The Sharing Foundation Newsletter

www.sharingfoundation.org

CARING FOR CAMBODIA'S CHILDREN

SUMMER 2025

Sunshine in a Box

Sarah Broderick

This month, our Board President, Ann Trudeau visited our Cambodia programs! During her visit, Ann spent meaningful time with the children and staff, observing daily activities, facilitating trainings, and most importantly, celebrating the incredible people who make our work possible.

Crafting gift boxes!

One of the most touching moments of the trip was a staff appreciation activity that brought together joy, creativity, and heartfelt gratitude. Each child was given a small white gift box to decorate, choosing a staff member they wished to recognize and honor. The kids were so excited to pick their person, decorate their box with care, and present it to them. It was so heartwarming to see how much the children cared and just as moving to witness the staff members' reactions as they received their gifts.

The results were beautiful and emotional. From colorful artwork to hand-picked messages, each box became a unique token of appreciation, each created with love.

The smiles, laughter, and shared stories captured in the photos from that day are a powerful reminder of the bonds that unite us across continents. Whether through leadership, care, or a simple decorated gift box, every person involved plays a vital role in building a stronger, more compassionate future. TSF

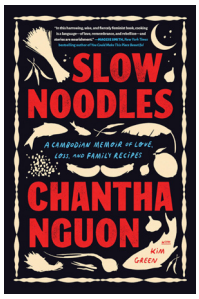
Heng Sokchea gives our newest staff member, Channy, her box

Nanny Chou Sokhoeun proudly displays her gift box

Cambodian Summer Reads

Lee Steppacher & Deborah Nelson

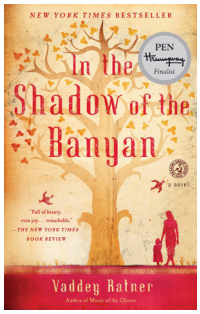
We thought it might be fun to share with you some of the books & movies that we have read or watched about Cambodia and/or by Cambodian authors. Each of these helps us to understand Khmer history and culture, and to understand the people we interact with and care for at TSF. This is not an exhaustive list by any means, and we would be happy to hear your suggestions too!



Slow Noodles: A Cambodian Memoir of Love, Loss & Family Recipes

by Chanta Nguon

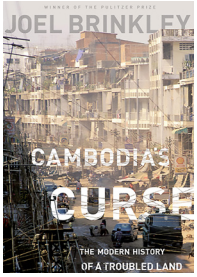
This is a heartbreaking yet beautiful memoir from a Cambodian refugee who lost her country and her family during Pol Pot's genocide in the 1970s but who finds hope by reclaiming the recipes she tasted in her mother's kitchen. Her memories are evocative as is the food she remembers. The book includes many authentic recipes.



In the Shadow of the Banyan

by Vaddey Ratner

While there are many memoirs about escaping the horrors of the Khmer Rouge, this book is somewhat unique in that it fictionalizes both the hardships and triumphs of escape. The author relies on her own experiences to create this compelling story of going from royalty and privilege to enduring the chaos and depravity of the killing fields. It is a beautifully written book.



Cambodia's Curse: The Modern History of a Troubled Land

by Joel Brinkley

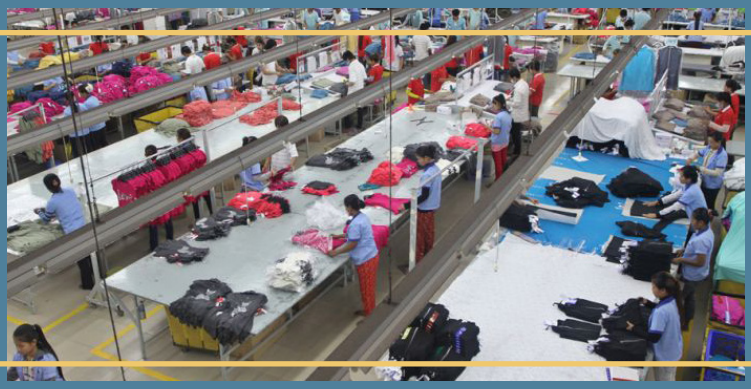
This book, published in 2011, describes how Cambodia has survived and emerged from the years of the Pol Pot regime. The book illuminates the country, its people, and the deep historical roots of its modern-day behaviors. This is not an uplifting book, though it is frank in pointing out the challenges facing the country. And although some of the book might be outdated, many of the conclusions are still apt.

Continued on page 5

Community Service and Politics

One of the most frequent questions I get these days is "How has the new U.S. administration affected The Sharing Foundation?" Here's the good news, and the short answer: Very little so far. However, the effect of some administration policies may come to impact TSF just as they impact all Cambodians.

There are three new policies that I know of that have hurt, or have the potential to hurt, Cambodians. The first one, already being felt, is the reduction in US government funding to international NGOs, particularly the closure of USAID. Fortunately, The Sharing Foundation receives no money directly from US government grants. We do have one program, HIV medical care, that was partially funded by the U.S.-based Clinton Foundation in the past, and could still receive U.S. funding today even though it's now administered by the Cambodian government. But that isn't a significant worry: when I asked Elephant who will pay for our HIV medication if the current source dries up, he shared that China, or Canada, would likely provide it: "In Asia, if any country is hurt, then they (China) will help." This suggestion – that China is ready to fill the US void in international support – has been reiterated by many news sources.



However, the loss of USAID funding may hurt us indirectly because of the damage it's causing Caritas, an international NGO that has helped us address our kids' mental and physical health challenges over the past six years. In a recent article, the Associated Press reported that Caritas had been due to receive about $1 million from USAID in the next two years. Caritas is also funded by a United Nations agency largely bankrolled by the U.S., putting it at further financial risk. Any reduction to Caritas's operations will deal a difficult blow to TSF as they have been an essential partner – affordable, competent and one of the few organizations in Cambodia that can help us with our most challenging children.

The second change affecting Cambodians is driven by the U.S. government's new policy on tariffs. CNBC has reported that Cambodia has been targeted with one of the policy's highest tariff increases: 49%. This will hurt the U.S. retailers that import from Cambodian factories including Under Armour, Lululemon and Eddie Bauer among many others, according to customs data reported by CNBC.

This policy hits close to home for TSF because at least two of our RCC children, now living independently, work in the garment industry. Their jobs are in jeopardy, as is the future of all our children who choose similar work in Cambodian's most prominent industry.

The third harmful change is the color coded immigration and travel policy the administration proposed in March; Cambodia falls into the yellow group, meaning travel to the U.S. will be disallowed unless the country resolves the U.S. government's security concerns within 60 days from the program's start. While this policy is currently on hold, the threat of its implementation this spring prevented us from bringing Elephant and Chita to the U.S. for another fabulous TSF celebration we were planning for September.

Unfortunately, there are other potential threats beyond these three. For example, media sources have reported the administration may limit the ability of non-profits to transfer money to certain countries, which is a practice we engage in monthly to support all our TSF programs. We will prepare for this possibility but hope it never becomes a reality.

We are part of a field that strives to make the world a healthier and safer place. Thanks to you, we are not reliant on governments to do this. Your contributions go directly to the care of thousands of children that need it most. We are thankful for your support. TSF

Correction from our Spring 2025 Newsletter

In Ann's article, Notes from the President, she stated, "we don't own our buildings, a consideration for the future." Factually this was incorrect because TSF does own the Roteang Children's Center buildings; however, as non-Cambodians, by law we cannot own the land on which they are built. (We do have a long term lease for the land and therefore are not in danger of losing our foothold.)

Sponsors Needed!

Laurie Simons & Sarah Broderick

At The Sharing Foundation, we often say that sponsorship is about more than just covering the cost of education, it's about showing a young person that someone believes in them. That someone, even from halfway around the world, is rooting for their future.

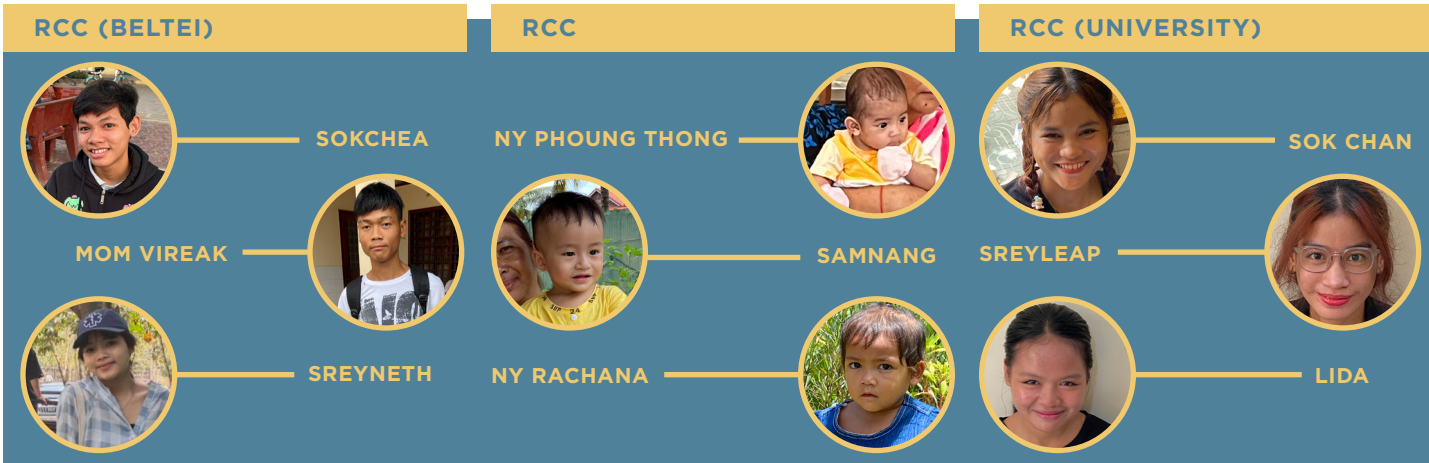
This summer, we're seeking new sponsors for several children and young adults at different stages of their educational journey. Some have lost sponsors due to age, illness, or passing; others are just beginning their lives in our care.

Take **Sokchea**, **Mom Vireak**, and **Sreyneth**, three high school students attending Beltei School. Their sponsor, Tom Meyer, was deeply committed to their education before his passing earlier this year. His legacy lives on in their determination to succeed, and we hope someone new will step in to help them finish strong.

At the other end of the spectrum are our newest little ones: **Ny Phoung Thong** (2 months), **Samnang** (1.5 years), and **Ny Rachana** (2 years). All three now live at our Roteang Children's Center (RCC) and need long-term sponsors to grow alongside them. RCC sponsorships are $1,800 per year and help cover housing, care, and schooling from infancy through adolescence.

We're also looking for sponsors for three university students whose previous support has ended: **Sok Chan**, **Sreyleap**, and **Lida**, all studying subjects such as hotel and tourism, marketing, and accounting. A full university sponsorship is $1,000–$1,600 per year, but even a half sponsorship of $500 can make a lasting impact.

In our vocational training program, we're continuing to support **Keo Lai**. While he is not pursuing further studies, he continues to help out at the Foundation, often assisting Peng Ron. He is facing some personal challenges, and we're uncertain about his capacity to hold outside employment. We'd love to share more details if you're interested in supporting him through this transitional time. TSF



Your sponsorship provides stability, encouragement, and opportunity to young people who need it most. Whether you're able to give a little or a lot, your support helps us say yes to a child in need.

To express interest or to learn more about sponsorship, please contact:
Laurie Simons (lysimons@gmail.com) or our University Coordinator **Lee Steppacher (shepstep@comcast.net)**

Welcome Sarah Broderick!

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Sarah Torres Broderick, who began her role as Operations Manager at The Sharing Foundation on May 5th. Sarah brings a rich background in nonprofit operations, survivor advocacy, and project management, with a career rooted in community-centered work and equity-driven leadership.

Before joining our team, Sarah held management roles at organizations like CASA (Community Action Stops Abuse), where she oversaw critical services for survivors of domestic violence, and most recently worked at the Sperling Center for Research and Innovation (SCRI), supporting operations and communications for education-focused nonprofits across the country. She is also an experienced trainer and facilitator with a focus on trauma-informed care.

Outside of work, Sarah lives in the South End of Boston with her wife and their three beloved fur babies, two cats and a dog. She enjoys exploring local restaurants, parks, and coffee shops, and spending cozy nights at home with her family.

Sarah's dedication to meaningful, mission-aligned work, combined with her thoughtful, people-first approach and strong operational skills, makes her a valuable addition to our team. We're excited for all she will bring to The Sharing Foundation as we continue to grow and deepen our impact.

NOTEWORTHY

Elephant just pulled off another amazing feat! He brilliantly planned a vacation for **71 RCC kids and nannies.**

On May 3rd at 4:30 am, seventy-one kids and staff boarded our TSF buses to make the 6 hour drive to Siem Reap. Elephant found a hotel that allowed them to cook their own food and they stayed four to a room. For some, it was their first time to visit the Angkor Wat temple complex, for others it was a return trip to experience the rich history of their ancestors.

We thank Trinitarian Congregational Church in Concord, MA for underwriting this trip and giving our children lasting memories and a great familial bonding experience.

We want to thank **Thai Tharo** and **Run Soneath**, two of our university alums (who are married), for their generous contribution to the RCC Khmer New Year's party.

They donated $100 to rent a loud speaker so everyone could enjoy music.

Baby **Samnang**, who is 18 months old, now has a playmate close to his own age. **Ny Rachana**, who is 2 yrs old, came with her sister, **Ny Phoung Thong** (2 months old) to the RCC in February. We have babies and toddlers back at the RCC!

Nancy Hendrie turns 93 on June 29th!

Celebrate the TSF founder with a donation of $93.

sharingfoundation.org/donate

Internet and financial literacy workshops were offered at the vocational center and the university dorms in June.

Developed and presented by President Ann Trudeau, our university alumnae Sin Vuthy along with our own RCC grads Pharoth and Yi Sophal, were an invaluable resource for this effort.

It is important that our children learn about the risks of phishing schemes and also how to manage their money so they can better live independently.

Hello & Goodbye

Laurie Simons

TSF Board member and Board Secretary **Linda Clark** bid farewell to the TSF board last month after a productive ten years. Linda came to TSF with a deep background in child development and education and dedicated her Board service to strengthening young Cambodians' opportunities to learn. Believing that the world opens when you give a child a book, she improved the libraries in Roteang and those in the four villages we support across the Mekong (Beng Krom, Lvea Sor, Prek Char and Sambour) by expanding their collections, advocating for improvements in their physical space and supporting their librarians and teachers. Behind the scenes, she developed an educational tracking program that helped TSF identify the kids who needed tutoring, special help, or a different path. Her care and concern for the "littles" in our preschool, as well as for the older children, was inspiring. She will be missed.

As we say good-bye to Linda, we welcome **Steve Peckar** to the TSF Board. Steve, who is from Colorado, learned about TSF on a Mekong cruise by talking to one of our TSF graduates who happened to be employed by the cruise company. Steve quickly became a friend to TSF and to Elephant; with his background in construction, he, along with a circle of his friends and family, have helped us fund multiple projects (e.g., renovating/updating the four village schools across the Mekong), and they sponsor at least five RCC children! We welcome Steve's energy and expertise in fundraising and look forward to a great collaboration.

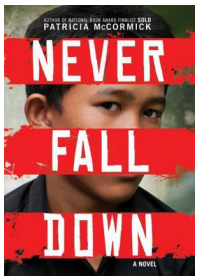
Cambodian Summer Reads

Continued from page 1

Three Flames

by Alan Lightman

Alan Lightman established the Harpswell Foundation, whose mission is to advance women leaders in Cambodia. A good friend to TSF, Lightman is also a physicist and professor, in addition to being an author. Lightman uses his unique perspective to pen this novel of three generations of a rural farming family. Beginning with survivors of the Khmer Rouge and the trauma that carries, the family struggles and thrives with the changes facing them and their country. The author captures the complexities of life in modern Cambodia, at once difficult and hopeful.



Never Fall Down

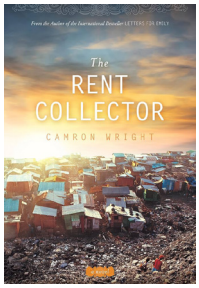
by Patricia McCormick

This is a book aimed at young adults, but will be enjoyed by adults as well. It has touched many in our community and describes the life story of the inspiring Arn Chorn Pond, peace activist, survivor of the Cambodian genocide and the founder of Cambodian Living Arts, in Phnom Penh. From child soldier to laborer in unimaginable camps, he survived because of his musical ability as the Khmer Rouge forced him to play propaganda music on his flute for them. Ultimately, he found his way to Thailand and was adopted by an American family, spending his teen years in New Hampshire. Life in America as a teen was challenging in so many ways. His father urged him to share his story as a way for him to heal, and so he has, all over the world. He has been awarded numerous peace prizes and been featured in multiple news stories. Through his life story, he urges us to spread love, not fear and hatred, and to be kind.

The Flute Player

PBS

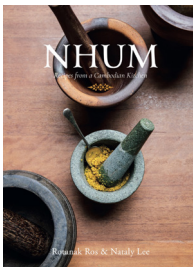
This is a PBS POV special film detailing the life of Arn Chorn Pond, and can often be found in PBS archives or on YouTube. In it we see Arn going back to Cambodia, after being adopted and living in the United States for 20 years. In "The Flute Player," Arn seeks out any "master musicians" who may have escaped the Khmer Rouge genocide, in an effort to preserve their music before it was lost. This is a heartfelt, touching and extraordinary story of survival, and one man's ability to transcend tragedy.



The Rent Collector

by Camron Wright

If you are looking for something not about the Khmer Rouge, this uplifting story is for you. This is a fictional story built around the real lives of a poor family who makes their living scouring the trash piles in Cambodia. It's about the family's surprising relationship with the embittered rent collector, about learning to read and write, and about finding hope and beauty on their journey. Beautifully written and the subject of many book groups, this book will touch you with the power of literature in the face of hardship. A documentary about the lives of this family is available as well.



Nhum

by Rotanak Ros

This is a beautiful book that presents us with 80 recipes from a Cambodian home kitchen. Filled with glorious photos, and using ingredients often found in Asian markets or online, the author shares her love and passion for Cambodian cooking. She tells us that this cookbook is her "invitation to experience Cambodia in a way that's rarely found in restaurants. These recipes are family treasures, each with a story, bringing you closer to Cambodia's soul. I hope this journey fills your kitchen with new flavors and brings a little piece of my homeland into your heart."

The Sharing Foundation

CARING FOR CAMBODIA'S CHILDREN

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The Sharing Foundation

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