



# TABITHA FOUNDATION (Canada)

Patron: Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean  
C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D. Governor General of Canada

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## **Newsletter: No. 4 - February 2009**

### **JANNE RITSKES TO VISIT ONTARIO IN JUNE!**

We are delighted that Janne Ritskes and her daughter, Miriam, will be in Canada this June. Janne's visit is primarily a private one, for a family wedding and a time for her to take some well-earned relaxation; but she has agreed to attend some functions. There will be one large event in Ottawa at the Museum of Nature. The 'Night at the Museum' is planned for Tuesday, June 16, 2009 and will feature a presentation by Janne Ritskes, as well an opportunity to see some of the newly renovated parts of the museum, visit a Silk Fair featuring the wonderful silk bedding and other smaller items made by Tabitha Cottage Industry, and ending with a wine and cheese reception. Tickets, \$30, will be in sale early April.

Other events are planned for the Toronto and Hamilton areas. Details can be found on the website ([www.tabitha.ca](http://www.tabitha.ca)) as they become available, but put the dates on your calendar! If all else fails, you can call 613-224-2709!

### **Rockin4Tabitha 2009 House-Build a Huge Success**

On January 29th, 13 members of the 2008-2009 Rockin4Tabitha House-Building Team gathered at the Billabong Hotel in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Arriving from a wide range of far away locations Vietnam, Thailand, Ottawa, Borneo - the entire team was together for the first time. After an ice-breaking evening of drinks and a swim in the pool, the team headed to the Tabitha office in Phnom Penh to participate in Janne's orientation. For the new members of the team, it was a chance to come face to face with the task ahead of them in the coming days. For the veterans, it was a chance to reflect once more on the history and reality that the Cambodian people must live with day to day, a reality that for most Canadians is hard to even begin to comprehend.

This year, the R4T team was sent to Battambang, a 4 to 6 hour drive (depending on the number and size of the



obstructions along the way ? the inevitable herd of cows, carts being pulled by small ponies or oxen, chickens, trucks, bicycles, motorcycles or police check points) north of Phnom Penh. This is a new area for Tabitha, and we were only the 2nd group to build in this region. This village was really, really poor, with very few pigs and some lean cows and chickens. The team raised more than \$25,000 in the last year, enough to build 20 houses and a number of wells. 20 houses in 3 days with 13 build team members, 4 contractors and 3 Tabitha staff members. Armed with hammers, gloves and aprons donated by Home Depot, and safety goggles and ear plugs by Merkley Building Supply, the team was excited and anxious to start. The plan, barring any injuries or GI issues: 8 houses on Day 1, 8 houses on Day 2 and a final 4 houses on Day 3.

The morning of Monday, February 2nd, saw the team up early for breakfast at the hotel and into the waiting vans by 7am for the 45 minute drive to the build site. Upon arrival, we were warmly welcomed by the villagers who came out en mass to say hi. Srei and her team were quick to put the group into action and we split up and got to work. Stopping for regular water breaks, we completed 4 houses the first morning before stopping for lunch. This was pretty good since some of the beams were once again wood from h..., we've hit softer rocks before!!! On a roll, the team managed to complete another 5 that afternoon!! A very successful first day was capped off by the official ceremony to hand the houses off to the families, and to present them their quilts. Tired and dirty but happy, the team headed back to the hotel for a much needed shower and meal.

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*The help that we give will last a lifetime, rather than a moment.*

Tabitha Foundation (Canada), Merivale Postal Outlet, Box 65057, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2G 5Y3  
Please visit our website for news updates and cottage industry products: [www.tabitha.ca](http://www.tabitha.ca)

Day 2 dawned bright and early and with it brought another 8 houses to completion. The team celebrated in the evening at a local downtown Khmer-Thai restaurant, the Smoking Pot, where we relaxed and shared a last evening together before going our separate ways after the final morning of the build. Day 3 was an easy coast to the finish line, with our by now experienced team. 138 people now have a solid secure home thanks to supporters of Tabitha.

Thanks to all our build team members, the Rockin4Tabitha team, and everyone who has supported our efforts.

*- Contributed by Paula Piilonen & Bob Carver, members of the house-building team.*

### **A House-building Break (or How to Stay Cool in the Heat)**

I recently joined my son Dylan Carter, his fiancée, and other staff members from the UWCSEA school in Singapore, for a two day house-building adventure in Prey Veng province, Cambodia. The week of Chinese New Year (Jan. 24-31) when the international school was closed seemed to be a perfect time to plan for a staff outing that would include rigorous exercise, social debate and compassionate rewards. I was privileged to “go along” with the young teachers, enjoying their company and learning about their individual talents and subject interests. The two day adventure began with an initiation talk by Janne and a visit to Tuol Sleng Prison (S-21) and the Killing Fields. Tabitha then looked after our transportation to our small village about an hour and a half outside of Phnom Penh and also provided us with “house-building” team scarves that we tied around our necks. Upon arrival, we took our



knapsacks, water bottles, and gear to a large table-like device called the station. Here we received hammers, a cluster of nails, gloves, and tape for our forefingers, thumbs, and wrists. Dividing into teams of six, we found our houses and began the work. Floors and walls would be added to structures that already included four stilts, basic “skeleton” and attached roof. After an hour of pounding, (and this was a sound to remain with me for many hours afterwards in my Phnom Penh hotel) someone called “water break” and we left our houses to join some of the villagers at the cistern of water. Here is where I experienced one of my golden moments. Usually the water break consisted of a team leader pouring water over workers’ heads with a bucket or large spoon. This particular break, an older woman of the village stepped forward to help the

women of the house building team with their scarves. She motioned for us to bend over while she tied the wet scarf around our heads in Cambodian style, showing us how to tuck the dripping ends into pockets around our ears. The cooling sensation of the cloth around our heads was a delight and we humbly thanked our teacher for showing us a much cooler way to work in the tropical heat. The older woman took her time and wrapped each head with the cool wet fabric. We laughed to see ourselves and in thanking our teacher, with our palms together and heads bowed; there were tears among the splashes of water as we returned to our hammers and nails.

*- Contributed by Terry Ann Carter, member of the team and Vice-Chair of Tabitha Foundation (Canada).*

*- For information about Tabitha house building, please visit: [www.tabitha.ca](http://www.tabitha.ca) and [housebuilding.tabitha.ca](http://housebuilding.tabitha.ca).*

### **2008 REVENUE UPDATE**

Another great year for Tabitha in Canada! Total revenue increased to a new high of \$206,183, up 30%. Nearly 50% of these funds, or \$101,729, were raised for house building. This is an amazing part of our program, providing shelter and hope for poor Cambodian families and an opportunity to share a life-changing experience for those on the house-building team. \$62,024 was raised in General Funds (used primarily for support of the savings program, which is so important to maintain as Tabitha Cambodia moves into more remote areas of the country). \$40,468 was donated for wells, another strategically important program. We thank all our generous donors.

### **HOW CAN I HELP!**

Donations can be sent to us by mail: Box 65057, Merivale Postal Outlet, Ottawa, ON K2G 5Y3 or can be sent on line using a credit card at: [canadahelps.org](http://canadahelps.org). You may wish to donate as a gift to a friend for a special occasion: birthday, anniversary, memorial, etc. We will be pleased to send you a gift card, or send it to the recipient.

#### **Gifts available:**

support a family for one year: \$120

water well (certificate or gift card available): \$125

support for the arrival of a baby: \$40

mosquito net: \$25

pair of piglets: \$40

rice seed: \$25

battery: \$40

bicycles: \$30

dishes: \$25

### **DO YOU LIKE GOLF?**

Yolanda Henry is organizing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Golf Tournament in support of Tabitha in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON. It will be held on June 10<sup>th</sup>, further details can be had by emailing Yolanda at [tabitha.golf@yahoo.ca](mailto:tabitha.golf@yahoo.ca).

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