildings are well organized and attractive, and people are speaking different languages yet they can get along well.

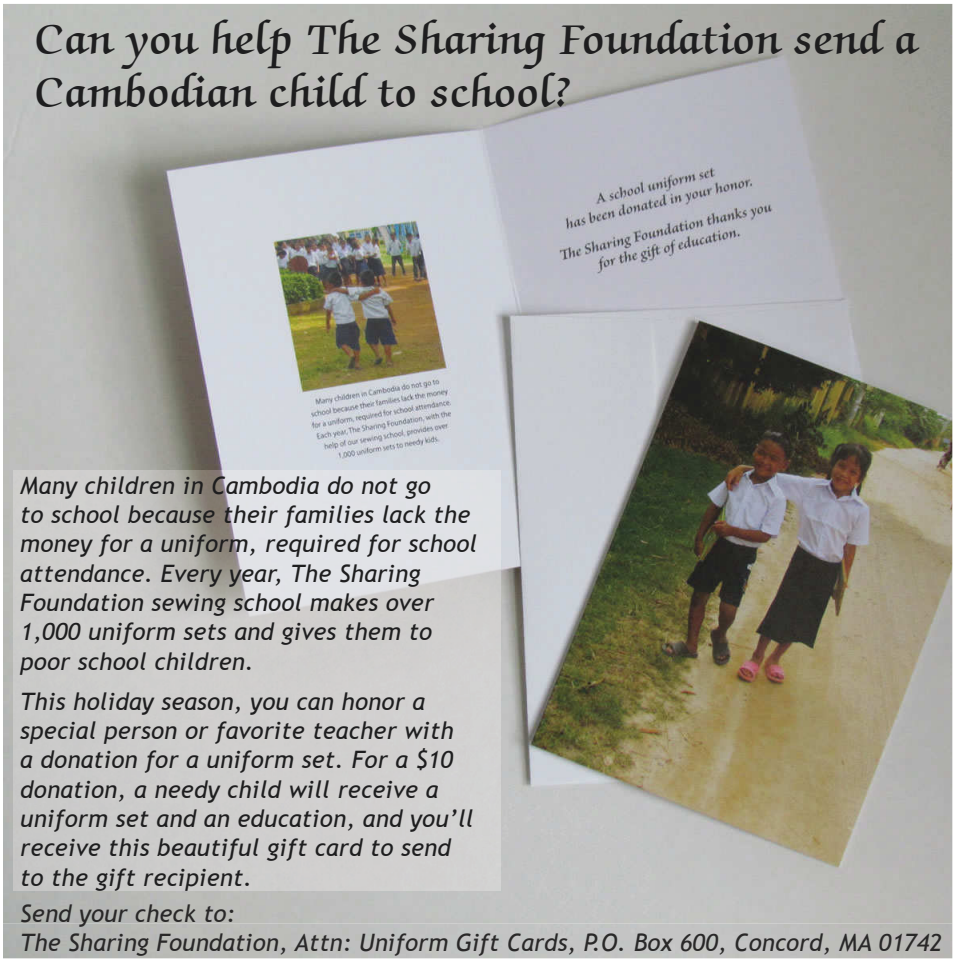
I spent most of my time, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., in the Andy Fisher Workshop, an international architectural firm. I love to work in that good work environment because people are friendly and helpful, and the projects are very interesting. My English is quite good in Cambodia, but it was not very good as native speakers who can speak naturally in discussion. However, Andy always made me feel that I am a part of the project and always urged me to speak up. Gradually, I started to speak more and more with my team. Then I started to work and present my idea.

I could see the way professional architectural workers work individually or in group. Even though I was working on only one project with four colleagues, I could learn about other projects. The first thing that impressed my ability to them was my sketches. But I couldn't work well with some software, such as Photoshop and Sketchup, which Norton University will never provide in their courses. Now I plan to study part-time classes of that software.

I always spent my two-day weekends to see around the country. I visited most of the free admission tourist attractions. I could see how the high buildings stand in the crowded spaces with the open space of big tree gardens, which is very different from my hot, small plant garden in Phnom Penh. There is no trash on the road, and the sewers are even clear. The resident buildings are simple, the public buildings are very attractive and there are many public gardens.

Internship in another country is very important. In my view, Cambodian students are also good at study. It is just because there is a lack of chance to make them see how to perform well. It must be the great chance for them to open their idea to the world.

Sam Putchai, sponsored by TSF, is an architecture student at Norton University.



Immunizations at Beng Krom

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the parents were very good about holding their young children still. Before they departed, Dr. Ney informed each child and parent when the child would be due for the second round of shots and emphasized the importance of completing the series.

It was inspiring to watch all the activity, but one of the most heartwarming aspects was to watch Tep Vuthea, the orphaned son of our former head nanny at Roteang Orphanage, now a medical school student in Phnom Penh, administer shots to the Beng Krom children. We saw the Foundation's work come full circle once again.

The immunization project will have a long-term impact on Beng Krom Village and the health of its children. We wish to express heartfelt thanks to the Bates family for making it all possible, and to Elephant, our In-Country Director, the volunteer medical students, and Dr. Ney, who carried out our mission with dedication and compassion.

Round two of the immunizations will take place in January when Nancy Hendrie, who oversaw the first immunizations in Roteang Village, will be in Cambodia to lend an experienced hand.

Kathy Recknagel is a registerd nurse and a TSF board member. Sally Stokes is TSF President.

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

Dance videos are online!

The children from Roteang Orphanage performed a number of traditional Khmer dances during the TSF board member visit to Cambodia in October, 2012. You can see video recordings of the Bamboo Stick Dance and Coconut Shell Dance on the TSF website videos page:

sharingfoundation.org/videos

The Sharing Foundation

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