

Commerce Cares Cambodia - May 2008

With an occasional yawn, twenty students from Queen's University gathered at Toronto's Pearson Airport early on an April morning. After working for a year to prepare, and with final exams just days behind us, we bought one last Starbucks coffee and set off on our adventure. We stopped in Hong Kong for an impromptu tour of the city and spent two days in Bangkok racing Tuk-tuks in the hope that the breeze might cool us down (it didn't) before we arriving at our final destination, Cambodia.



Our journey culminated in the building of ten houses in the southern province of Kampot. We arrived ahead of the heat in the morning to start building. Less than half an hour later we were drenched with sweat and taking a well earned break. A rumble of thunder let us know that respite was on the way so long as it wasn't accompanied by lightning. Soaking but relieved we were able to finish all 10 in one day. The sense of satisfaction knowing the difference that you are making is impossible to describe. I am truly thankful to those who made it possible; the families, my team, our generous sponsors* and most of all, Tabitha.

Contributed by Chris Henry, Queen's University Commerce Student and trip participant.

*Price Waterhouse Coopers, CodeMorphis Technologies, Genworth Financial Canada, Winpack, Waterbound, and Emerson Electric.

Read-a-thon a clear success!

Last year, my French Immersion class at Sk'aadgaa Naay Elementary School and I began collecting our juice boxes at school with the goal of raising money to purchase a well in Cambodia through the Tabitha Foundation. We discussed how lucky we were to be living here in Canada and more specifically Haida Gwaii, a remote, but superbly beautiful part of the Canadian west coast! I spoke to them of my travels and how difficult some people's lives are in comparison to ours. I thought the fund-raising was a great way of having the kids learn that yes, they too have great influence in the world and they can do many things to make the world better. Our goal was to raise enough money for one or two wells, depending on the amount of juice packs and cans they collected. By Christmas, it was looking like our estimate was close to reality. Then we started a Read-a-thon where the kids were to read in French for a minimum of 30 minutes per day for ten days. Reading is a skill that takes time and practice to strengthen and make fluid. This exercise provided this and helped make it fun and beneficial to many people here and abroad. The response was astounding! The read-a-thon lasted 2 weeks and we raised over \$1500 dollars! It was phenomenal the support we received. We were able to fund the building of 14 wells in Cambodia last year and touch the lives of about 300-400 people! The Read-a-thon proved to be a good way to achieve worthy goals. We are very grateful to all the parents, relatives and friends who supported the Read-a-thon and the fund-raising. *Contributed by Martin Favreau, French Immersion Teacher, Sk'aadgaa Naay Elementary School.*



You Can Make a Difference with a tax deductible donation to Tabitha Foundation (Canada), by cheque addressed to Box 65057, Merivale Road Postal Outlet, Ottawa, ON K2G 5Y3 or by credit card: Visit www.tabitha.ca and click on "Canada Helps" secure website. For Birthdays, Christmas/Seasonal gifts, Memorials (for a loved one who has passed away), Anniversaries, Retirements, Weddings, Gifts for teachers, General "thank you"s, a gift card or certificate will be sent to the recipient for the purchase of: one bicycle = \$20; two piglets = \$35; one well = \$125; or one house = \$1000. More information available at www.tabitha.ca (official receipts sent for gifts over \$10.00).

Rockin4Tabitha III



The dance floor is full of dipping and swaying fans, the crowd is singing out loud, the band is belting out tunes, cottage crafts are for sale in the lobby - Rockin4Tabitha is once again a huge success! On Thursday, September 18th, 2008, the LoneStar Texas Grill played host to the 3rd annual Rockin4Tabitha benefit concert. Organized by Tabitha supporters Bob Carver and Wendy Cunning, Rockin4Tabitha III brought together more than 110 people for an evening of live music featuring Bob's own R&B band, Texas Flood, as well as head-liners, Les Emmerson and the Hitmen, all in support of the 2009 Rockin4Tabitha House Building Team. Starting on January 31, 2009, a volunteer team of Ottawa-based house builders, lead by Bob Carver, Wendy Cunning, and

Jeff Ritskes, will travel to Cambodia's Battambang province to build 20 houses for deserving Khmer families. This is the first build to take place in the Battambang region, and the team will have the honor of being accompanied by Janne Ritskes herself. The team will spend a few days in Phnom Penh, visiting Tuol Sleng prison and the Killing Fields after undergoing a mandatory orientation at the Tabitha head office, after which they will travel to Battambang for a 3-day build. For more information on the build, or to donate to the Rockin4Tabitha team, please contact Bob Carver (Phone: 613-233-6981; Email: carverb@on.aibn.com).

Contributed by Paula C. Piilonen, Ph.D., Mineralogist, Research Division, Canadian Museum of Nature

Dreams Coming True

I've had the privilege to be part of 6 house-building trips. Building houses is a fantastic experience, but better yet, is having the opportunity to go back and see how these families' lives have continued to improve.

Srei, Tabitha's Community Development Manager, explained that Tabitha focuses its efforts in areas that have over 80% of its families living in poverty (earning less than \$1/day). Families begin by saving for either basic necessities, like dishes and pots and pans, or to pay off debts. They then move on to income generating items like livestock to raise and sell or transportation to get to work. Houses come later, and it is the villagers themselves who nominate the families most in need to receive a home.



In only a couple of years, the houses and plots become unrecognizable. Fruit trees, and vegetable gardens surround the houses. Extensions have been added to enlarge the living space, and windows and doors are brightly painted. Washing hangs to dry near the well. Chickens run free, pigs sleep in their pen, and a cow or two are grazing nearby. According to Srei, owning a cow is the clear indicator of a change in status. At this point, families no longer need to depend upon Tabitha.

Srei also pointed out that having a well with clean water helps families reach self-sufficiency two years sooner. Not only does their health improve, but they are also able to irrigate crops through the long dry season, thus maintaining a source of food and income all year round. All of Tabitha's programs, Savings, Wells and House-building, work together to make dreams a reality for the poorest families in Cambodia.

Contributed by Yolanda Henry, former head of Tabitha UK and current member of Tabitha's Canadian Board of Directors - September 2008

Another great effort from the annual walkathon at St. Ann's Church in St. Thomas, ON! This year they raised over \$8,000 for house-building!

West Coast Report

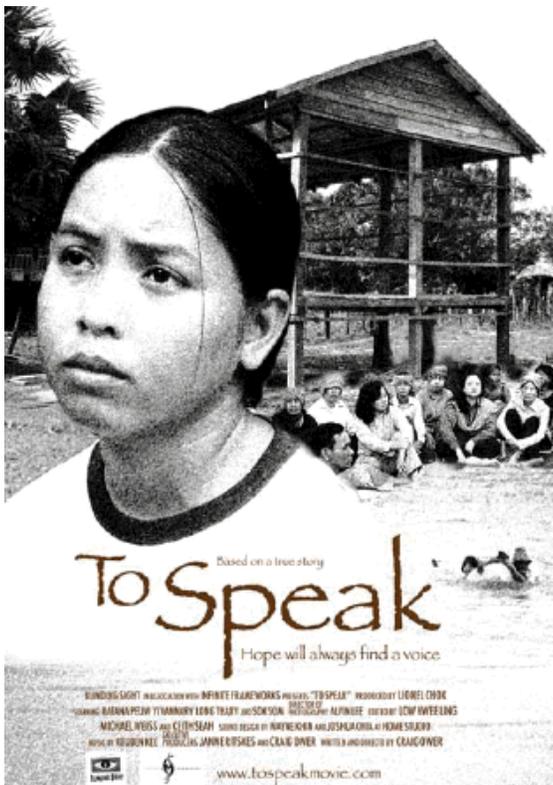
We are now blessed with four members of the Board, all keen and committed. On August 13, Bonnie Robertson took the initiative to call a "planning" meeting at her father's home in West Vancouver accompanied by Glenys Galloway and Gordon Longmuir. Also attending were Kazuko Longmuir, Faye Gentry, Maureen Frederickson and Holly Scott. Jennifer MacKay was unable to attend.

The main current event is a fundraising function to be held at the Surrey Cultural Centre September 13 to help finance the housebuilding expedition being organized in mid-November by Jim and Holly Scott. Gordon Longmuir will speak as well as Brian McConachy of Ratanak Foundation, which also has a significant program in Cambodia. Holly has, of course, been in touch with Janne and arrangements are coming along for their trip, but the signup has been disappointing so far; thus, the need for additional funding. Fortunately, the respected Kenoli Foundation has shown an interest in supporting this effort, and may provide future support for Tabitha.

Other events planned for November have mainly to do with house parties and sales of Tabitha goods. Bonnie has already sent a large order to Janne which will serve for fall and winter events. Among these are a house party by Faye Gentry in Lantzville (north of Nanaimo) on November 8 and there are three others on Vancouver Island in November (e-mail Faye at fayegentry@shaw.ca for more details). Maureen Frederickson will host a similar party in North Vancouver on November 12, Audrey Mitterdorfer will organize a party at Whistler on November 14 and Glenys and Jennifer will hold an event at the Unitarian Church of West Vancouver on November 30. Support seems to be growing out here on the Coast, and we hope to raise the profile of Tabitha considerably over the next several months.

Contributed by D. Gordon Longmuir, former Canadian Ambassador to Cambodia and current member of Tabitha's Canadian Board of Directors, dglo@shaw.ca

2nd Annual Fundraising Event – May 2008



Tabitha Foundation Canada's Second Annual Fundraising Event, held in Ottawa on May 2, 2008, was a great success. Over one hundred people attended a wine and cheese reception and afterwards the screening of the movie "To Speak", a story of a young Cambodian girl's plans and dreams to help her impoverished village. Following the movie, dessert was served, people socialized, had a glass of wine and admired and bought the cottage industry crafts. Many visited the displays for house building and the sale of pigs and bicycles and asked questions about Tabitha.

It was a wonderful evening: an opportunity to learn more about Tabitha and meet its many supporters as well as raise money.



Sponsorships

I was looking for a way to celebrate and give thanks for friendship and love that distance and circumstances won't really allow to manifest. Could all this positive energy be channeled and bear fruit? Janne's Ritskes reports from Tabitha's Savings Program inspired me. What about helping bring health, security, opportunities and joy to those who need them most! Indeed this is what Tabitha's Community Development program achieves. We could sponsor a family, by paying for the interest on their savings over the 7-8 years of the duration of the Savings Program. \$35 times 8... that is very affordable for us. It could sponsor 5 families... could present the idea of sponsoring a village as a social corporate responsibility project in our respective work places... a public sector organization and a private sector firm would both perhaps consider supporting such a project. Tabitha Canada supports its sister organization Tabitha Cambodia a low cost, low key, very reputable NGO, working in one of the poorest countries of the world, with a record of impressive results. It does not sound like a very difficult sell ...

Would *YOU* give it a try? For ideas on individual or corporate sponsorship, check out the web site at www.tabitha.ca, or send an email to info@tabitha.ca, or write to Tabitha postal address. As for us, I will keep you posted as to what we've done. *(Contributed by a Tabitha fan.)*

Our condolences to the families of both Dick Dreise and Martin Ritskes (Janne Ritskes' brother). We give thanks for donations made in their memory, as well as all other memorial donations.

Note from the Chairman – Nov. 2008

Dear Friends of Tabitha,

Our newsletters have proven to be a popular way of letting you, our valued donors, learn about Tabitha Canada's efforts to help the devastated poor in Cambodia, putting a human face on our work. It showcases some of the valuable volunteer work and gives us the opportunity to both thank you and ask you to consider donating volunteer time or financial support again this year.

Tabitha Foundation currently has almost 290,000 Cambodians enrolled in its programs. They are designed to bring families out of poverty and despair, and into lives of dignity, hope and active participation in their communities. In the 14 years since Janne Ritskes started Tabitha, she and her all-Cambodian staff have brought hope and better lives to over half a million of the poorest in Cambodia; earning the respect of both the Cambodian people and their government. In an exciting new trial initiative, Tabitha Cambodia, working with UWCSEA, plan to repair one school and to build another in Prey Veng province. This effort will provide education for 900 students.

Here in Canada, Tabitha continues to attract high quality volunteers dedicated to aid this well-run and effective foundation. Our core group in Ottawa continues to get excellent support from many good people, as you will see from the newsletter. On the west coast, where we now have 4 enthusiastic directors and many volunteers, Tabitha is starting to receive much more attention and support. Southern Ontario has seen a higher profile for Tabitha, largely due to the efforts of Yolanda Henry, the former head of Tabitha UK. A small but important group in Montreal has supported us in several efforts, including the provision of translation and aid with the newsletter.

One of the most significant achievements of the last year was the all-volunteer upgrade of the Tabitha Canada website, largely the work of John Kaldeway. I urge you to visit the revamped site (www.tabitha.ca) and learn even more about our wonderfully fulfilling work.

Donors and volunteers alike may take justifiable pride in having helped, in so many different ways, the amazingly successful work of Tabitha in Cambodia. Thanks to you, many people now to lead lives of optimism and opportunity, rather than helplessness and despondency. Our Canadian all-volunteer board gives joyfully of its time and energy to support this proven program for fighting poverty, making each of your dollars go that much further. Please stand with us, as we continue to reach out, helping thousands of people make the transition to a better life of basic security and dignity. Your help will last a lifetime.

With warm wishes for a joyous family Christmas and New Year,

Respectfully submitted, **Larry E. Neily**, Chairman, Tabitha Foundation (Canada)