

# perspectives

...on the Semiahmoo Peninsula

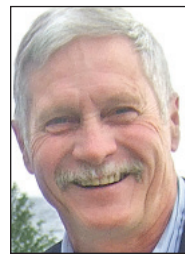
**South Surrey club** supporting orphanage renovations and education initiatives

## Rotarians providing aid to Cambodia

**Sarah Massah**  
Staff Reporter

Two members of the Rotary Club of South Surrey were able to see firsthand the benefits of their organization's fundraising after visiting an orphanage in Cambodia.

Longtime Rotarians Stuart Wilson and Brian O'Ruairc visited the country in mid-March following their club's initial donation of \$2,500 for upgrades to an orphanage in Battambang, which they were first made aware of when a member of the Rotary Club of Bangkok South – also a White Rock resident – told them about it.



Stuart Wilson



Brian O'Ruairc

"I have been in the Rotary club for 20 years and an international project like this was always something I wanted to be involved with," Wilson told *Peace Arch News* Friday. "So when he started talking to us about this project, I thought, 'here's the perfect opportunity.'"

Using their own funds, the two Semiahmoo Peninsula residents travelled first to Bangkok, then drove six hours to get to the Cambodian city.

"The cultural differences were incredible," Wilson said. "So many people have nothing. The towns we visited before we arrived at the orphanage, it was pretty basic."

Once they arrived, Wilson and O'Ruairc met with members of the rotary clubs of Bangkok South, Amsterdam Minerva and the FLOAT Foundation. The various groups have all provided support for the orphanage, Wilson said.

The South Surrey rotary's focus initially was to upgrade the three buildings that housed the children by adding separation walls and helping with heat mitigation, including electrical wiring to support new fans.

"We raised money to upgrade dorms and sleeping accommodations," Wilson said, noting the three buildings are similar to large auditoriums, with one housing the girls, one housing the boys and one for studying and teaching. "The kids are there



*Contributed photos*

**Longtime Rotarians Stuart Wilson and Brian O'Ruairc travelled to Cambodia in March to visit an orphanage supported by the club. The club provided \$2,500 initially to support efforts to renovate and upgrade three buildings in the orphanage.**

under these tin-roof shacks and the heat is staggering. They have 35 degrees beating down on them."

While work had yet to begin on the renovations – which will be done by local crews – Wilson and O'Ruairc, a longtime

contractor, were able to provide advice and suggestions.

"We were more in the observer status," Wilson said, noting that once upgrades begin, a Cambodian contact with the rotary will ensure work is being done and will give

the OK to release funds.

Another area needing attention is the kitchen, comprising two large woks on a dirt floor, open to the elements, with little counter space.

"Now, (the orphanage) wants to rework the kitchen, so that's something (the rotary) can think about. They know what they need and we've seen it, so we're on the same page," Wilson said.

"At the end of the day, we're going over there and we have an organization that can help and kids that need some help. We're the interpreters of what we see and can help decide what should be done in respect to the money."

With the information gathered by the two men, the rotary focused their annual Fool's Night Out fundraiser in April on providing further support for the Cambodia project, including the new kitchen, a new bathroom, new computers, lessons for the children, school uniforms, bicycles and painting of the buildings, as well as aid for those who will be exiting the school system.

"These kids are 16 and 17, and they're done school, but they have no post-secondary or vocational skills," Wilson said. "So we're on that page also trying to find out how to support some of these kids through schooling."

Most importantly, Wilson noted, is that none of the efforts in Cambodia – or for any one of their various projects locally – would be or will be possible without the support the Rotary club receives from the community.

"We lean on the community to support us. This is the kind of thing we're doing, internationally and locally. When it's local, that's easy to demonstrate, but to say this is what we're doing in Cambodia... This is what we are and what we're going to do," Wilson said.

For more information about the Rotary Club of South Surrey or to donate, visit [www.clubrunner.ca/Portal/Home.aspx?cid=261](http://www.clubrunner.ca/Portal/Home.aspx?cid=261)

All funds raised by the club go directly to charitable projects. None are used towards administrative costs.

**"We lean on the community to support us. This is the kind of thing we're doing locally and internationally."**

## Retractable Awnings

- ★ Retractable Screen Doors
- ★ Retractable Awnings
- ★ Security Screens
- ★ Patio Slider Screens
- ★ DIY Entry Door Awnings
- ★ Retractable Pergola Canopies
- ★ VistaView Large Opening Retractable Screens

*Expand Your Living Space*

**Wizard**

**604.299.8878**  
[www.wizardscreens.com](http://www.wizardscreens.com)