HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER FOR 2019:
A YEAR OF SHINING STARS

To all donors, supporters and friends of The Chelly Foundation:

We have had another success-filled year to date in helping to improve the lives of the children of Chum Kiri District in southern rural Cambodia. Our Chelly Scholars are flourishing at university, and the children in Chum Kiri have benefited from a wide variety of teaching and educational opportunities provided by our charity. We could not have accomplished everything we have achieved in the past four years without the enthusiastic support of hundreds of donors, along with generous partner organizations. Here are some of the highlights of 2019:

Chelly Scholarships Now Include 26 Scholars Being Given Assistance To Attend College

We began the Chelly Scholarship program in 2015 with one scholar, Manouv, attending at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Each year, the program has grown – from one, to 6, to 10, to 19 and now as of Fall semester 2019, to 26 Chelly Scholars (23 young women, 3 young men). We are providing scholarships in the form of either full or partial tuition, as well as free housing near to several universities the scholars attend. As everyone is from far away Chum Kiri, the students have formed special friendships, with the older students serving as big sisters and brothers. We have students learning in a variety of programs, including chemistry, business, banking, accounting, hotel management, and teaching. Everyone continues to be doing well in school, but we wish to highlight four “bright stars” in particular:

--Manouv was our first Chelly Scholar and finished her course work in chemistry this semester at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Manouv had a part-time job at a pharmaceutical company during college, and now may pursue a job in industrial agriculture. We are so proud of her as a shining light for all the Chelly Scholars who followed in her footsteps.

--Channary was in the second group of Chelly Scholars and graduated early with a degree in accounting from Vanda Institute. We agreed to fund additional schooling for Channary to get a second degree in English.

Manouv and Channary were invited back to the Hun Sen Angchork High School this Fall to participate in opening ceremonies and to give inspiring speeches about studying hard to get ahead, and of course about life
far away from the village studying and working in the capital city of Phnom Penh (an experience many students only get to dream about). Here they are with Samorn Khem, teacher and Chelly Foundation staff member, and Nop Ess, our in-country director.

-- Jakkrya is our Chelly Scholar who also was one of only 20 young women selected each year from all of Cambodia to take part in the very prestigious Harpswell Foundation program, after The Chelly Foundation facilitated the first-ever interviews by Harpswell staff of students from Chum Kiri’s two high schools. This residence program while students attend university provides for an intense learning environment that fosters a wide variety of leadership skills. Among other activities, Jakkrya participated in debate (where her team won fourth place in a prestigious competition amongst many schools). She also attempted indoor rock climbing with her new friends at Harpswell this year!
Malatee is a freshman who in addition to being supported by the Chelly Foundation, received a world-class honor this Fall: Ess encouraged her to sit for an exam for a generous scholarship to the University of Cambodia, something she would never have had the opportunity to do if left back to fend for herself in Chum Kiri. Malatee placed in the top 30 students among 2000 students taking the exam, including doing a remarkable job on the English portion of the exam (she told us an amazing story of how she is self-taught in English, reading what she could back in the village). We will provide housing for Malatee while she attends the all-English speaking classes at the University of Cambodia on a full scholarship now provided by the school.

The New Dorm Space in Phnom Penh
We are very grateful to Neil Weinstein and Annette Jensen, who run the Cambodia Education First program, for leading us to find the new dorm for our scholars to enjoy all together. Everyone shares double bunk beds per room and there is always something going on, between cooking, cleaning and studying.
Our World-Class Volunteer English Teacher Kent Greer Spends 3 Months in Chumkiri

When Kent Greer chose to answer our online posting for an English language volunteer, the children of Chum Kiri became the beneficiaries of an extraordinary teacher. Originally a UK citizen, Kent and his wife live on the island of Hokkaido in Japan. He travelled from there to join us for three wonderful months this past year. Kent did an outstanding job of teaching English both in the free English class we sponsor, as well as tutoring kids after hours at Chelly House where he stayed. He travelled with students on field trips to Kampot and to the beach in Kep, and even sponsored one of those trips. The students loved him and gave him gifts when it was time to go. Kent’s letter of thanks (and praise for our charity) is available to read on www.thechellyfoundation.org. We wish Kent well as he currently pursues his other passion…fly-fishing!
Fans in Classrooms
Thanks to a generous donation from Kevin Schoeler, Ess and others were able to install multiple fans in multiple classrooms in the Hun Sen Angchork High School. Outside temperatures are often in the 90s (Fahrenheit) during the year, and the inside of classrooms get very hot! Each fan costs about $50 so even a modest contribution makes a world of difference in helping students have a better learning experience.

Hundreds of Students Continue to Visit The Chelly Library Each Month
The Chelly Library, opened in 2016, remains the only freestanding public school library in Kampot Province. After an expansion in 2018 of outdoor seating, the facility is routinely used by students each day under the supervision of part-time librarians funded by our charity.
A Second Creative Writing Intensive Workshop – Partnering with Writing Through

This year, for an encore, we were able to host Sumi, a delightful Polish-born English teacher sent to us by the Writing Through organization. She was assisted by our favorite volunteer teacher Kent Greer. This week-long workshop young people the opportunity to creatively fashion poems and short stories in English and to recite them in front of their friends & families. The workshop format was the invention of Sue Guiney, a college classmate of mine, who has spent many years doing great work in Cambodia (www.writingthrough.org). A full copy of the students’ poems and creative output can be found on our website (www.thechellyfoundation.org)
Chelly House – A Place for International Visitors

We were very happy to host Chelly Foundation Board Member Jamie Brown, and her daughter Ellison, who made an extraordinary second journey to Chum Kiri to help us out in various activities, on their way to Bangkok from Ho Chi Minh City. Thank you so much Jamie and Ellison!

In 2019 we were also very lucky to have, in addition to teacher Kent Greer for his extended stay, a number of other international visitors, including Maxime La, a photographer from Paris who, with his friend, introduced local students to photography with real cameras.

Also visiting were two young college students from Bristol, U.K., Seanaigh Attfield and Sophie Blackburn, who wished to volunteer for a week when Kent Greer was also with us.
Bread Days and Toothbrush Giveaways

During 2019 we continued providing bread feasts for youngsters, here pictured at the local elementary school that Nan Nop originally attended. Jaime Brown and her daughter Ellison assisted. We also sponsored a toothbrush giveaway at a local school (thanks to Jennifer McGovern and Dr. Glenn Prager), with our friends Seanaigh and Sophie along with Kent helping out in distributing to students.
Field Trips to Hear Blind & Orphaned Children Sing and Dance to Traditional Cambodian Music

Under the supervision of Nop Ess and teacher Samorn Khem, students from Hun Sen Angchork High School took two field trips this year to the Khmer Cultural Development Institute, where orphaned and blind students performed traditional songs and dance. The experience was extraordinarily moving for all who attended.

A Week-Long Celebration of Life at the Passing of Nan’s and Ess’ father

We were all saddened in March at the passing of Nop Neang. Buddhist culture includes week-long rituals being observed (including in Chum Kiri close male family members having their head shaved), all capped by a celebration of life party on the seventh day. This year, a number of Chelly Scholars came back to their village to show respect to Ess, to participate in the observances, and to just help out.
Our Coconut and Mango Farms Continue to be Built Out

All of the farms we started in 2018 are doing fine, the trees are growing, and in a couple of years we really hope to see profits from the crops helping the children of Chum Kiri.

An End of School Year Excursion to the “Safari”

Samorn and Ess took the lead in organizing the annual Chelly Foundation end of school year field trip for our awesome group of college scholars. Everyone had a blast at this safari park near Phnom Penh.
And Back in the U.S.

This year, The Chelly Foundation held a fundraiser in Seattle in June (thank you Amy & David Marcos), with a second fundraiser in December coming up in San Diego (thank you Ruth Hargrove). We were also happy to be able to sponsor scholarships for books and supplies to two deserving students of Cambodian heritage at Middlesex Community College in the greater Boston area (home to one of the largest communities in the US of individuals with Cambodian backgrounds). And Nan Nop, in the U.S. all year this year after her last visit ended in January 2019 (shown below), spent every day focused on ensuring that everything continued to run smoothly. From Day 1 she has served as a big sister from afar to all the young people participating in our program. Nan has been the inspiration for everything good that we have done for children in Cambodia – she is a perfect role model and a hero to all the young people back in her home village. Thank you Nan!

On behalf of Nan Nop, Nop Ess, Samorn Khem, and all who tirelessly work to support the The Chelly Foundation, I would like to again say how very much we have appreciated your kindness and support this year, through donations made directly on our website, and through Benevity, Global Giving, and Facebook fundraisers. As the pictures throughout this letter show, along with better health and educational opportunities for the children of Chum Kiri, we are also trying to bring joy. We will continue supporting our Chelly Scholars and we will continue doing good works across a spectrum of activities in 2020. I promise to keep you posted! Please “like us” on Facebook, and please know that all donations made to The Chelly Foundation are fully tax deductible.

With every best wish at the holidays.

Jason

Jason R. Baron  
Founder & President, The Chelly Foundation (EIN 81-0785392)  
www.facebook.com/thechellyfoundation  
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