

KENT GREER
MOIWA, SAKAE MACHI 21
TOYOKORO-CHO
HOKKAIDO, JAPAN 089-5313

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Re: An Open Letter To The Chelly Foundation

If there is one defining characteristic that, based on my personal experience and observations, best sums up the overriding philosophy of The Chelly Foundation and those who are tasked with carrying out its mission in Cambodia, it would have to be “responsive.” Given the focused scope of its work and the virtual absence of any type of bureaucracy to impede progress and/or slow the decision-making process, it has the unique ability to accurately identify the compelling needs of the residents of Chum Kiri and, therefore, quickly implement small-scale programs that effectively address the community’s most pressing problems.

Prior to beginning my volunteer teaching stint in Chum Kiri, I asked Jason about any behavior problems that I might encounter with the group of high school students that I would be teaching. He assured me that I had absolutely nothing to worry about. Having taught high school students in the past, I was, to put it mildly, a bit skeptical of what I perceived to be overconfidence on his part. After spending three months with a group of approximately 20 young scholars in Chum Kiri, I have to say that not only was his confidence well-founded, but it did not go far enough in terms of accurately describing the overall thirst for knowledge that the students demonstrated throughout the course of the program. From day one, the students would quietly gather in the classroom and turn their undivided attention to me for the entire class period. Not only were they attentive, but they quickly warmed up and adapted to what surely must have been perceived by the vast majority of them as an unorthodox teaching style. They displayed an overt eagerness to participate in the classroom activities, and the overall level of importance that they put on the learning process was a primary contributing factor that now allows me to state that it was, indeed, the most enjoyable teaching experience of my life.

The positive experience that I had, and one that I hope was replicated on the opposite side of the lectern, was possible because Jason and his in-country staff recognized the pressing need for such a class in the community and responded appropriately. In addition to the ESL class and the Chelly Scholar program in Phnom Penh, the Chelly Foundation has also successfully identified various other needs within the greater community and are currently taking appropriate and guided steps to see that these needs are adequately addressed in an efficient and timely manner.

If you are giving consideration to volunteering your time and efforts to the Chelly Foundation, let me assure you that you will be in good hands. The in-country staff was always readily available to answer any questions or immediately resolve any problems that arose. Nop Ess, the Foundation’s In Country Director in Cambodia, is an

individual who simply does not operate within the bounds of a job description. Regardless of the nature of the problem, he always seems to have an immediate solution. At times, I could not help but feel pangs of embarrassment because of the lengths that Ess and his staff were willing to go to ensure my safety and make me feel welcome within the greater community. But most importantly, every one of the staff members demonstrated on a daily basis an unwavering commitment to the work of The Chelly Foundation. This, undoubtedly, is one of the fundamental forces that serves to drive the overall level of responsiveness.

Finally, for those who currently contribute to The Chelly Foundation or those who are pondering a future financial contribution, I would like to provide you with reassurance as to the effective oversight and use of your donation. Having been raised by parsimonious, Scots-Irish descendants who taught me at a very early age that paying extra for cheese on a hamburger at a fast-food restaurant was a luxury reserved only for those with 'means,' I now harbor an acute sensitivity to any appropriation of funds that I deem as being improper or wasteful, especially when it involves donated money. Having only minimal administrative costs, The Chelly Foundation is able to fully and effectively utilize your donation to directly aid the residents of Chum Kiri. Having witnessed first-hand the real impact that the work of The Chelly Foundation is having, I would like to provide reassurance of the fact that all of the money that is donated is being directly targeted toward making an immediate and tangible difference in the overall standard of living of literally hundreds of lives. I dare say that any charitable organization that is able to make such a well-founded claim is, indeed, a rare breed.

Regards,



Kent Greer