

AWARENESS CAMBODIA

"Rebuilding the children of Cambodia"

www.awarecam.org.au

Issue 1 2012

Kim and I are currently in Australia briefly before heading back to Cambodia, where one of the pressing issues is growing Graduation House.

In late July another nine students will move to Phnom Penh to take up University or Vocational training. While it's a great sign that together we really are making a difference in Cambodian children's lives, our current Graduation House premises simply aren't big enough. That means finding alternative accommodation while we continue fundraising for the new Graduation House complex.

With construction scheduled to start July this year, we have met with some amazing West Australians. They're not only making sizeable contributions from their own pockets, but helping us raise the balance of funds to ensure Graduation House's debt-free completion by this time next year. This display of selfless giving really moves me inside.

Denis Waitley the well-respected American author once wrote, ***"No man or woman is an island. To exist just for yourself is meaningless. You can achieve the most satisfaction when you feel related to some greater purpose in life, something greater than yourself."***

And one of the best ways to relate to something bigger, is investing in someone else. It's one thing to know how to make money, but yet another to know how to spend it in a way that will bring hope and change to somebody's world. It's one thing to be moved by suffering, but quite another to sacrifice to make a difference. Yet in the end it isn't what we say with our words, feel with our emotions or lean towards with our intellect, but what we do with our money that counts.

Remember it doesn't take a lot of money to change someone else's life. You can become an Awareness Cambodia partner for as little as \$2 a day.

And sometimes the benefits aren't always that obvious. I remember the first Cambodian employee at Awareness Cambodia – she was a widow who had lost everything. During the reign of PolPot she saw 80 family members killed. The last relative she saw was her 11 year old daughter. One day she got on the back of a truck and left to work in the fields and never saw her daughter again. Vanny was left alone and destitute on the side of the road. When she was employed at Awareness Cambodia not only did she find something to do, but she once again found family in these orphaned kids. And some seven to eight years later, remarried. That's a complete life turnaround that money given towards orphaned kids brought into someone else's life.

Gary Hewett, Founder/ CEO



Sunshine House has a new reading room in the Education Wing. A special thanks to the people who helped fund this renovation.



Update from the USA branch



by Russ & Janet Landreth (USA Coordinators)

We have just completed our first full year as coordinators for Awareness Cambodia USA - what a year!

It was about this time last year we received an email asking whether our Impact Team would construct the new Sunshine House playground. Within days we were in contact with an organisation called 'Kids around the World', a sea container was sourced and we were able to ship the playground, sport equipment, bicycles and clothes to Cambodia. We don't know who was more excited to see the finished project, us or the kids!

Over Christmas, a number of local churches encouraged their members to support those less fortunate. Awareness Cambodia USA

was present at each to help people put this into action and get involved in our ongoing projects.

Our latest news is the launch of the **12-12-12 Campaign**. It sees people commit \$12.00 a month, for 12 months, in 2012!

The campaign will help raise much-needed funds and also raise awareness about Awareness Cambodia's mission.

While there is plenty to do, we are eagerly awaiting our next assignment – bringing another Impact Team to Cambodia in October.

If you live in the USA and are interested in joining us, please email us at info@awarenesscambodiausa.org



Helping students learn English



by Sopheak Pheng



Since 1998, the Cambodian Government has committed to addressing poverty through education, but unfortunately lack of resources has restricted progress.

English is now the second language in Cambodia, but there are very few trained English teachers. Most schools have directors who cannot speak English, one teacher who can speak some English, and a small number of students with very low

levels of English. And while education is theoretically free, most students are forced to pay fees to their teachers. Without these fees and second jobs, teachers would live in poverty on salaries of about \$US50 a month.

In January 2011, Dr Gary Hewett (CEO) approached the Regional Director of the Ministry of Education, and Youth and Sports (MoEYS), Mr Sam Samantha, to ask what education programs were his priority. The Director pointed out that whilst the curriculum was in place for high school students to study English, students arrived at high school without knowing the most basic English sounds. This was leading to high school classes being of very little use to the average student. Following this conversation Awareness Cambodia agreed to assist by forming the English second Language for Primary Schools (ESLPS) project – with the cooperation of The Ministry of Education, and Youth and Sports.

By July a pilot program began with two schools, with the first six month classes completed with 70 per cent of children able to read and write well enough to pass exams. Due to its success, the pilot program has been expanded and is now running in two more primary schools within 15 kilometres from the Kampong Speu Provincial Town. These schools, Kirivong Sleng Primary school (in Somrong Tong district) and SEN TEAV Primary School (in Kongpisey District), will take part in the program until the end of 2012. The program will be reviewed in preparation for 2013.



Meet our latest team members



Welcome Trudy and Tim James, who joined our Cambodian team in January 2012. Originally from Perth, Trudy and Tim are currently up-skilling and empowering our Cambodian staff in a two year placement. In just a few short weeks they have already worked with the Cambodian Central Office Accountant (Kimna) and the Eco Farm Manager (Bunchat) to review the current profitability of the Eco Farm. This includes assessing the potential profitability in the rice processing program. In reviewing the Profit and Loss Statement for the Eco Farm Trudy enquired; "What is Pig Hire?" Kimna explained it was "boyfriend for the pig". Much giggling ensued – it's a privilege and a lot of fun working in Cambodia.

Graduation House Profiles: by Trudy James

I first visited Sunshine House in 2003 and now the young children that I met back then are young men and women preparing for their very bright futures at university. Here are some fast facts about three of our Graduation House students.

Pisey KEO (Age 20)

Arrived at Sunshine House: 2002
Studying: 1st year English Literature
Part time work: Seeking part time work in English teaching or working with children
Goals after university: To teach English and even have my own school
Hobby: Singing and playing guitar
Favourite music: Khmer & Korean singers, but also Taylor Swift & Justin Bieber



Above: Pisey

Below: Samnang & Sokhua

Sokhua SARHOOT (Age 19)

Arrived at Sunshine House: 2000
Studying: 2nd year Architecture
Part time work: Teaches guitar
Goals after university: To be an Architect
Hobby: Playing guitar, hanging out with my friends and playing computer games
Favourite music: Khmer & Korean singers, but also Linkin Park

Samnang CHIENCHON (Age 20)

Arrived at Sunshine House: 2000
Studying: 1st year English Literature
Part time work: Teaches Mathematics & Khmer
Goals after university: To be an English Teacher
Hobby: Playing computer games, guitar, soccer and volleyball when I visit Sunshine House/ House of Progress
Favourite music: Khmer music, but also Eric Clapton



Farewell Pushpa

by Kim Hewett



Pushpa was Awareness Cambodia's first aid worker, sent in 1996. In those days it was a dangerous and uncertain place, and it was only in 1997 tanks rolled into Phnom Penh, bombs falling, in a political coup. This is just one of Pushpa's many adventures over the years.

After 15 years with Awareness Cambodia, Pushpa retired from Awareness Cambodia late last year. A farewell lunch was held at The Boat Noodle Restaurant in Phnom Penh where all staff gathered together to farewell her in style. Even some of the older children from Graduation House were able join in.



In true Cambodian style as soon as Gary began to give a farewell speech honouring Pushpa, a

man on a jackhammer started pounding away nearby. We all kept giggling!

As a thank you gift from all of us at Awareness Cambodia, Pushpa received a gold and garnet pendant. So thank you Pushpa for all the dedicated years of volunteer service to Awareness Cambodia and the Cambodian people. You are an amazing person. I think this quote sums you up, my friend;

"The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it."



What do a plumber, electrician, painter, and tiler have in common?

A spot on our next Maintenance Team! If you've ever considered going to Cambodia as a volunteer, here is your opportunity. Planning is well underway for the next Maintenance Team **14 - 28 September 2012.**

- The **Maintenance Team** is seeking tradespeople to do maintenance and building work, while living at Sunshine House. Electricians are especially NEEDED for this team.
- The **Medical Team** is seeking qualified doctors and nurses to work in our rural Medical clinics. Doctors are especially NEEDED for this team.

If you want to be a part of this life changing adventure, fill in an application form on our website or contact our Perth office. An expression of interest meeting will take place in May and we will name our team members soon after.

Applications close 7 May 2012



Rice Processing Program



The Eco-farm is in the midst of becoming more diverse, with the commencement of a rice processing plant next month. The project will see rice processed onsite and sold at the local Kampong Speu market. Eco Farm Manager Bunchat is confident it'll supply Sunshine House, House of Progress and Graduation House too!



A rice storage unit under construction at Eco Farm.

The project is also beneficial in reducing the cost of pig farming. The project produces a by-product of 'broken rice' – key pig food! We're hoping this will allow for our pig numbers to grow.



MUSHROOM GROWING

We commenced our pilot program for growing mushrooms last December, and our first mushrooms were harvested and sold in the local village in January. We're currently producing around one kilogram each day. If it continues to be a success, we'll be able to upscale the program and supply Sunshine House.



There are great things ahead for the Eco Farm, so watch this space!



Find us on
Facebook

To join our Facebook group, Awareness Cambodia, go to our website www.awarecam.org.au

Click 'Find us on Facebook' and 'Like' the page.

We regularly add new photos, fun stories and keep you updated with Awareness Cambodia's latest news.



**You can also now find us on
Twitter @AwareCam**

Guildford Grammar School visit

An outstanding success story!



In January 2012 Sunshine House welcomed for the first time, a group of dedicated and hardworking young men from Guildford Grammar School. In one week they repaired verandas, lined the 'reading room' walls, erected new clothes lines in the dorms, tilled the soil, and reseeded the land at Eco Farm. They also taught our children the concept of 'reading for joy.'

The boys were amazingly hard workers and an excellent example for the children at Sunshine House. A special thanks to teachers Adam Handley, Colleen Reed and Remy. To the team of students from GGS, thank you for your incredible efforts and dedication. Instead of being mere tourists, you made a real difference.

Music Lab at Sunshine House

The Sunshine House music equipment had been looking worse for wear recently, so when the Guildford Grammar team arrived in January they decided to set that straight. After a long day in Phnom Penh bartering and sweating, Sunshine House became owners of new drums, acoustic guitars, electric guitars, speakers, a new sound desk, microphones, bass guitars and a music lab of pianos.



Thank you to the Guildford Grammar School team who made this upgrade possible, especially teacher Adam Handley. The music lab looks amazing, and will give our young musicians years of pleasure.



Fun times at the beach!

by Sok Heng
(Internet Café Manager)



On Sunday 4 March 2012, 90 people piled into 2 buses and 2 cars and headed to the beach at Kampong Som Province. We had a lot of fun on the buses to help make the hours go faster and for the kids to have fun.

We arrived at the Ochheuteal Beach at about 10 o'clock. Everyone was very happy and enjoyed playing at the beach. The staff kept a close watch on the small children as they played in and around the sea. Everyone was very happy. After having some activities of joy at the beach, we ate lunch and had a rest and then it was time to head back to Sunshine House and House of Progress.

We are so happy that **Eschol Fellowship, Cork** provided the funds for us to enjoy this wonderful day at the beach. We hope to have the chance to do this again next year and after.



Awareness Cambodia Story

Awareness Cambodia is a not for profit, overseas aid organisation established in 1996 by Perth dentist, Dr Gary Hewett in response to the incredible suffering and poverty experienced by the Cambodian people after the execution of 25% of its most intelligent under Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot. We work to relieve poverty and encourage development of life skills through participation in self sustaining projects.

Awareness Cambodia doesn't simply raise funds to pass onto other organisations; instead we initiated projects in response to ongoing needs. Together these projects form an environment that provides a seamless structure for orphaned Cambodian children to transition into well adjusted and self sufficient leaders, so necessary in rebuilding Cambodia's future.

We also see Cambodian culture as a unique national treasure meaning all efforts are taken to ensure our presence doesn't simply result in these children being westernised, relocated to other parts of the world or being reduced to the indignity of a dependency on overseas handouts.

Effective training for indigenous staff, a non adoption policy, working in cooperation with local organisations and government departments as well as the inclusion of self funded business components in projects are key components in reaching our objectives.

"Awareness Cambodia is proud to be a partner for project 'J515 Awareness Cambodia- Stage 2' with Global Development Group, an Australian AusAID approved NGO carrying out quality humanitarian aid and development projects with approved partners to relieve poverty and provide long term solutions."



Child Development Projects



Sunshine House

House of Progress

Graduation House

Awareness Cambodia Child Development Projects are registered with the Cambodian Government. This is an important process as all registered orphanages are bound to uphold the national standards of care for children in their facility. They are also subject to a process of inspection by the government authority who monitor standards. Sunshine House continues to enjoy a high status with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSALVY), as one of the leading Cambodian Orphanages in both facilities and standard of care. Sunshine House has been awarded the 'best orphanage' in Kompong Speu for a number of years by MOSALVY.

As part of our commitment to the protection of children in our care, we have a strong and active child protection policy. Background checks are conducted on all volunteers who are interacting with our children.

Children at Awareness Cambodia's child projects are not in any way used to secure funds by selling products. We ensure our staff are long term workers and are well trained. Children who are living outside of a family unit have complex needs and they require specialist staff to accommodate these needs. Ongoing training is a high priority for all staff.

Awareness Cambodia believes it is very important that children are not separated from their siblings. Where possible we try to keep siblings together. We are actively involved in maintaining relationships with living family members via our 'homeland visits' program. This visit to relatives ensures that a child has a sense of belonging to their village should they want to return to their childhood community upon reaching adulthood.



The annual Volleyball Competition that takes place with FGA (a Cambodian NGO) and House of Progress, resulted in a win for the House of Progress Champions. Congrats boys, you did an outstanding job.



A friendly football (soccer) match occurred earlier in the year between FGA and an Awareness Cambodia Team. ACI put up a valiant effort but were defeated on this occasion. Congratulations to the FGA team!





Last November a group of motivated year 11 students from Pymble Ladies College embarked on a three day journey, cycling from Sydney to Crookwell. The girls instigated the ride in response to the touching experience gained on their visit to Sunshine House in 2010. Their aim was to promote awareness about Cambodian orphans, and to raise funds for the programs run by Awareness Cambodia.



In the weeks leading up to the bike ride, students Philippa, Laura, Phoebe, Aleisha and their teacher Erin, trained extremely hard and got busy finding sponsors for their mission. The cyclists faced typical challenges – wet weather and crazy drivers.

But it was also the greatest success, with the girls arriving safely at Crookwell having raised over \$12,600 for Cambodian youngsters.

Congratulations to the cyclist group, Pymble Ladies College community, and the friends and family that supported this great fundraiser. The money raised will go towards the building of Graduation House. With heartfelt thanks from the Awareness Cambodia team and children.

Pippa Kensit (year 11 student) **Why did I become involved in the bike ride fundraiser?**

"Last year on the Pymble Ladies College Vietnam/ Cambodia Tour I saw firsthand the remains of a country destroyed by genocide. I saw the scars left on the children who had been orphaned due to the aids epidemic. This touching experience was moving, inspiring me to want to help change their lives in some way.

In doing the cycle I wanted to raise much-needed funds for Awareness Cambodia – to help them continue their amazing work. And in the end I gained skills of my own, including resilience, responsibility and perseverance."



Thank You

Awareness Cambodia's programs benefit the people of Cambodia in three main areas:

- Health services
- Education; and
- Childhood development programs.

But we can only do all of the above because of your generous giving. You have helped Awareness Cambodia make a real difference.

Thank you for walking this journey with us!

You can help educate a Cambodian child with as little as \$15.00. Join the **Case for Change** program and play your part in making a difference.



Education is powerful; a basic human right. It enables children to break the cycle of poverty and inequity - the very things which lead to human trafficking, gender-based violence and other human rights abuses. Our **Case 4 Change** program acts to reverse this cycle by equipping rural schools with much-needed educational tools.

This July we will be distributing over one thousand backpacks filled with stationery. The **Case 4 Change** program is growing in popularity due to its simple yet valuable structure. We will run a second distribution of backpacks in October 2012. The more backpacks we supply, the more school children we help. If your school or organisation would like to join the program or learn more, you can contact our office. It isn't too late to join for 2012!



We would also like to thank those who are coming on board with the project for the first time this year - just to name a few:

Crown Finance, Lions Club Ellenbrook, Friends of Willunga & Aldinga Libraries, CRS Australia - Northbridge, Guildford Grammar School, Eden Hill Primary School, Hampton Senior High School, and Pymble Ladies College – Junior School.



AWARENESS CAMBODIA
Rebuilding the children of Cambodia

End of Year Gift Giving

The perfect gift that will keep on giving.

** 2011 **



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Thank you those who donated towards the annual Christmas Party at Sunshine House. It was a huge success and we couldn't have done it without you.

We'd like to thank those who supported our Christmas Giving Campaign. It truly is a gift that keeps giving!

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AWARENESS CAMBODIA INC

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Thank you for your generous support

If the funds raised exceed project requirements then funds may be directed to a similar project. Donations made within Australia are tax deductible.
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