



KEP GARDENS NEWSLETTER

January 2015

Hi Everyone,

We hope everyone had a great Christmas. We did. Christmas Eve we had a traditional Swedish Christmas dinner. So many different tastes, really yummy. On Christmas Day we had a traditional English Christmas lunch, turkey, the works. Food, food, food was the theme for this Christmas.

I am sitting here trying to gather my thoughts as so much has happened since the last newsletter. Maybe not different things happening but many people passing through the gates and achieving heaps. Huge thanks to all the people who have contributed to the success of Kep Gardens in many different ways. It would not be possible without a lot of people's input.

BeMore Volunteers



Irene

Susan



Mirthe

Many thanks to these girls. I hope they got back from their experience as much as they gave to the students at Kep Gardens. Without volunteers we cannot run our Reading and Conversation Programme which is so beneficial for the students, especially the older ones. Unfortunately we only have one volunteer booked for 2015 which will severely curtail this programme but the year is young so let's hope numbers improve.

Volunteers

Lisalotte came back to Kep Gardens for a week bringing her husband, Jarna, to share her experiences from her stay in April. Not only did they read and converse with the students but out of class time continued digging our water reticulation system that some World Challenge members began. Thanks for your input and support of Kep Gardens.



Jarna and Lisalotte

World Challenge

December saw 3 groups from Australia visiting. Two groups were from Adelaide, one from a neighbouring suburb where we lived and the other not that far away. All 3 schools were great kids who worked hard, made themselves at home and fitted well into our small community. Our students gain so much from these visits from the young ones having new playmates to the older ones enjoying conversation during class time, dancing and friendship at party time. We hope the visitors left Kep Gardens with fond memories and an insight into the Cambodian rural way of life.

Seaview High School



building a second sandpit, settling the worm tunnel in its home, initial painting of tunnel, erecting high flying fox

Melville Senior High School



building a second sandpit, painting sandpits bright colours, erecting jungle gym, erecting and painting competition size basketball ring and backboard

I apologize if I have left anything out. All schools worked continually, overlapping at times, completing jobs started from before or renovating when the correct material arrived eg steel cable for flying foxes. The playground is gradually filling up providing not only our students but also other village children with hours of fun and enjoyment.



January saw two schools from New Zealand visit and stay at Kep Gardens. Once again, a great effort, great bunch of kids and we loved having them visit Kep Gardens.

Long Bay College



leveling the roundabout, a huge job setting the foundations for the fort, making sure all posts level, a long tedious job but a very important one. The girls helped getting the library straight and others dug trenches for our water supply to be piped from the dam.

St Bede's College



erecting and painting small basketball ring and backboard for younger children, platform for flying fox, steel cable for flying foxes, cementing places and repainting areas of worm tunnel where tarpaulin was initially used





All visiting schools participated in our Reading and Conversation Programme. I think this was the part of the project that the students liked best, the one-on-one interaction with the Cambodian children and youth.

The last night of each group's visit we had a party. Our Class 4 is happy to attend even if there are 2 a week. They have nowhere here where they can go to dance and have fun with friends.



continued building fort, digging trenches for water pipes, weeding the garden, attaching slides to fort

World Challenge Videographer

World Challenge selected Kep Gardens to be videoed for their website to show to potential school groups thinking about where to travel. It will only run for 2 minutes so a lot has to be packed into such a short time. James only had Saturday afternoon at Kep Gardens so we asked all the kids to come to school like a normal day. Most came so I hope he will include as many as he can in the short film time he has. I will let you know the link to Youtube when it has been completed. We will also put the link on our web page.

Storytelling and Playgroup

To start with we had many children attending and had to add Tuesday and Thursday to our original plan of Monday and Wednesday. Numbers have dropped slightly but are still large enough to warrant 4 days. Kimsy runs this group who are really cute. They arrive very early and play in the playground while it is cooler.





Beanies

The photo above is showing the playgroup children receiving beanies from Long Bay College. People from all over New Zealand knit beanies to send to various charitable organizations. A student obviously had a contact and brought over bags full. Unfortunately they were mostly small. They fitted the smaller children and several are still wearing their beanie to school every day. They will not be wasted as the Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital where our children attend for health checks have recently opened a midwifery section. Most Cambodian babies wear beanies after birth so we will offer them to the hospital which I am sure will receive them with open arms. Thank you very much to all the knitters in New Zealand for your dedication.



Sopheak's daughter

One of our youngest playgroupers, not only wearing her beanie but one morning I saw her tottering past the schoolroom towards the library with her library book clasped in her hands, taking it back to get another one. **THIS IS WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT!!** It is exactly what we are trying to encourage, a love of reading and books.

Career Student Donations

Thank you very much to the people who have donated money to help pay the fees and living expenses for the 1 engineering student and 3 nursing students sponsored by Kep Gardens. Your support is much appreciated by the students and all at Kep Gardens.



We met the nursing students for dinner one night while we were in Sihanoukville. Their first year has flown by and they have been very successful in their examinations. We also met with Baraing in Phnom Penh. All 4 of them are looking healthy and very happy.

Student Health and Dental Checks

Below is an excerpt from a Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital newsletter:

"Despite progress in the last few years, Cambodia has still some of the worst health indicators in Southeast Asia. There is growing evidence that malnutrition in early childhood causes lasting health damages and reduces the physical and mental capabilities of a population. Many families are broken, destroyed by domestic violence, alcohol abuse and poverty and children grow up in a dysfunctional environment."

We would like to thank Arie and Dini Holkers from The Netherlands who fundraise every year with family and friends to contribute towards the cost of our students to attend Sonja Kill Memorial Hospital for annual health checks plus a yearly visit from the Mobile Dental Clinic run by the Buddhist Institute.

We will be organizing the hospital visits for late February this year to beat the really hot weather travelling in the ramok under the sun.

Sports Day

The second Sunday in January we had a sports day playing soccer and volleyball games against a French organization, MCS. We are going to make this a regular event.



Many other students came to cheer and watch.

Spare Dog's Puppies

Coca has been very sick. She almost died and although she is still very skinny she is well on the way to recovery. Spare Dog has had 5 puppies. Little cuties!! They have gone home to the staff member's home who actually owns Spare Dog. Moi Deit which means 'one more' in Khmer is a new addition to our family of dogs. She was by the side of the road where Andrew was working for a couple of days and no one claimed her so he brought her home. She goes everywhere in the ute with him. He beeps twice and she jumps into the car. Five dogs – mmmm. One of our geese died but we now have a female to keep the old male company. He is certainly quieter now.



Weblink

Michael Jones, a visitor to Kep Gardens wrote about his experiences on his blog. I have added his weblink here for your information:

<http://www.talk4meaning.co.uk/2014/12/heroes-in-kep-gardens-cambodia-with-help-from-bowie-play-for-change-and-musicians-in-angkor-wat/#.VJcLfCcBgHappy>



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL
JANINE AND ANDREW

