



3 Violets news

The Marist Solidarity Cambodia Newsletter
September 2010

Issue number 1

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Director's Greetings

Welcome to our first Marist Solidarity Cambodia Newsletter. It gives me great pleasure to introduce myself as the Director of our Marist Solidarity Cambodia organization (MSC). We have now combined the two operations of the LaValla School and Yodifee under the umbrella organization- Marist Solidarity Cambodia. This was a natural progression as the LaValla school has now been educating our children with disabilities for twelve years and the students that have started on the road to literacy have now progressed far beyond Yodifee and out into the wide world of Cambodia. Nevertheless, our past students as well as those who are with us now need and ask for our constant attention and so it was with this wider overview that Marist Solidarity Cambodia was formed. Marist Solidarity Cambodia is now in Khmer hands with myself heading up the wide reaching side of the organization at Yodifee and Yodifarms and with a new Principal appointed to LaValla School; as Br Terry takes a well earned year-long sabbatical break. This will enable us to better co-ordinate our wide reaching activities bring to these tasks our Khmer

culture along with the Marist concern for our poor disabled children who have been the reason of our organizations over these last years. It is hoped that this new coordinated approach will provide a continuity of assistance to our children and to the youth who leave our hands to live a fruitful and happy life in our Khmer community. Already we have established some excellent facilities in Phnom Penh here at Takhmao with LaValla School and Yodifee at Villa Maria and our outreach establishments have provided new opportunities for our youth in the countryside at Kampot, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Pailin and elsewhere.

MSC plans that these projects will grow and develop into an ever wider range of structures to help poor disabled children in our community. To do this we have the on-going generous support of our Marist organizations in MSC as well as the support of our donors. As you can see from the New Title of this newsletter we have now combined the different programs that we are running.

Mr. Nimul Ouch
Director



Ms. Ho Peakna at grade 12 exam day July 2010



Ms. La received a cow



A performance team at LaValla Graduation Day August 2010

Grade 12 Result 2010

During their final year of high school (Grade 12) Yodifee has supported sixteen students across the country, five in Villa Maria and the rest in their home provinces. Twelve of the students were successful in their Grade 12 examination. Four of these students gained Cambodian Trust scholarships to continue their tertiary programmes of study for the next four years. The several other students secured a Liliane Fonds scholarship. The successful students will live in Phnom Penh while they attend their courses in their chosen subjects such as Tourism, Information Technology, Management or English Language.

All the successful students will continue to be under MSC's supervision and support as they reap the reward of their serious study efforts of 2010. It gives the staff of Yodifee much satisfaction and encouragement to see their young charges do so well. Not all of the students have finally decided what they will do just yet and are exploring their options which also include some skills training programmes such as Agriculture at Yodifarm. We wish them every success in their future studies no matter where it may lead them.



Product Focus

It's the season to be jolly... and now is the best time to purchase Yodicraft items for Christmas! We can offer you something extra special from our beautiful range of wooden carving and other artifacts. The quality is amazing, the price is unbelievable, and to top it all off you will be helping our disadvantaged youth attain self sufficiency. We want our youth to become fully functioning members of society and Yodicraft is one of the initiatives that we are using to work towards achieving this goal. Now, thanks to Yodicraft, our people are being given the opportunity to use their own talent, as well as the skills that they have learnt through our training programmes to earn a living. We have extremely talented artisans here and they produce unique and very high quality products, from our wooden carvings to our Cambodian silk bags-ideal Christmas gifts for your loved ones. You can ask us for a catalogue or place your order via email nimullavalla@yodiffee.org

Shopping online is available. Please browse our website to www.yodicraft.com

Thanks for shopping with Yodicraft.



LaValla Graduates 2010

In a colorful ceremony on Wednesday 4th August 43 students of LaValla School graduated in the presence of many guests and friends. The graduates processed through the applauding crowd of well wishers to receive their *Krama* from their teachers. Br Terry welcomed the graduates and then introduced the guest of honor, Sr Regina Pellicore from Maryknoll.

A most fitting guest of honor as Sr Regina is soon to return to the USA to take up another position for the Maryknoll organization who have been such good friends and helpers of our school since it first commenced in Phnom Penh. Br Terry congratulated the graduates on their achievements, thanked them for their contribution while at LaValla and wished them well in the future.

The graduates received their certificates from Sr. Regina and Mr. Ouch Nimul to the applause of the gathering.

Br Terry's words were responded to by two of the graduates. The remaining students then presented each graduate with a farewell present from the school after which Sr Regina encouraged the graduates to continue their studies at high school or vocational training school.

The graduates sang their farewell song of *Colors* to complete the graduation ceremony. A short concert was followed by morning tea and a picnic lunch that were enjoyed by all.



LaValla Graduates at Graduation Ceremony at LaValla School Takhmao, August 2010



Income Generation for Independent Living and 2010 Training

You may recall how in the last issue of Yodiffee Newsletter (No.4) we spoke of the five young men developing their farming skills at Yodifarm, Kampot. After completing their course they have now returned to their villages in southern Cambodia where they are pursuing their farming of chickens or pigs which will generate an income for them and their families.

Phnom Penh is fortunate to have the Jesuit Vocational Training Centre (JVTC) where young men and women are educated and trained in agriculture, motor repair, electronics, sewing and book binding. Yodiffee has been able to support fourteen students at JVTC which provides accommodation as well as instruction. Students care for themselves with washing, cleaning and cooking duties. The full year's programme includes both theory and practical aspects of their subject. Once students have completed a JVTC course they are then prepared by Yodiffee to commence their own business or farm. Yodiffee prepares and consults with the family and the student for this step into being self supported even if they are disabled. Yodiffee staff will continue to visit every six months and support the family and former student providing encouragement, advice and professional help to keep the income being generated for the self support of the disabled person.



Mr. Pheng Sophoal at his chicken raising business, Kompong Chnang



Ms. La received a cow to raise earning her living, Kompong Speu



Mr. Vanda is cutting hair at his barber shop, Kampot

Stepsafe

We are grateful to *Step Safe Funding* for their generous assistance in helping refurbish out computer training room with new computers and new workstation desks so it has become a true IT Centre rather than just a room with a few computers in it. Now we will be able to conduct proper classes in IT so that our young people with disabilities will be able to gain computer skills that will make them so much more eligible for employment as they master the different Microsoft suites as well as typing skills. It is hoped that as one student becomes more proficient in computing they will teach and encourage others to undertake the time consuming task of learning IT. In this way many students will have an additional skill to the subjects that they normally study either at high school, university or in vocational training.

Our instructor is a past student, Sophoan Kheng.

Profile in Determination

Ho PeakNa is a determined young woman who lost the use of her legs through polio suffered as a child and has been confined to a wheel chair most of her life. Ho PeakNa commenced her return to education at LaValla school where she quickly completed her primary studies that had been interrupted by her polio treatment.



Ms. Ho PeakNa was carried to take her 12 exam day July 2010

This year, after seven years at the local high school at Takhmao and living at Villa Maria, Ho PeakNa finally sat for her Grade 12 exam. Most of us are familiar with the stress of sitting for exams where even the best prepared students are nervous but for Ho PeakNa there was another unforeseen hurdle!

Upon arrival at the examination venue in her wheel chair Ho PeakNa discovered that the examination was to be held on the third floor of the building! Ho PeakNa pleaded with the Principal to allow her to sit the exam on the ground floor without success. Undaunted, Ho PeakNa's determination to sit the exam was supported by four Yodiffee staff members who carried her up the stairs in her wheel chair. Her embarrassing arrival in the exam room was thus heightened, as if the mere fact of her disability was already not enough. One can easily imagine the stressful state of this young woman preparing to sit the most important exam of her life! As if this difficulty was not enough to shake the confidence of the best of students, Ho PeakNa was further embarrassed to find that her wheel chair would not fit through the toilet door and so she was forced to crawl across a wet and dirty floor to use the toilet. Such determination to sit for her exam despite all these stressful and embarrassing moments in front of her classmates must surely be rewarded! Imagine Ho PeakNa's delight to find that her efforts and determination had been rewarded by not only passing her exam but Ho PeakNa has won a scholarship to enable her to continue her Tertiary studies for the next four years.

Congratulations to a very determined young woman, Ho PeakNa!



PACHID



Students at the event

Parents Association for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (PACHID) commenced in 2008 to support, encourage and train parents who have children with intellectual disabilities. The parents gathered with their children twice a week and were instructed in caring for their children better as well as learning new ways to teach and train their children. They have been helped professionally especially by teachers

from *The Rabbit School*. After this initial programme PACHID

broadened its scope to promote awareness in the community towards intellectual disability. This was achieved over the last few years by a generous grant from the ABILIS Foundation of Finland and others, which enabled PACHID to present a one year course for both parents and children and to support teachers and instructors. Besides this, PACHID was able to combine with other NGO's in Cambodia to make the community more aware of the needs of the intellectually disabled.

Yodiffee with assistance from Liliane Fonds in 2010 has assisted in the PACHID educational programme by encouraging some of the students at Yodiffee to participate in the caring of the children in the PACHID programme. These students see themselves as giving something back to the community for the help that they have received themselves. LaValla School has provided funds to develop a good space for the children. There is now a classroom and an Activities room where students can learn and play. The children and carers also come for a weekly swim in the therapy pool at LaValla. Unfortunately, the funds for PACHID's activities have now run low and so PACHID's director, Ms Svay Simorn, is seeking generous donors to support the continuation of this most deserving community programme.

Our WISH LIST for Christmas 2010

As we come towards the Christmas period we all have our wish list which normally includes dreams that we can never expect as well as those that we wish for in our everyday living. MSC's wish list includes:

- + Wheelchairs for some of our smaller children at LaValla school,
- + A larger dining area at Villa Maria,
- + A motor (TukTuK) for PACHID so they could collect the children for school.

All donations and help are appreciated, however because of practical reasons, such as security and postal problems many times we find it better to receive money rather than actual items.

ABOUT US

LaValla School opened in June 1998. LaValla offers poor disabled boys and girls the opportunity to complete their elementary school that was interrupted due to their illnesses. Some had never been to school and as a consequence the average age of the students is about 15. Once at LaValla they are able to follow an accelerated programme of studies, completing two grades in one year, after which they can proceed to the government high school nearest their homes. With the success of the initial programme it was found that a second phase of the project was needed to monitor these high school students as well as to support those who dropped out or went into vocational courses. In 2002 the second programme was formalized as Yodiffee that was established at Villa Maria not far from LaValla in Prek Reang village. This phase developed into a variety of programs such as Yodifarm and Yodicraft supporting disabled youth but still with a strong emphasis on normal education. The time was coming to unite both programmes to give a more consolidated approach to the whole project and naturally to place everything in Khmer hands.

This year, 2010, Mr Ouch Nimul was accepted to the position of Director of the renamed project: *Marist Solidarity Cambodia*. With this restructuring new positions have evolved and most are being filled by the present staff in recognition of their many years of service to our disabled children.

Recent Visits

Thanks for the visits to our centres of our friends recently:

Br. Jeff Crowe FMS
Fr. Kevin Stewart SM
Dr. David Buckley
Sr. Anne Sklenars S.J
Mr. Frank Surgener RideAid
Ms. Julie Lowe
Mr. Joe Fay
Ms. Miep Kessler
Ms. Jose Vahl
Ms. Françoise Bricout
Fr. Oh In-don Francisco, S.J
Mr. Wayne Slattery

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3Violetsnews is a three- monthly newsletter published by Marist Solidarity Cambodia (MSC)

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