



CENTENNIAL BEAT

April 2013

Service Above Self

The Rotary Club of Toronto \$100,000 Centennial Award

Dear Readers,

The Centennial Beat is a special edition created for our Club's Centennial to honour our committees' choices for Centennial grants totaling \$1,000,000 and for highlighting very special topics for our Club members.

This issue, along with this week's Voice, featuring the choice of our International Service Committee, could not have been written without the help of Chris Snyder who has been on the committee for one third of the existence of our Club! With his usual energy and resolve, he has led our sweat equity trips and has been our main contact with Bakong Technical College.

Enjoy,
Maureen Bird

Selecting The International Service Committee's Centennial Project

– by Maureen Bird and Chris Snyder

The International Service Committee (ISC) of The Rotary Club of Toronto selected the Bakong Technical College (BTC) project at the conclusion of an extended search and review of grant applications from six international projects.

The ISC was pleased to make a choice to assist with the "bricks and mortar" in a project for which we see long-term sustainability. The committee is particularly happy to continue supporting the work of Ronnie Yimsut, BTC Founder and friend of our Club. Ronnie's

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Chris and Pat Snyder with their "brick"

Creating Opportunities Through Skill Training: The Bakong Technical College In Cambodia – Choice Of The International Service Committee

– by Maureen Bird and Chris Snyder

Cambodia is still recovering from the civil war, genocide and regional conflict that devastated the country for more than 20 years. During that time, all human rights were abolished, the educated and urban were the first casualties with an estimated two million people dying. The education system collapsed, communities were destroyed, and the conflicts left behind over 10 million landmines.

Bakong Technical College (BTC) has a unique mission to serve the rural community of Siem Reap by building a school to provide the local Cambodian people with much needed vocational training and skills.

The school is located just outside of Siem Reap, the home of the UNESCO heritage site Angkor Wat. Bakong Technical College is headed by Ronnie Yimsut, a survivor of one of the Killing Fields. He

is the only one of more than 100 people including a large part of his family to survive the Tonle Sap Massacre – his parents and seven siblings died. He escaped to a refugee camp in Thailand, and then eventually to the United States.

The construction began in early 2009. The first building, now complete, is a multi-purpose pavilion and kitchen built in the traditional Khmer style. The second building is a library and administrative complex.

Reforestation is a huge need in the country and tree planting has already become an important part of the BTC project.

When construction is finished, there will be space for approximately 300 young people, including members of landmine survivors' families, to learn vocational skills. The skills being taught will focus on the tourist trade and environmental protection. Courses will include English, computer training, cooking, hospitality training, green design, fish farming, agriculture, micro-credit and bicycle repairs. The latter will be run by landmine survivors.



Administrative building

The Rotary Club of Toronto has supported BTC with earlier grants and sweat equity missions that began the construction of the college community center and mess hall in 2009 and 2011. The Centennial Grant of \$100,000 will be used to continue the work on the project administration building, library, IT/computer center and classrooms. The school will be opened November 25th. It is estimated that 40 Rotarians & Friends from this year's sweat equity teams, working in partnership with the Canadian Landmine Foundation, will be present.

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Selecting the International Service Committee's Centennial Project

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dedication and leadership provides the insight and integrity that bring success to this ambitious project.

The BTC partnership represents the best Rotary values of "Service Above Self", offering practical support to a recovering community with excellent prospects for development. This project very clearly satisfied the "Areas of Focus" which are consistent with Rotary International and Rotary Clubs worldwide. These six areas, considered to have the potential for the most successful and sustainable Rotary service are: peace and conflict prevention/resolution, disease prevention and treatment, water and sanitation, maternal and child health, basic education and literacy, and economic development.

This project clearly relates to peace and conflict resolution and economic development. The project will continue to create a high presence for our Club in a wonderfully beautiful country that is slowly recovering!



Work in progress



Ronnie Yimsut with plans

Building With Your Hands And Heart – A Life-Changing Experience

– by Susan Hunter

In November 2011, two groups of Rotary volunteers and friends went to Cambodia to help build the vocational school along with a local Cambodian crew. For two weeks, we worked on constructing the main meeting and dining areas as well as the IT Centre and Library under the very hot sun. We marveled at the ingenuity of the Cambodian crew and their extraordinary ability and skill to work with the meager tools and supplies available to them. But amidst the hard work, there was lots of camaraderie among the volunteers and the local crew as they tolerated our lack of construction skills with good humour.

Returning home from the sweat equity trip, we reflected on the experience and came to understand that:

- Ultimately we all want the same thing -- a peaceful environment and a safe home, enough food for our families, opportunities for our children to get an education, and to be happy
- To see and judge a situation from a Western-based perspective and to assume that we always have the right answer or even the best solution is flawed thinking
- An attitude of adaptability and flexibility goes a long way to truly enjoying the sweat equity experience.

Many of us see this experience as the beginning of an ongoing commitment to

Cambodia. In November 2013, we will return to Siem Reap to open the Bakong Technical College and begin a new era that will provide opportunity for the local people and their communities.



Bakong Technical College



Susan Hunter working hard

MOVING FORWARD

Be Part of the Action!
Join us for BTC's opening
in November

Contact Chris Snyder at
chris@eccgroup.ca

Join our vital and active
committee!

Contact chair Maureen Bird
Maureen.bird@sympatico.ca

Join us for our next activity!
Trump AIDS Walk
Saturday, April 27, 9 am

www.trumpaidstoronto.ca

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