

Children ... Education ... Choices...

Summer 2003 Newsletter

A Note From Our Director

The journey towards achieving our mission to help children succeed in school continues. The success of our April trip and seeing those cheerful smiles in the Aine Savanh preschool reinforces that working together we can make a difference. It was such a satisfying experience to see the preschool complete and full of children. It strengthens our resolve to bring more educational opportunities to the children of Luang Prabang Province and beyond.

We have broken ground on our Phou Leuay preschool and together we will follow the construction progress. Phou Leuay is a small ethnic village located on a mountain ridge surrounded by an incredible panoramic setting 102 kilometers or 4 1/2 hours by car south of Luang Prabang, Laos. Educational opportunities have been minimal. The village is comprised of ethnic Khmou, who speak their ethnic Khmou language only. We are excited and hopeful that the children will have a nurturing, learning environment by year-end. We still need additional support. Read how you can help us later in this newsletter.

As we continue our mission to help children succeed in school, we are exploring opportunities to help impoverished children in Cambodia. I thought you might enjoy reading a little bit about Dori's discoveries during his brief one-week trip to Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Cambodia this past July. We will share our proposed plans with you in our Fall newsletter.

As always, we are grateful for your encouragement and support, we couldn't achieve these milestones without you. Share our newsletter with your family, friends and others that may be interested. And please, when you plan for your charitable giving this year, think of us and what we are accomplishing. Our success comes from working together.

Debbie Davis, Executive Director

Aine Savanh Preschool Update

The Aine Savanh preschool finished up their school year at the end of May. School is slated to re-open the first of September and attendance is expected to grow even more. We will continue to support the Aine Savanh preschool programs, provide the funding for teachers salaries, provide school supplies and equipment and monitor their progress.



Phou Leuay Preschool Breaks Ground!!!

Construction of our second preschool in the remote village of Phou Leuay has begun! We are in the beginning stages of the earthwork, the site is being cleared, a road is being cut to the site and the preschool foundation is now in. This preschool in Phou Leuay will serve a small cluster of seven or eight closely situated villages and nearly twice the number of children as the Aine Savanh Preschool.



The site of the Phou Leuay preschool.



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We are now live! www.givechildrenachoice.org

We are proud to announce that our enhanced website is now live! We encourage you to view our website and send us your comments. We strive to provide you timely feedback on our programs and progress and our new website will help us do that. We gratefully acknowledge everyone who helped us put this together, many volunteer hours were spent to bring you an informative look at Give Children A Choice and what we are accomplishing. A special thank you to Doug and Jessica, your expertise, talents and time have brought us yet another positive step forward.

Medicine Project Successfully Continues

The Aine Savanh medicine program continues to make a positive impact on the children of the village. It has been a year since the program was initiated and it has been a complete success! We continue to monitor the program, receive monthly reports and replenish the medicine and supplies on an as-needed basis. Thanks to a dedicated supporter the general health of the children has improved, keeping the children in school and ready to learn. Our preschool teachers have done a great job of identifying when the children are sick and getting them to the village nurse where they can be given the appropriate medicine.



Excerpts from Dori's Trip Notes from Cambodia

I received a phone call late last winter from Bill Smith, a professional sports photographer from Chicago. Bill and his wife, Lauren have been visiting Phnom Penh once or twice a year for the last 13 years and they have developed a passion for the country and the needs of the poor children there. It only took a couple of conversations and off I went.

Cambodia is situated in Southeastern Asia and bordered by the Gulf of Thailand, between Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. The country's population is slightly over 13 million people, 90% of them Khmer and Khmer is their official language. Phnom Penh is the capital city and one of the places that I visited on my trip. Illiteracy in Cambodia is among the highest in the world, estimated at about 65% of the population above the age of 15. Infant mortality is high, estimated at 111 per 1,000 live births and the average life expectancy is 51 years old. Cambodia has a history that has been devastating to its people, during the Khmer Rouge the country, its infrastructure and millions of its people were obliterated. I traveled to the killing fields where I observed many workers missing one or more limbs. I saw the monument with skulls stacked neatly some 30 plus feet high. Beyond the monument were the killing fields, pits where people were murdered and discarded. It was a somber visit.



I visited two orphanages during my visit, the Kien Klaing Orphanage Center and the Centre 'Les Enfants D'Angkor. It tugs at your heart when little children run up to you, holding their arms out to be picked up and held when you know they have no family to give them the love and attention they need. So many of these children were born to single mothers and left on doorsteps, in trash bins and simply abandoned because their mothers could not care for them, many suffer from HIV.



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Both orphanages are full of children ranging in age from birth to eighteen years old. These are the lucky children, lucky in the sense that they are being cared for, but food and nutrition are difficult to come by. Funding is scarce and they depend on local merchants, nonprofits and visitors to help them out. We provided them with powdered milk and rice. Give Children A Choice hopes to assist them in the future.



I visited an area adjacent to the Phnom Penh municipal dump where there was a cluster of maybe twenty or so homes. Each home was maybe 10 by 10 foot and many housed up to eight people. The children of this area spend their days rummaging through the dump to earn money for their families. If they find things worthwhile they can earn .25 to .50 cents a day. While Bill and Lauren told me of these children before my visit I was startled to see it for myself. There is no running water, no bathrooms, and the homes were decrepit. During the rainy season these homes are underwater and the children walk through fly and mosquito infested stagnant waters. The buried garbage rises to the top of the water, the smell unbearable. I visited the dump, at least a half mile long, high piles of garbage, and scattered with children searching for anything of value. The majority of these children will never see life beyond this dump. We talked to one little boy, asked him how old he was, he didn't know, neither did his parents.

Bill and Lauren support two girls who no longer go to the dump on a regular basis. For \$20 to \$30 a month the girls now go to school full time and take English lessons after school. I saw pictures of these girls when they were spending their days in the dump and when I met these girls I was amazed at the transformation. They came running up to Bill and Lauren, smartly dressed in school uniforms, happy smiles on their faces. The girls were polite, quiet and as excited to see Bill and Lauren as they were to see the girls. They introduced themselves to me and counted to ten in English. These girls have done very well in school, one being at the top of her class. The contrast was amazing to me. Give Children A Choice hopes to start a sponsorship program for children who want to go to school, live life outside of the dump.





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The beneficiaries of
our Phou Leuay
Preschool.



Help us bring educational opportunities to the children of Phou Leuay!

The Phou Leuay preschool building will cost approximately \$24,000 to build, not including many other necessary items listed below. The Luang Prabang Education Department will provide the land and timber for construction.

We need your help. Give Children A Choice is providing the children of Phou Leuay a preschool that is long overdue. This area has been at the top of the Education Department's priorities. With your support we will provide the preschool children a nurturing, learning environment where they will learn basic development and social skills. You can be a part of this exciting project by making a donation to our general preschool fund or by donating for any one of these specific needs:

Teacher Training	\$1,000.00
Teacher Salaries	\$192.00 per year each, 6 teachers total
Tables and Benches	\$1,600.00 total
Teacher's Desks and Chairs	\$125.00 each, 3 needed
Blackboards	\$125.00 total
Storage Cabinets	\$105.00 each, 6 needed
Mats	\$2.50 each, 30 needed
Blankets	\$3.50 each, 80 needed
Water Pots & Cups	\$30.00
Playground Equipment	\$1,200.00 set or \$200.00 a piece
School Supplies	\$75.00 per month

Give Children A Choice prides itself on the fact that we direct 100% of your donations to our projects. Give Children A Choice is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation and your donation is tax deductible as provided in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code.

Thank you for helping us help the children of Phou Leuay.