



SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of Singing Kites

Always our first thoughts when starting our newsletters, is to say how deeply grateful we are to you all for your support, not only during this past year, but for the 10 years since we opened our Education Centre in Tanop Village. We have had our share of challenges, but have always made it through buoyed by the love of what we do, the all important support we receive, and the very close relationship we have, working alongside our Khmer team of wonderful staff members. But without our supporters we would not be able to continue on this path supporting our team on the ground. We continue to work hard towards the project becoming sustainable. It is important to have the community we work with, take the wonderful work we have been part of forward to another level.

There have been several milestones this year reflecting the natural maturity and progress of the project. The most satisfying results have been seen in the progress of the Education program; our University student support, and to the support we offer our wider village communities to access free dental care.

We owe our deep gratitude to many people for this.

EDUCATION NEWS

We have always believed that enabling a child access to education provides a pathway out of poverty so that they can make well-informed decisions to secure a better future for themselves and their families. As we have seen in our own cases, it just takes one educated child to change a family's direction away from poverty.

We have faced some added challenges in this aspect of our project, one being the rising number of garment factories, which have caused some widespread social problems in village communities.

Family cohesiveness can be challenged when mothers work in factories, travelling very long distances to and from work each day. Fathers are away working or looking for work, and we have found children are often left at home in the guardianship of aging and often frail grandparents or being minded by siblings who then miss school.

We have seen the rise in school absenteeism and behavior problems with the strong family unit that once was, being weakened.

We continue to work hard by engaging with our community and sharing general discussions with our families while we work together to solve the problems we are all aware of.

While our student numbers have dropped a little, classes are still well attended and our students often come bringing their siblings with them!



OUR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Our eight supported university students continue to make us proud with their achievements and their attitude towards their study.

Rany Chann and **Lyda Sann** have completed their English teaching degree and are now in their third year of Dental Nursing. They attend university each day during the week, and come down at the weekends with our Cambodian dentist Dr Boran Soeung and open our Dental Clinic and provide free treatment to the community.

Luch Tab and **Chanthan Ton** are in their last year of IT/ Media studies, and **Sreyla Tab** and **Try Suy** are in their second last year of a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree.

We have begun interviews for two students to receive tertiary education support in the new university year, beginning in November 2019. All our supported university students have just sat for their end of university year final exams.

Our two supported students doing Bio Engineering will start semester 1 of their fourth and final year after their

university holidays and are doing vacation internships with two companies in Phnom Penh. **Raksmey Mark** with NAPHRI (the National Animal Production and Health Research Institute) where he is working on detecting strains of salmonella in fresh water fish. **Daraya Piset** is doing her internship at Signatures of Asia and is working on making a film from the starch in potatoes to cover the surface of sugar to prevent the growth of yeast and mold that contaminates dried fruit.

We held our second **Singing Kites Alumni Dinner** at Khmer Surin in March and it was so wonderful to have time and enjoy a meal with our past supported students who are now fully employed in a variety of employment faculties ranging from IT, Journalism, different faculties of Engineering, Teaching, Fine Arts, Dentistry, Nursing, Business Management, and Architecture. Encouragingly, those with younger siblings, are supporting their education and offering financial support to their families.



THE DENTAL CLINIC

Our dental clinic continues to open at weekends while our trainee dental nurses complete their degrees in Dental Nursing. Our Khmer dentist Dr Boran Soeung goes down with the girls and works at our clinic on Saturdays and Sundays.

We are happy that more and more people with urgent dental needs (some from a distance away), are bravely coming to see us. To have a highly competent Khmer dentist overseeing the program is a bonus for us.

During any one month we treat on average 70 patients over the 8 days we open. Ages of patients range from preschool age children to elderly villagers often requiring dental treatment for severe dental decay issues and gum disease.

During any month we see many children and older villagers who live with severe dental issues. As an example, in August our team treated 86 patients who needed a variety of treatments. We did 62 Fillings, 21 Root Canal Treatment, 40 Extractions and 12 Cleans.



Our school dental education program is still in its early stage and will remain so until Lyda and Rany have graduated from university.

Dr Karuna Khatri from Dental Pearls Dental Clinic in Brisbane very generously donated \$4000 AUD towards our need to purchase a portable Xray machine. This has now been purchased and is in full operation in the clinic at the school. We are so grateful for the support we received to purchase this, as we have had to turn away many patients in the past because we have been unable to investigate the severe problems presented in teeth and gums. We can now evaluate oral health with much more surety in these more serious cases, before treatment begins.

Clinic in Action



Before and after treatment



Dr Karuna Khatri donating funds to our CEO Mr Bharat Vanmali, for portable Xray equipment.



The new portable X-ray equipment.



VOLUNTEERS

We are eternally grateful to all those wonderful volunteers who visit us. Some make it across to us each year and we so look forward to those visits.

Working in special places and with special young people, make for just rewards and make the whole experience for all concerned, wonderful.

Our students are forever grateful to have visitors from another country come and generously give of their time to brighten their day a little and show support of their desire for learning.

Our gratitude for the help given by Carolyn, Trish, Leanne, Donna, Kane and Cary, Amy, Elly and Elijah McCullough and Adam Hungerford, our volunteers since the last newsletter.

We would love more people to consider volunteering with us! It is one of our greatest needs.



Cary Gordon taking group work



Cary Gordon



Amy, Elly, Elijah McCullough and Adam Hungerford



Amy McCullough



Carolyn doing PD work with the teachers



Leanne and June doing group work with the students



Donna Whittle on her way to the classrooms



June Moro with students

VISIT FROM DR SORPHANY KITH

In February this year we had a three day visit from audiologist Dr Sorphany Kith who checked the hearing of every child who attends our school, and the staff as well.

Dr Kith comes to us each year and reports that quite a few of the children have hearing problems. This is often caused by objects finding their way into their ears, whether intentional or not, and these objects become a fixture in ears causing preventable deafness.

We are so grateful to Dr Sorphany for her contribution in coming to us and identifying problems that often result in major hearing issues.



WE HAVE A SOCCER TEAM!

A special day for us! We have our very first soccer team... the TCEC Hurricanes! They come complete with the name chosen by the team. The boys are practicing very hard every day to be the team for a play off against other teams in the inaugural 2019 SINGING KITES FOOTBALL TROPHY later this year. They are so enthusiastic! So keen to participate! Next, we would love a girl's team!

NEW RAIN WATER TANKS

We are so grateful to those people who have very generously donated rainwater tanks to secure the drinking water supply for our students.

These are all now in place, filled with rainwater from the "rainy season", and we are no longer worried about running short of this essential commodity for the health of our students.



OUR GOLD COAST 10TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Another of June Moro and her teams incredibly special “Lunches for Learning” at the Gold Coast in celebration of Singing Kites 10th birthday! 120 people attended at the ‘Jasmine Room’... a room with a beautiful view and superb food!

Our deepest gratitude to June, her MC Leonie Howard, her special GC Singing Kites team, the auctioneer who did a fabulous job of auctioning auction items... and last, but certainly not least to every single person who attended... and by doing so, helped us continue our work of enabling our rural children to access a university education to help move themselves and their families away from the cycle of poverty.

Thank you all!



The cake was such a treat to behold, and to taste!

Our MC, Leonie Howard



A WONDERFUL SCHOOL COMMUNITY EFFORT!

Our deepest gratitude to all those people in the community and Khmer friends of Singing Kites, who so generously donated the money to enable us to cement a path through the school, so our students no longer have to walk through mud and water to get to class.

The teachers did a wonderful job organising it all... then our male teachers all “rolled up their sleeves” to do the cement work.

A great team we have!



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES

On 7th February this year, TCEC had it's 10th birthday!

It has been such a wonderful 10 years and we should congratulate our loyal, dedicated and wonderful staff who have been with us over this time. We could not do it without you!

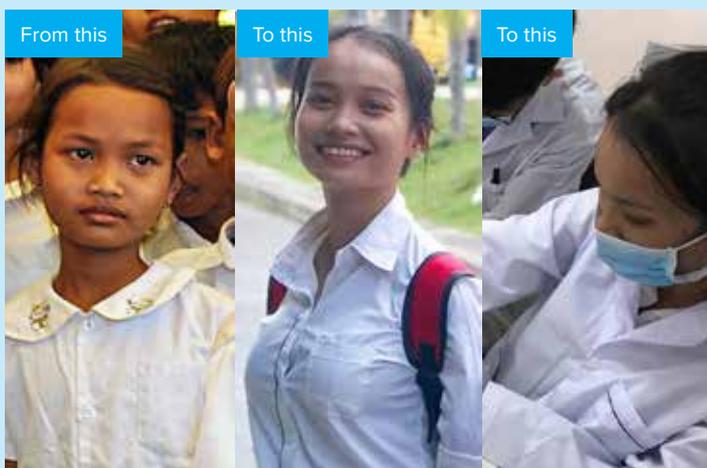
In 2008 we wanted to fulfil the dream of a young village man who wanted just one thing, to take education back to his village, so that village children in rural Cambodia had the same opportunities as the city children had.

With the support of many generous donors and hard working supporters, we raised the money, and in 2008, 11 local, village builders were able to begin to build our school in Tanop Village.

We opened the school ten years ago... and what a great day that was! Today, together as a team, we feel we run a "great ship"...where 13 local village teachers work hard to help educate 1600 village children.

It could not have happened without the support of all those many, many generous people who have contributed in so many different ways. So many of you have shared our journey... and have seen the results of the support you have given us. To each of you, our deepest gratitude.

Ten years later... many dreams have come to fruition... and lives have been changed. Thank you so much to our wonderful, loyal and dedicated staff! You will never... ever be forgotten!



Supported all the way and continuing, thanks to our generous supporters.

TCEC 2009

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

We plan a weekend of celebration on the 29 and 30 November and the 1 December 2019. Lots of activities are being planned to celebrate a wonderful milestone with the people who have made our journey possible; the local village people, the staff and students of TCEC and our supporters who are able to make it over to share this time with us. Much is planned and I know we will have news about this occasion to share with you in our next newsletter.

FLASHBACK FROM LYN

This special photo is one of many I draw on when energy levels feel a bit low! It was taken on one of the most memorable day in my life. We had arrived at the school and we were seeing it for the very first time!

The embrace of this young lady, who had dropped out of school after grade 7 and had been working long hours as a weaver under the family house to support her parents, were tears of gratitude for all those who had raised the money to build a school in her village.

This young lady Channa Tek, is now our wonderful Pre-school Director, and is one of our truly remarkable stories.



CONGRATULATIONS TO TOUCH AND SARI

March was a month of quiet celebration with a much-loved teacher, Touch Chuon and his new bride Sary Mech. Touch has had a long connection with us over many years. He was the very first in his family to ever attend school and receive an education; and the very first supported university student from our village school. Today he heads our IT program in a most capable way. Our very best wishes go to you Touch and Sary. We wish them years of health and happiness.



Touch and Sary on their wedding day

FINALLY

Our financial position continues to be a challenge to us as the AUD against the USD continues to fall.

When we began 10 years ago, the disparity between our currency was almost equal. Our original goal ten years ago was to bring a quality education to rural Cambodian village children and support the local community in the process.

We had to employ local “untrained” teachers to support this goal and to build on community involvement in the project, but it was clear that we needed to work on improving our teachers’ skills which led to the project’s investment in building teacher skills, through university scholarships, volunteer involvement and training programs, wide ranging professional development and so on.

Our challenge is that we want to keep these teachers, not only because they are part of the Singing Kites family but also, because they ensure the school’s continued success. They also want to stay in the village with their families and children. We believe we have a responsibility to provide a living wage for our staff, otherwise we will lose them.

Ten years ago a living village wage was \$60 USD a month and there were few other employment opportunities. Ten years on, a living wage is \$300 USD. The cost of living in Cambodia, even in rural areas, has risen and garment factories, in monetary terms, are proving an extremely competitive employment alternative to teaching.

Some of our teachers could earn better money in Phnom Penh or local industry. Wages are the largest component of our project expenditure but our teaching staff are the largest component of our success.

In closing, the Singing Kites team, teachers and students send gratitude and warm wishes to each of you.

If you would like to help us by making a donation, please visit our webpage www.singingkites.org

Once again a huge thank you to Katherine May our Graphic Designer for generously donating her time to produce our newsletters! kmay.com.au