

Second Newsletter: An Exciting Moment in Cambodia

Hi Everyone! This is the second newsletter and I hadn't intended to write until my return but.... it is all so exciting.

So I arrived and went to the shelter which my friend Lynelle comes to work in. It is run by HCC Healthcare Center for Children. It is a simple place with about 60 girls aged 6 to 22. Actually it is a vocational training center teaching weaving (there's lots of silk here) hairdressing, make-up (big deal here), some agriculture, sewing and so on. At the end of the training of about 6 months the girls can choose to stay in Phnom Penh or return to their rural background. The shelter then provides them with the basics to get started with. There are also about 40 permanent resident girls there.

So as I sat with the girls, I saw that one had a hare-lip / cleft palate and as one of my friends is particularly interested in helping these people and there is a high percentage in Cambodia, I wrote her name down.

We spent more time at the shelter and then Lynelle left on Tuesday and I went to dinner with two Singaporeans who have lived here for many many years. They were charming. David Sim and Peter Ng told me endless stories of their efforts to try to help the mass of poor and suffering here (let me know if you want some of these depressing stories) and we had a great time. Finally I told them about the hare-lip girl and they were really interested in, as they called it, "giving someone a life." And they said that Operation Smile (hare lip people can't smile because it draws attention to their lips) was sometimes in Cambodia and they would find out.

So next day I went to visit a monk doing a fabulous environmental project but he was busy and not very receptive and so I was sort of hanging around when Peter called asking to bring the girl immediately.

The shelter is half an hour away.... So I rang their teacher) and she said she would bring her and we met at the hospital.

The list was closed but they would look at her and do her next time.... "But I won't be here," I moaned. So Peter phoned the head of the project Chan Kok Choy and they talked to everyone and worked some kind of miracle and anyway, she is being operated TODAY!!!!

Anyway, so much news.... I bought a huge mountain of English materials, games, badminton rackets and shuttlecocks with the money that Ahn Hyun-ji and Ahn Ji-hoon gave me. Then I wondered what else I should buy. Their teacher was with me, gorgeous, sharp, 23 year-old Chonboleak and she said they would love to learn computer. So we got one for her (she has studied IT so the computer won't break down and just sit there as she can mend it and program it and so on) so that she can show the girls English films etc. on it and also teach them some basics in computer.

Then I still had money so I asked what do the girls need and she said towels. So we bought 60 towels (one was given by Albert and two by Su-hong-i) and then she slowly and quietly told me they would love to have pajamas. So we bought 60 pajamas. Of these 2 were given by Nina, 4 by Do-kyong, 6 by Jae-hyon, 2 by Jae-won, 2 pajamas and 3 towels by Sung-eun and 4 pajamas were given by Jae-mi. They even danced in the pajamas!!!! Children like that never get anything new, so they were so happy!!!! Anyway, i have all the pictures and everything.

So now i must stop as i will go to the hospital to hold the girl's hand as her father is in goal for killing the mother and she must have been abused and beaten too. Her name is Kong Thai and she is 18.

PS. I am going on one of HCC's rural campaigns next week. We will go with all the girls to the villages and try to teach the people not to give up their children and how to avoid AIDS and so on. Will keep you all posted....