

## An Update on FDCC and Mekhala House

There have been some exciting developments at Mekhala House lately, the most important being that it is now home to 31 children, up from the 13 children that we started off with, more than a year ago.

We have recently employed Phlong Sinath as House Mother at Mekhala House. Sinath's role is to ensure the children receive the best possible care and support. Education is obviously a very important element of this and Sinath will be monitoring all of the children's progress at school. Her initial report provided the very encouraging news that most of the older children are receiving grades that will potentially enable them to go to university in about three years time. This is wonderful and reinforces our belief that the children have a bright future if given the opportunity. Of course, some children are struggling given their limited schooling to date, but we are also providing them with every encouragement to catch up and achieve their potential.

The children recently started traditional Khmer dancing lessons every Sunday and as a result were able to put on a performance for Di Willis (Director) on her last visit to Prey Veng in March (see photo inset). The meaning of the dance



is to wish members of the audience success in their lives.

We also have some exciting fundraisers planned with a yoga event and an FDCC dinner planned at a Cambodian restaurant – although we can assure you the Cambodian delicacy of fried spiders is definitely not on the menu! We will send out more details when they have been finalised.

## Traditional Cambodian Barbeque

The final evening in Prey Veng on my recent visit was time for a party with all of the girls and staff members, which meant it was time for 'cow climbing the mountain'. Well, not a real cow.... and there are no mountains in Prey Veng: this is the literal translation for a regional Cambodian dish served at large gatherings, kind of like the backyard barbeque, Cambodian style.

The 'mountain' is a convex shaped central section of a ringed cooking dish that covers a wok-shaped bowl containing hot coals. The ringed dish is filled with butter and oil (this recipe does receive approval from the Heart Foundation). Fresh vegetables – carrot, Chinese cabbage, beans and water spinach (freshly picked from the children's vegetable patch) were cooked in the butter and oil with black sesame seed. The sliced beef was dipped in egg and placed on the 'mountain' – where it rested rather than climbed. Then everyone helped themselves to the food when cooked, which was served with rice and two dipping



saucers, one a sesame paste and the other made from chillies. It was very good.

The girls were the enthusiastic chefs for the evening but when the eating was over chef Phally (pictured) became DJ Phally as she took control of the music on the portable stereo. For the remainder of the evening a group of excitable, energetic children danced and played and tried, with some success, to get the less-energetic grown-ups to dance to a selection of Cambodian pop songs.

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## Yoga Fundraiser – Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April

Susanne, a yoga teacher at the Williamstown Yoga Centre has kindly organised a fundraiser for the purpose of purchasing computers for the Mekhala House children. She is organising two yoga sessions on the 27<sup>th</sup> April at 1.00 – 2.30pm and 7.30 to 9.00pm. These sessions will include some gentle yoga poses with relaxation and meditation. All participants will be given a blessed crystal and a raffle will be drawn during the evening session. Prizes have been donated by local Williamstown businesses, students and teachers of the Williamstown Yoga Centre.

The cost is \$20 per person and all enquiries can be directed to Susanne 9397 3015 or [susanne@williamstownyoga.com.au](mailto:susanne@williamstownyoga.com.au) Bookings are essential.

## FDCC Fundraiser – Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> June

FDCC will hold a fundraising dinner on Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2007 at the quality Cambodian restaurant Bopha Devi located at the Docklands.

*“Cambodian (or Khmer) cuisine is an exotic fusion of Chinese, Indian & French influences. An emphasis is placed on freshness of ingredients & simplicity in cooking, allowing the complex aromas, textures & flavours to shine. The core flavours are subtle, utilising lemongrass, galangal, lime leaves and turmeric.”*

The cost of dinner and drinks will be \$100 per person with all money raised going towards operating costs for Mekhala House in Prey Veng, Cambodia. There will also be an auction of donated items on the night.

Please email [info@fdcc.com.au](mailto:info@fdcc.com.au) or call Melani Daruis on 0414 291 680 for further information or bookings. Bopha Devi only has seating capacity of 80, so please book early to avoid disappointment....

## Khmer New Year

The Khmer New Year in Cambodia is a celebration in mid April that brings the country to a standstill. It coincides with the end of the rice harvest and before the planting of next season's crop. FDCC ensures that all of the children return to their villages to celebrate New Year with their guardians and extended families.

The festival begins with the monks and people building five sand mountains to symbolise the burial chambers of Buddha. They are decorated with incense, perfume and flags. People place a handful of sand onto each of the mountains wishing for good luck and happiness for themselves and families and freedom from bad luck caused by their own or their ancestors' wrongdoing.

The monks prepare offerings to the gods and place them on tables surrounding the sand mountains. People come to sit at the sand mountains as the monks pray. These prayers change the sand mountains into the burial grounds of Buddha.

After this people celebrate playing games and dancing, and it's only at this time of year that young men and women are allowed to dance and play games together.

Later there is a ceremony to clean the Buddha and people carry buckets of water perfumed with jasmine, into the temple. After prayers the monks sprinkle water over the congregation and clean the statue of Buddha. This is to bring good luck for the New Year and to be free of any bad luck from the old year.

The celebrations end with a ceremony called Chlong Bon Chol Chnam to send the ancestors home.



## School Visit

A positive outcome from our recent trip was the opportunity to assist the Prey Veng Krong Primary School where the Mekhala House children attend. At the request of the school Director, we are raising money to build a shelter for the children to sit, eat and relax during their breaks as there is little shade in the grounds. We believe this is a great project to be involved in as it benefits the children during hot school days - and it's always hot in Prey Veng!

We need to raise \$1,000 and are seeking donations from anyone willing to assist us. If you are interested in helping raise money for the shelter, please contact Mark on 0414 291 605.

### All donations can be forwarded to:

The Foundation for Developing Cambodian Orphans Trust  
ANZ Banking Group: BSB 013 423 Account No: 4961-05454