

HOPES FLY HIGH WITH



INSPIRATION: Toowoomba woman Lyn Hotchin could never have imagined that her dream to educate some of the poorest people in Cambodia would become, not only a reality, but also an incredible success. PICTURES: SUPPLIED

City group soars to new heights



By ANTHEA GLEESON
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FOUR years ago Toowoomba woman Lyn Hotchin met an inspirational Cambodian man who was so determined to make something of his life that he studied by street light. Like a moth drawn to a bright

light, the Cambodian man would seek out public spaces lit at night to study for his Year 11 and 12 exams. The young man lived under a house and would also study by candlelight.

"My eldest daughter and I were deeply moved and went away feeling troubled," she said. "We met with village children and elders and decided we didn't want to give a handout, but we wanted to help."

"We asked ourselves how we could help them and our answer was through education." The plight of Cambodians soon gained support in Toowoomba and Mrs Hotchin founded the Singing Kites organisation.

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SINGING KITES



LEARNING FUN: Students at the Tanop village education centre participate in classes.



MEETING LOCALS: Lyn Hotchin of Toowoomba meets with villagers in Cambodia during her most recent trip.



IN THE CLASSROOM: A teacher leads a group of students in a learning game.



EDUCATION: A teacher from the education centre in Tanop shows Lyn Hotchin and a student some school work.



HIGH ENROLMENTS: More than 1200 students attend the school in Tanop.



EDUCATION DREAM: Four years ago Lyn Hotchin had a dream to build a school in Cambodia. Today more than 1200 students attend the facility.

with school in Cambodia

"We decided on Singing Kites because they are flown at the end of harvest as a sign of hope," she said. In June, 2008, the grassroots organisation aimed to raise \$USD15,500 to construct four classrooms and a toilet block. "We did that in six months," she said. In December, 2008, 16 Cambodian builders put the structures up. "We were expecting an enrolment of 450. We got 850," she said. The man who inspired

'We were expecting an enrolment of 450. We got 850.'

— Lyn Hotchin

Mrs Hotchin's Cambodian education dream has since gone onto study at university for a Masters of Rural Development. The school now welcomes 1243 student from 27 different villages every day. Most travel more than eight kilometres to and from the school on push

bikes. "We have four of the poorest of the poor villagers now at university," she said. "We have achieved a lot. "Now we are looking into sustainability." The final step of the education component of the project is to build a library and computer room. Once those funds have

been raised, Mrs Hotchin said Singing Kites would look at ways of being self-sufficient. "Toowoomba people have been amazing. "But we don't want to rely on donations." Mrs Hotchin aims to set up a sewing centre and bakery to fund the school and provide vocational training for students. "Cambodia has an extra shadow over it. "They lost all of their educated class. The fabric of their educated society —

that's gone." Mrs Hotchin travels to Cambodia every three months for up to six months at a time. "It has changed my life," she said. "After my visits, I get sick, limp home and it takes me three months to recover. "But I wouldn't give it up for anything in the world." A fund-raising luncheon will be held next weekend at Angelo's House from 11am. Tickets are \$49 each or \$450 for a table of 10. Contact Frances Holmes



LESSONS IN LIFE: A pre-school teacher reads an English storybook to students.

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