



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2015

DEAR FRIENDS OF SINGING KITES

Once again more time than we have liked has flown by since our last newsletter, but the dedication, the enthusiasm of our students continues and our deep gratitude to all those who support us, never wanes.

Our hard working staff continue to devote themselves to their tasks of helping us bring educational and health improvements to our students so that our next Khmer generation have access to opportunities that can open up their lives to greater possibilities.

The beginning of November is the busiest time of our whole school year, when the official Khmer new school year starts and our class schedules must change to fit in with the changing Government school schedules. Our year 12 students leave us but we have more students applying to come and all students have to be assessed and placed in classes to match their level of proficiency. Director Tith continues to manage everything that happens at the school with amazing skill, particularly in areas of growth and change, which can be especially challenging.

As always, we must mention how deeply grateful we are for the support so many give to us and in so many different ways. You are the sole reason we are able to continue our work. We are more than aware that with the drop in the value of the AUD we have to work harder to find that 30% more we need to fund our project. We are working hard on different ideas to make the project more sustainable in the future, as we know that this is the only way we will have a future away from relying on the generosity of people funding us.

But now to our news!

With our gratitude and warmest wishes to each of you,

Lyn, Tith, June, Carolyn, the Singing Kites Team, teachers and students.



STAFF AND TERTIARY STUDENT NEWS

- We welcomed a new staff member **Sem Kimsrong** who came to us in July as a part time teacher to teach science to our students who are in need of extra tuition.
- Our teachers who started last year studying at university at the weekends have just completed their first year.

Our teacher **Seth** will soon graduate. **Tevy Morn** one of our University students will also graduate in December and already has a permanent job with a school in Phnom Penh. She is now going to support her two younger brothers through University.

- Our Dental Technicians **Lyda and Rany** are attending university at the weekends and studying an English language degree. They continue with **Nak**, to train at **Cambodia World Family**, a free Dental clinic in Phnom Penh. Nak will sit for her year 12 exam next year.
- Our teachers again enjoyed attending the three day **Hope Cambodia teacher's conference** at **Salamom School**, Phnom Penh in September. They all came away with lots of enthusiasm and new ideas to introduce into the classrooms. We extend our deep gratitude to **Linda McMillan** for again financially supporting our teachers so they could attend.
- * Twelve of our students sat for their year 12 exams in August and all passed. They have gone on to attend universities in Phnom Penh and Takeo.

- * Unfortunately the lease for our student house in Phnom Penh ended and the owner wanted the house for his daughter's business. He offered us another house which wasn't in a safe area. We had to look for another residence and luckily managed to find one. The owner of our new rental house has indicated that the maximum number of students he would like us to have at the house is 11. We have taken two new graduate students and will offer more places as current students graduate and places become available. The six teachers, who study at university on the weekends stay with us on Saturday nights.



The teachers and Lyn at the Hope Conference in Phnom Penh



We had a dinner at school for the year 12 graduates before they left us



Our new university student accommodation in Phnom Penh.



We are indebted to our dedicated and hard working **staff members** who all come from our village communities and who generously give the best of themselves to nurture the children in their care.

Our deep gratitude to each one of you! You mean a great deal to us!

SCHOOL NEWS

TRADITIONAL MUSIC PROGRAM

We have opened up our Traditional Music Program to the community and have some very enthusiastic “older students” who have joined the program! They are already making great wedding music together and learning quickly under the wonderful tutelage of Master Ny Nuon!

They have said that they love playing the traditional instruments, but never had the opportunity as music was not allowed in Pol Pot’s time and it had all but died out in the years that followed.

It makes us happy to know our school is not just there for the present younger students attending, but the involvement of the wider community enriches us as a functioning community centre as well.



DENTAL CLINIC NEWS

Our three trainee dental technicians Lyda, Rany and Nak continue their training at **Cambodia World Family Free Dental Clinic** in Phnom Penh. They are doing so well and are becoming very skilled in many aspects of dental hygiene and dental treatment.

Our clinic is still having a few teething problems which means we are still not operating at full capacity, but we hope to work through this and increase the times we open in the early part of 2016.

We continue to welcome visiting dental teams to the Clinic.



Top. Action at the clinic! Below left. Visiting the girls at CWF in September. Below R. Our visiting German Dentists.

AN ENGLISH PROGRAM UPDATE

from Carolyn Watts, English Program and Volunteer Coordinator

The volunteer program is going from strength to strength. We have had some outstanding volunteers contribute to student learning and school life in the past 12 months and we thank them wholeheartedly for giving up their time so generously to work so effectively with our students, teachers and local community. It is wonderful to welcome new volunteers but also to see other volunteers returning year after year.

We have worked hard to make sure that volunteers have a good experience at the school. We have updated all our pre-departure documents; have put in place a comprehensive Volunteer Orientation program for volunteers on arrival at the school; prepared Teaching Notes to help volunteers in classes; developed a volunteer feedback questionnaire; compiled a Singing Kites cooking guide and taken care to ensure that the volunteer accommodation is as comfortable as it can be.

Volunteers play a huge part in the success of the English language program at the school. Students are becoming much more used to the presence of western volunteers in their lives and need no encouragement to engage, talk to and learn from them.

Teachers have gained professional confidence through interaction with volunteers who have shown them and helped them try out new classroom teaching ideas as well as, at the same time, improving their own individual language proficiency. Through volunteers, teachers have become increasingly aware of how to use Teachers books and Workbooks in their lesson planning to motivate students and get them actually speaking in English, edging us closer to our goal of becoming the best communicative teaching centre in the province. Our teachers currently studying teaching at University, having been exposed to this methodology at TCEC, are well on their way to becoming really skilled, qualified, confident and sought after language teachers.

We are just in the process of moving to a new set of course books which we believe will be better suited to our students’ needs and we look forward to reporting on the success of this venture in our next Newsletter.



Carolyn and Tith



HER FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT!

Because of your support the future looks bright for preschool student **Sreyne Sar** and all her young classmates.

Sreyne Sar has come all the way from Kompong Speu Province and is living with her grandmother so that she can attend our school.

Starting with our youngest learners, the Singing Kites **Preschool Program** under the wonderful guidance of **Channa Tek**, builds an important foundation for lifelong learning, providing Cambodia's next generation with a pathway out of poverty and prepares them for a future in the world beyond.

HOW VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS CAN HELP US.

Volunteering with us is a wonderful and unique opportunity to learn about and be part of village life in rural Cambodia, while making a very useful and positive contribution to village children in a worthy educational community setting.

Singing Kites is a registered charity and as such receives no funding from any government, but relies solely on the generosity of our donors and money raised from fundraisers to run the school where almost 2000 children attend daily.

Sustainability of the project is of paramount importance to our long term survival and we are working hard towards this.

One of the ways volunteers can help us do this, is to contribute to the cost of their stay with us. As much as we would like to, we cannot continue to take the cost of accommodating volunteers from school funding. The low Australian dollar value means that our expenses have risen significantly.

We endeavour to supply our volunteers with all their needs for a comfortable stay. Their contribution towards the cost of their stay with us will cover accommodation in a comfortable cottage, all linen, gas for cooking, eating and cooking utensils, drinking water, fans, refrigeration, free wifi, daily cleaning of the cottage and bathroom and bicycles for use to explore the surrounds.

100% of the volunteer's /visitor's contribution will go towards the running of the school and help secure our future. We hope that people coming to us will understand the need for us to cover these expenses as a start of the project becoming sustainable.

We would like to implement this initiative from the beginning of January 2016.

Please contact the volunteer coordinator, Carolyn Watts at carolyn@singingkites.org for more details on the above.





Our **staff** and their **families** had a wonderful picnic day together at **Kirirom National Park** during the Pchum Benh holiday break recently. Tith said they all spent a very special day together and enjoyed seeing new surrounds.



We are deeply grateful to **WIG (Women's International Group)** Phnom Penh for a grant so that we could put up another much needed 5000 L rainwater tank at the school.

It is important we increase our potable water supply for the student and school use.

FUNDRAISERS AND DONORS ARE OUR LIFE LINE.

What can we say to the many people who have so generously contributed in supporting us in these ways throughout the year.

There are no words to thank you all enough and to tell you how your contributions have meant the difference in us continuing what we have committed to do for our rural Cambodian children.

We are indebted to you. You are our hope for a continuing future.



Above June Moro, her team and supporters at the Gold Coast work tirelessly for us. Here is June and some of our supporters who attended the "Secrets of Italy" morning at the "Italian Club" on the Gold Coast in October.



Above top: Our yearly fundraiser at "Preston Manor" in Toowoomba. Below: Hailey and Simon put on a photographic exhibition for us at "Ortem" in Toowoomba.

Some amazing members of our Singing Kites family have started fundraisers selling cookies, chocolates and other items for us and we are deeply touched by the generous support they give us.

IN THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS!

Christmas gifts for sale that help support our rural Cambodian children to learn, grow and look forward to a brighter future.



BOOKMARKS – \$5

These bookmarks make a special small gift for any occasion.

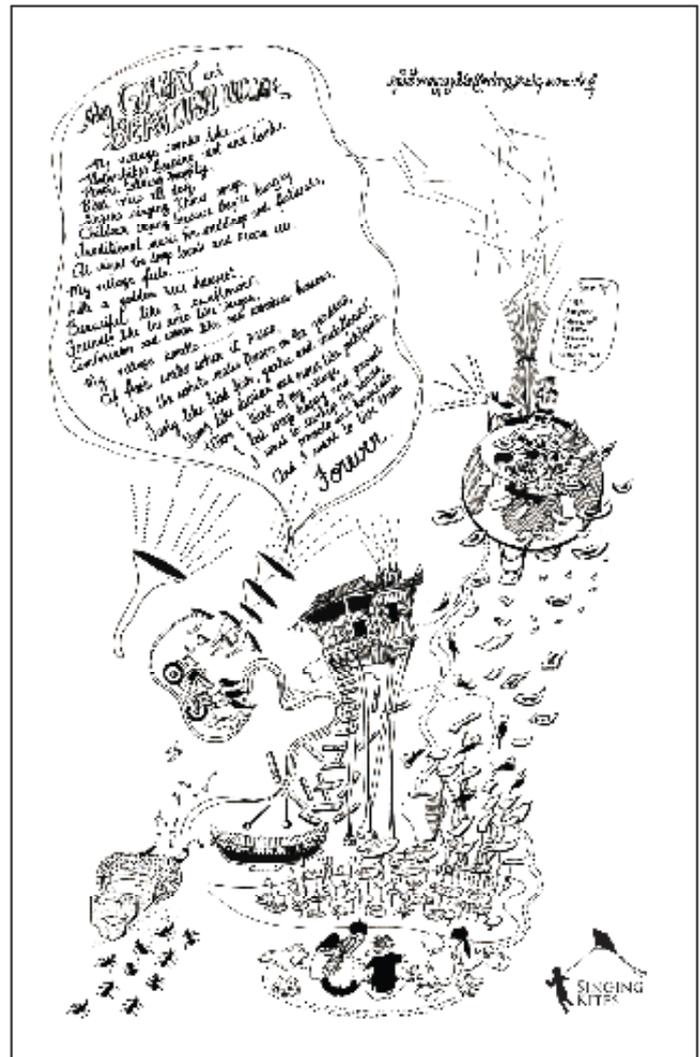
Each one supports different parts of our project.

They measure 190 mm x 50 mm and are double sided on quality card.

The bookmarks support the school, transporting children to the school, the breakfast program, the dental clinic and a teacher's salary.

PRICE: \$5 each.

Postage free within Australia



SPECIAL TEA TOWEL – \$18

A quality linen/cotton blend screen printed tea towel.

Under the guidance of writer ER Murray, a special compilation of our students' first poem in English.

Illustrated by published illustrator **Alex Hotchin**.

Limited edition for Christmas (Only 50 printed)

PRICE: \$18 each or 3 or more for \$15 each.

To place orders and receive payment details please email Lyn at:
lyn@singingkites.org

SPECIAL DATE CLAIMER FOR 2016



A GREAT DAY COMING FOR US!

From Lyn

This special photo is one of many I draw on when energy levels feel a wee bit low!

It was taken on one of the most memorable days in my life.

We had raised the money to build the school, the local village builders had completed the building of it and we had arrived in Tanop village to see 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, hard hours as a weaver under the family house to support her parents, were tears of gratitude for all those who had helped raise the money to build a school in her village.

We are very, very excited that our amazing Director Tith Tek and this young lady Channa Tek, now our wonderful Pre-school Director, are planning to be here in Toowoomba for our annual fundraiser on Saturday the 16th of April 2016, to tell their truly remarkable stories.

We promise it will be a day to remember!

Final details about this event will be sent out in February 2016

The Teachers, students and Singing Kites team wish all our Singing Kites friends and supporters a very happy Christmas and the very best of wishes for a wonderful 2016.



Singing Kites is proud to be a partner for Project J094 with Global Development Group (ABN 57 102 400 993), an Australian DFAT approved Non-Government Organisation carrying out quality humanitarian projects with approved partners and providing aid to relieve poverty and provide long term solutions.

