The Sharing Foundation Newsletter
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CARING FOR CAMBODIA'S CHILDREN
HOLIDAYS 2017

TSF's first US intern reflects on life and learning here

Over a year ago, The Sharing Foundation began the involved process of arranging, for the first time ever, an internship in the United States for a Cambodian young adult. San Soroth, a Cambodian principal, shares below his observations of life in America and his work at the Galloway School in Atlanta after his first two months.

By San Soroth

American life: taking risks, having fun, learning the basics

First time leaving my foot out of the plane on the US territory, I felt something special about where I would live. I was wondering about myself of how I can well adjust to live in such a complete different world full of challenges, a wide range of cultures, weather, food, national characteristics, language, dressing, and quality of life. My back started to get itchy by the overwhelming ideas and concerns I think of. However, the best part for life is who you are, and you are the only person to figure out all the things. Nothing will figure out itself. Therefore, find your foot and have a firm stand in order to handle all the things coming.

> "I would like to have some space to highlight about my life with my host family...I respect them and love them like parents.

See page 4 for article from his host family

Taking risk is something fun and common in US. In regards, I have experienced doing scary things I have never done before. I have talked and lived with people I have never known before. I have got to know strangers at work and expressed my opinions in the meeting. I have travelled to different places such as Blue Ridge Parkway for my three-in-a-roll trip (route trip, camping, and hiking), Six Flags, where I rode on a very big roller-coaster which thrilled but scared me to death, and then the excitement of watching soccer and baseball game at the stadiums.

By the time I am writing this piece of documentation, I have already been living in the US for roughly two months. I have got some ideas of how to take MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority) train system by myself, pay for things at the store, do the laundry and cook my own food, while I didn't even know how to make a sandwich before. The life of spending for stuff by cash has changed to a credit or debit card since it is a lot easier and common in America. I still have some issues in communication. Most of the time, when people talk about jokes, everyone keeps laughing while I don't since I can't figure out the joke. It is hilarious, right?

I find American people are respectful and disciplined. You will be able to see some examples when going to a very busy coffee shop. People always line up and no one can just pop up and cut other people. Driving on the highway is another interesting example. For the most part, people obey the traffic law, lights and signs and drive in an expected speed, which I don't see much of this case in Cambodia.

I would like to have some space to highlight about my life with my host family. They are just so good and nice to me. I respect them and love them like parents. They treat me kindly, empathetically and make me feel like home. They give me food, bring me fun, share me about life, and drive me to school. All they have done is like parents. To simply say, they are really extraordinary hosts.

To squeeze everything up, my life has changed and shaped from day to day by the society in America.

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It's a proud moment! Principal San Soroth is flanked by two deserving students in Cambodia.

Notes from the President

by Ann Trudeau

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, The Sharing Foundation board continues to manage a healthy budget. Our funded programs are continuously monitored and evaluated and when these programs are fully funded and performing well, we discuss how to put any extra money to use. Guided by our mission statement, The Sharing Foundation has always supported projects in Cambodia that provide increased opportunities for young, disadvantaged people. We are fortunate that with our financial resources steady, and an active, hard-working board, we have some ability to grow. There is so much we could be doing and so many villages that need our help, it is often difficult to decide on what to do next. We typically plan our growth and evaluate new projects based on the following criteria:

1) Will the project be in line with our mission and goals?

2) Does the project provide long-lasting and meaningful assistance in the context of the Cambodian culture and government?

3) Does the Foundation have the financial and human resources to manage the project well for the foreseeable future?

The Sharing Foundation's top priority has always been our orphanage children and their well-being will always come first. Some new programs for these kids include private school for all those that gained admittance, vocational school for a few of the boys, mental health professional training and support, and an emphasis on helping our handicapped children thrive.

Since our founding 20 years ago, we have supported the local school where the orphanage is located and where many of our children attend classes. This led to programs which improve the lives of all village children, such as clean water initiatives, immunizations, the farm program, and then English and computer classes. We saw that motivated high school students wanted extra help and had dreams of university and so we began our high school scholarship program. When those children did well and wanted to continue their education, we began our university sponsorship program.

Over the years, we have broadened our reach and provided some of our initial programs to a number of other remote and underserved communities, particularly the immunizations and local village school support. We recently started an English Program across the Mekong where about 500 kids go every night to learn English. And last year, we also initiated library programs in a handful of schools in that remote area.

This year, we are excited to share two new programs which are highlighted in this newsletter and focus on the continuing success of our university graduates as they become capable, productive and responsible citizens of Cambodia. One of these initiatives, for the first time ever, brought an enthusiastic Cambodian post-graduate to the United States for an internship opportunity. The other new program led to the establishment of the Zand Graduation Fund, which will support recent graduates as they begin their professional lives.

TSF is extraordinarily fortunate to have donors who continue to support the programs that are the bedrock of our mission but also allow us to extend our roots to help many more youth in this country where 32% of the population is under 14 years old. TSF

If you are interested in sponsoring a high school or university student, please contact Laurie Simons or myself at info@sharingfoundation.org. See our website, www.sharingfoundation.org for details.

Zand Fund will provide a boost for university graduates

by Ann Trudeau

The Sharing Foundation's university students have done very well. There is a 100% graduation rate and all are gainfully employed. Perhaps equally important, the sponsorship program means that each of those graduates has a sponsor, mentor, friend in their lives, somewhere in the United States or Australia.

One of those friends is sponsor Barbara Zand who, even after her student graduated, wanted to keep helping. The Sharing Foundation policy states that no gifts may be given to sponsored students, even upon graduation. This is not always a popular policy, but one that the board feels strongly about to preserve our students' hard-working drive to independence, maintain equity among our students and, most importantly, remain faithful to our mission.

Barbara Zand understood our reasoning but asked TSF board member and Chair of University Programs Lee Steppacher to persist. Conversations with the board, and In-Country Director led to the establishment of the Zand Graduation Fund in January 2017. It was established to provide small gifts upon graduation and allow recent graduates to apply for grants which would support them in their

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Sreyrath is ecstatic to receive the first grant for an advanced English course which will further her career.

TSF's first US intern reflects on life and learning here

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Learning educational practices that might, or might not, work in Cambodia

The main goal of my internship program is to be able to run a school in an appropriate way by the time I fly back to Cambodia. The first page of my objective: I am curious to know about the management team. I find the principals of all programs are independent and flexible at my host organization, the Galloway School in Atlanta. They have skills in accessing and supporting their teachers in a proper way. They plan ahead and handle their tasks in the organized way. They always install supportive and friendly environment when giving the commendations, as well as recommendations. As I have noticed, they usually smile and openly talk, share, discuss and pass information in the proper, respectful and fun manner, which tremendously improves the environment. With the mindfulness of positive attitudes, I will take back these working attitudes to Cambodia and install this medication among my staffs.

The school philosophy is the utmost mentor that guides and shapes the behavior in working, teaching and learning environment in the school. The Galloway School has its philosophy which is to promote individuality, "figure out who you are and become that person", "learn how to learn", and "help kids become successful and enlightened individuals". These quotes mean so much to me as a school leader. With passion and commitment, I would like to foster these impactful concepts in my school. That is a big quest and will be answered only when I try to implement them.

One thing that I really find fascinating is that teachers at Galloway set up their own curriculum. They can decide what to teach as the content as long as to improve kids' education. At the beginning of school year, all teachers at certain grade do an overview about the curriculum to the parents. Teachers are well-trained about 4D classroom, which is deliberate, daring, dynamic and discovery method. Prior to my training, I would think of 3D or 4D movie. Only when I have been trained, I realize that it is a new methodology of teaching and learning in a very effective way.

There were tears, hugs and then smiles all around when San Soroth (center) finally got to meet his US sponsors, Judith Healy and her son Jay. "You changed my life," he said.

I tell myself that I am on the right journey of discovering what I really need to improve education quality in my country. For sure, I have to bring back these critical concepts for educators in Cambodia. Some other areas about Galloway School that I have to bring back to Cambodia are the role of librarian who is not only the person to look after the small tiny space, but be a teacher that helps to guide the curiosity and love in reading to kids. There are advisory groups in which there are some advisees and one advisor whose basic role is to motivate and monitor students' learning. The idea of supporting teachers is also noted and essential.

Further, parent education, book club, and forth, are other necessary factors. Nevertheless, I don't think it will work in Cambodia. Most of parents are busy and uneducated. To some extent in the future, the society might change to be good enough to implement this concept. Technology also intensively influences interacting with students' parents and in teaching and learning areas. Periodically, the on-going progress of kids is updated to parents for them to keep track on their kids' education. Without advanced technology, I bet a school can't process well and fast at all. All the above I have outlined are extremely fundamental for school to maintain quality education and keep close interaction between parents and school.

The Galloway School is not only a school but also a family for a bunch of families and a community of many people who feel a sense of love, respect, care and progress for life. I think I will gradually put some good ideas into use in my school in Cambodia, at some points, when I feel it is a right time to do. To sum up, I have learnt so many things about my host organization. Meantime, I have to give myself a chance to process all of the information and use in the real world in order to tailor my professional skills, as well as experiences, to enhance education quality in my home country.

I want to thank The Sharing Foundation, my host family, the Galloway School and CIEE (the cultural exchange program) for this experience which will change my life and education in Cambodia.

American family embraces Soroth

by Ann Bates

We are the Bates family in Atlanta, Georgia and we are hosting San Soroth while he interns at The Galloway School. Prior to his July 14th arrival, I emailed Soroth. I could tell he was excited for the opportunity but also a little worried. I tried to reassure him that we were an easy family to get along with and that we would treat him like our own children, Kyle, age 20, and Kiry, age 18, both of whom are from Cambodia.

I must admit that I too was a little nervous. I worried that he wouldn't like us, that he would be shy and hard to talk with, that he would be homesick, etc. When we picked him up at the airport, it was easy to spot Soroth, not only because I had seen a photo of him, but because he had a huge smile on his face. It was immediately evident that there was no need for me to be nervous. Soroth quickly demonstrated that he is outgoing, easy to talk to, and always ready to try something new. He has become close to our family—especially my children.

Kyle and Kiry have put a lot of thought into things we should do as a family while Soroth is with us. My son asked a jet-lagged Soroth if he wanted to go for a drive in downtown Atlanta the first day he arrived—and Soroth was totally up for it! I've seen them show Soroth things they did when they were young to introduce him to American culture. They have played board and video games, watched movies, gone out for ice cream late at night, tossed a football around, etc. In some ways, having Soroth here has encouraged our family to spend more time together.

> "In just a short time, Soroth has become a member of our family. He has adjusted so well to his new life, we joke that he is turning into an American.

Life in the US is very different for Soroth and he has quickly adjusted to the conveniences we enjoy. He told me that laundry day back home would encompass two hours of hand washing his clothes and then hanging them to dry over the next two days. He now does his own laundry in our washing machine and dryer and loves the time savings! He also enjoys cooking on a gas cooktop and selecting food from a refrigerator, appliances that were not available to him in Cambodia.

While Soroth has been a part of our family, he has eagerly participated in outings that he never would have had the opportunity to do in Cambodia. He has made lots of friends in Atlanta and is often invited to outings over the weekend.

In just a short time, Soroth has become a member of our family. He has adjusted so well to his new life, we joke that he is turning into an American. TSF

Roteang Orphanage kids hang together, heading to school wearing their smiles and school uniforms made at the TSF sewing center.

Zand Fund will provide a boost for university graduates

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professional careers. Seven months later, Roth Sreyrath was the recipient of the first grant which she will use for tuition in an advanced English class. From Kampong Speu Orphanage, Sreyrath had majored in accounting and is now working at Cambodia Public Bank where all business is conducted in English. This class will improve her skills so she can advance in her job and help her to achieve her goal of a master's degree, possibly in the US.

At this time of year, we are particularly grateful to our many donors who, like Barbara and her husband Mark Zand, inspire us, help us to sustain our current programs, and also push us to extend our reach to the many Cambodian children, who like Roth Sreyrath, continue to strive for a better life in an underserved community. TSF

For more details on the Zand Fund, contact Lee Steppacher at college@sharingfoundation.org

Pool Splash

It might be sweltering hot, but our youngest children are having a blast splashing about on the porch of Roteang Orphanage.

Farm School

All eyes are on the teacher during a math class at the two-room thatched Farm School. Over 125 children attend the school in Roteang in three shifts every day.

Sreyleak and Dalika

At Roteang Orphanage, Dalika is happy to cart around her dear friend and "little sister" Sreyleak, who is vision-impaired.

Roteang Party February 2017

Guided by In Country Director Elephant, the Roteang Orphanage kids are intrigued by a new challenge at this year's birthday party, an annual event to celebrate the nearly 70 birthdays.

Life Skills

This time it is the Roteang Orphanage nannies and staff lining up for class! All of the personnel received two Life Skills trainings, provided by Caritas, so they will have the tools they need to effectively guide our teen-agers as they grow and mature.

Making Music

At Roteang Orphanage, Piseth patiently guides the youngest member of the orphanage family, Paul, in playing one of the traditional Cambodian percussion instruments. Almost all of the orphanage kids participate in traditional dance or instrumental music classes.

Prek Char Immunization

A volunteer medical student, working with Dr. Ney, administers a hepatitis B immunization to a stoic youth in the remote village of Prek Char. TSF has provided thousands of Cambodian children with immunizations against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus, as well as hepatitis B, which is so prevalent in Southeast Asia.

Panha at Work

Horn Panha is focused and poised to answer the teacher's question utilizing his tablet. Born with cerebral palsy, Roteang Orphanage has always been his home. A special tilt wheelchair enhances his mobility and the "Happy Kids" organization supports his physical and intellectual development in a number of ways. In Cambodia, the prevailing thought has been that disabled children can't learn, but Panha has certainly dispelled that myth!

Kids at the Beach

Smiling, swimming and soccer dominated this summer's field trip to Kep, a Cambodian beach town. The trip, a special event for the older Roteang Orphanage youth, is a memorable vacation for them.

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If you would like to contribute in this way, contact **info@sharingfoundation.org**

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The Sharing Foundation

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