

# Kampuchea House Newsletter



May 2019

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## **SUASDEY and greetings to all our supporters.**

Here is an update on our latest news from Kampuchea House.

All our kids and staff in Siem Reap have recently celebrated *Choul Chnam Thmey* (Khmer New Year) with a three day holiday during the lunar New Year. Traditionally people return to their homeland to be with family and friends during this period and so our offices were closed from 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> April. Best wishes for the coming year to all of you!

Also in April our new President, Libby McCann, travelled to Siem Reap to meet with our Director Leng, all the kids and staff, and our Vice-President Belinda Lightfoot, who was there at the same time.

Libby has been involved in KH since its inception 12 years ago when she made a donation to assist in purchasing the land in memory of her godmother, along with three other donors. Having stepped down from her role in fund-raising last year, Libby was appointed President. No matter what her current official title, Libby has been unwavering in her involvement and support of KH from the very beginning until now.

Our vice-President Belinda spends a good part of her year in Siem Reap, travelling there at least three times a year to provide practical support to Leng, our Director, and a presence on the ground. Because of the amount of time she spends in Cambodia, Belinda has made many contacts with other members of the foreign community there, including members of other NGOs, businesses and charities. She has often availed herself of these connections when finding apprenticeships, suitable courses and trainee-ships for our kids. Belinda is often seen picking up a coffee and having a quick

catch-up with ex-KH residents Ros and Sak Sak at Litte Red Fox, where they now work, while buzzing around town, just like one of the locals, on her trusty yellow motorcycle.



## WESTBOURNE GRAMMAR VISIT

Happily the first of Westbourne Grammar's bi-annual visits this year occurred during the kids' pre-New Year break, and coincided with both Belinda and Libby's visit in April. As always the event was a huge success and a fun day for all. Our kids now look forward to these visits with great anticipation as the days always prove to be full of fun with lots of interaction between them all. The gift box programme continues to delight, as do the games played, the music and singing, and a fabulous lunch prepared by the house mothers. This visit also coincided with a number of birthdays, which were duly celebrated with the mandatory multi-coloured cakes and party hats. Libby commented on how much our kids' English skills have improved since her last visit over a year ago, facilitating communication and the forming of real relationships. It is always moving to see the WG students departing in a convoy of tuk tuks, with our kids waving them off sadly.



As always we send a heartfelt **THANK YOU** to Westbourne Grammar for their friendship and their support for our kids and our mission in providing them with the best education to provide the best outcomes possible for them.



## EDUCATION IS THE WAY OUT OF POVERTY

Another very emotional moment was Yim's speech, which she delivered during the visit by Westbourne. With Yim's permission we invite you to read the text below. It captures the essence of **why we do what we do**:



In my family there are five people such as my mother, father and two siblings. We live together but everything has changed when my mother has died. My father got a new wife and moved to live with her. He never came to visit us, so I and my siblings need to live with my grandmother. She is very frail, but she still tried to take care of us and to earn money to feed us. She is unhealthy and weak so I and my siblings must help her to do some works that we can do like sell vegetable, feed the cows by harvest the grass for it. Sometimes she makes Khmer cakes for sell. I go to sell it by ride a bike in my village outside mine. In rainy season I plant rice for my neighbours in order to get some money. I catch the fishes or crabs in the field to cook because we don't have enough money to buy at the market. The life that I live with my grandmother is very miserable. I don't have enough food, don't study enough. I can't study English, don't have enough materials for study because the money that got from sell vegetable it isn't enough. My grandmother difficult to support us. She decided to take me and my sister to KH since I was 10 years old. Living here I have everything like enough food for eat, I feel warm because all the staff always take care of me and make delicious food for me and give good advice especially. I have many friends in KH. I regard them like my brothers and sisters and I have mom and dad to call like people around me. Nowadays I am studying English course at University of South East Asia. KH has changed my life because I have everything and continue my education in University. If don't have KH I won't have today.

This is the reason we need your ongoing help, so that all our kids, like Yim who is now studying at University to become a teacher, have access to the best education possible, according to their capabilities. This is their path to independence and security in the future, enabling them to contribute and hopefully give back to their community one day.



Our Vice-President Belinda, Westbourne Grammar Principal Meg Hanson, and our President Libby, during Westbourne Grammar's visit to Kampuchea House in April.

A very special bond between Kampuchea House and Westbourne Grammar - which we relish and for which we are extremely grateful.

A NOTE ABOUT OUR NEW HOUSE. As this was Libby's first trip back to Siem Reap since the amalgamation of the office and the new house, she was pleased to report that the move has been an outstanding success! As confirmed by Belinda, all have benefited, with more interaction between the younger and older kids, happy engagement between all the kids while home at lunch time, Leng being more accessible to all and able to observe the children and deal with any problems immediately. In fact, it is a big family unit which functions like any other, just on a bigger scale!

## Annual end-of-year appeal.

As we do every year, we are asking you to consider making an end-of-year donation to our cause. The article above outlining Yim's speech shows what a difference Kampuchea House is making in the lives of our students. By providing food and security in a home environment our kids are then able to concentrate on their schooling. Our support for them after school finishes in the various trades, business courses, jewellery-making apprenticeships, hospitality training, teacher-training degrees, and university degrees they have chosen to follow has set them on their path to independence and a fulfilling future. Compared to the lives they would have led, on rural farms or in isolated villages, with no education and no possibility for future employment, their lives have been radically changed and their futures are bright and promising. Please help us to continue in our mission of educating these young Cambodians so that they can provide a good future for themselves and their country.

\* Please note that unfortunately KH no longer has a facility enabling tax deductible donations.

## Some local news DROUGHT

Not only in Melbourne are we holding out for rain.

The Tonle Sap river and lake, which we mentioned in our February newsletter with regard to the Water Festival in Siem Reap last November, is running especially dry this year. Unfortunately a drought is well underway and has worsened each dry season over the past few years.

Some of you may have visited the floating villages on Lake Tonle Sap, an isolated and extremely disadvantaged area of Cambodia, where remote communities eke out a living from extremely poor resources. This year the water level of the lake and river of the same name is exceptionally low, causing the fish to die and jeopardizing the already dire situation of its floating population. The Lake Clinic, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing medical services and basic health care to these isolated communities, is reporting that in April they held their first clinic on land, with their boat sitting on the riverbed rather than floating.

Hopefully rain will come soon, with the start of the rainy season in May, to provide some relief to both farmers and fishermen. Hopefully the many prayers offered during the Khmer New Year will be answered.

The 2 photos below were taken at a distance of just 2 weeks:



## **CHOUM REAB LEA until next time.**

For more on the kids' activities and everyday life in Siem Reap check out our Kampuchea House Facebook page.