



A nonprofit organization providing assistance and support to local communities in South East Asia

Winter 2007, Vol. IV

www.JourneysWithinOurCommunity.org

Building Opportunities





In Review - From the Director



'If you could sum up your life in a word, what would it be?' This question was posed to me the other day, and the answer came quickly – 'grow'. My whole life I have been encouraged to learn, challenge and know myself. It is the notion that when you look back at your past, you can be proud of what you have accomplished and changed.

As I now step down from the daily running of JWOC, it seems appropriate to reflect on what has been created here at JWOC in the last three years. It is a bit overwhelming to think that when I first arrived in Siem Reap the projects were in a conceptual state with nominal funding. Fast forward to the present and the statistics make me proud- **we have installed over 180 clean water wells, given out more than \$17,000 in small business loans to almost 100 borrowers, sent 30 students to university, and taught over 200 students computer and second language skills each month.** Talk about growth!

While these numbers are a great measure of our tangible growth, there is another, more meaningful aspect of growth taking place in the people affected by JWOC. For the Cambodians who care about helping themselves out of poverty, it is growth by using opportunities they would otherwise not have had to start new businesses, undertake higher education, teach skills to the less fortunate, and ultimately provide better lives for their families. Through the work of JWOC, their lives are continuing to get better.

The people who support JWOC make all this possible, and I think one of the greatest aspects of JWOC is our ability to connect Cambodians with people who want to help them. Growth in this way manifests itself in seeing the progress of Cambodians and the lives of their families. Our donors are facilitating the life changes and are invited to let that experience change them as well.

One of the accomplishments I am most proud of is the Dollars for Scholars program, which gives scholarships to university students and in return, requires each student to volunteer in the local community each week. The growth these students have made in their knowledge and experience is phenomenal, but above that they have grown within themselves a true desire to give back and continue to support the less fortunate in their community. Just the other day, I received an unexpected but not uncommon email from a university scholarship student:

Hello! John how are you? This time I want to say thank you so much that you respond to me for university and other students and help all the students got scholarship to develop our knowledge. When I got scholarship from you, so I am happy and I reduced expenditure my family such as payment at university, purchase book. On the other hand I got scholarship I work at JWOC I got experience like Microfinance and Well water. Oh! I want to tell you that may be October 2008 I will finish at university (Bachelor Degree). Now thank you I want to say good bye and I wish you good luck and good health every time and success everything.

Best regards

*From me,
Meas May*

I feel incredibly blessed with having had the opportunity to watch the development of Cambodians like May. Like him, I realize that growth within is linked to helping improve the lives of others. In having this wonderful opportunity to start JWOC, I would like to thank the entire JWOC Board, our Founders' Society, all the JWOC supporters whom I have befriended over the years, and especially Brandon and Andrea Ross for their dedication and fortitude in making a better world. I hope you will join me as we watch JWOC continue to grow.

Thank you,
John Walsh



From the New Director

Greetings to all,

My name is Jesse and I have come to Siem Reap to take over from John as the managing director for Journeys Within Our Community. I arrived in Cambodia on November 29 with my wife, Melissa, and our son, Santiago. This marks my second time in Cambodia and I am thrilled about the opportunity to live and work in a fascinating country which is undergoing such rapid change and development.



In just the short amount of time I have been living here in Siem Reap, I have been struck by the vast disparity of wealth which is represented here. Just blocks from hotels which cost hundreds of dollars a night are dirt roads with holes big enough to swallow mopeds and people living in bamboo shacks with hardly more than a sleeping mat and some clothes to their name. A new Cambodia is emerging, but in order for the majority of Cambodians to benefit from it, they must have the skills and means to play a part. That is where JWOC and my mission here come in.

Prior to coming to JWOC, I was a U.S. Marine infantry officer for four years during which I spent time in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was my experience in those countries which led me to want to work in a non-governmental role within developing nations. After witnessing the complexities and hardships of ordinary people suffering from conflict I knew my life was going to take a different path. Cambodia is a country still recovering from a brutally violent past but yet has great potential for rising above it.

John has set the bar high for both myself and JWOC by establishing a solid foundation from which the organization can continue to expand and grow as it seeks to continue meeting needs within the community here. It is my sincere hope that by building on what he began, I can guide JWOC to new heights over the years to come. I look forward with much anticipation to working closely with our outstanding scholarship students

and finding ways to continually improve the quality of current projects while also identifying and creating new ones.

As the evolution of JWOC progresses and our impact in Siem Reap and elsewhere becomes greater, I promise to keep you informed of our accomplishments and aware of new directions we may take. You, as the donor and supporter of JWOC, are critical to our success and ability to make a difference through our projects in the lives of those who need it the most. We are grateful for everything you have contributed to our endeavor whether it is donating your money for a well in a village without clean water or visiting us here and donating your time teaching English. Please share with your friends and family the work we are doing here and the significant needs of the people in Cambodia. I trust that in the future I will be able to count on your continued support of JWOC and together we will “See a problem, Solve a problem...”

Jesse Wolfe



New Language School- More Classes, More Opportunities

Opening of Wat Chork Language School

With so many young and ambitious Cambodians wanting to improve their future, JWOC is always on the watch for ways to give opportunities to those who want to change their lives. One of the best ways is through education, and so it is with great enthusiasm that JWOC announces the opening of a second language school at Wat Chork in Siem Reap.

In Cambodia, as well as other Buddhist countries in the region, a wat (or Buddhist monastery) functions as a center for cultural and educational instruction. Monks who live at the wats learn Buddhist scriptures, and many teach lessons to the local community about Buddhism or a second language. As monks are both teachers and students, they are always eager to accept new teachers from the community.

Building on the success of the Wat Thmei Language School, we decided to expand our education program to other poor villages in need of free education. So in early 2006 Dollars for Scholars students, Heng Bunsung and Mat Somit, searched for a new wat where JWOC scholarship students could teach free language classes.

Bunsung and Somit talked to the head monk at Wat Chork and proposed working with the wat to educate more of the local community. As luck would have it, the head monk already had plans for a two-story building with a dormitory for the monks on the bottom level and a classroom on the top floor to teach novice monks Pali lessons (the scripture of Theravada Buddhism). At the time the pagoda had gathered enough small donations from the local residents to build the bottom half, but without additional funding the classroom was left unfinished.

Seeing the opportunity, JWOC jumped in to help. With the support from our wonderful donors, bamboo scaffolding went up and construction of two classrooms began-- one classroom for language classes, and the second for a computer lab.

During the construction, JWOC scholarship students opened temporary English and Japanese classes under the humble surroundings of an aging stilted house. The modest surroundings of a cob-webbed ceiling and old benches did not deter students and monks from filling all the available seats. This is an example of an amazing phenomenon around the growing towns of Cambodia: if you offer a white board and good teachers, the students will come.

Continued on Page 4...



Scholarship student, Bunsung, teaches English in a temporary classroom.



Construction of the future classroom.



Building the new second story at Wat Chork for a computer lab and language classrooms.



New Language School- More Classes, More Opportunities

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Wat Chork Language School after construction.

When the construction was finally complete in November, the classes were moved into their new building so students could enjoy a proper classroom with new benches, whiteboards, fans, lights, electricity, and motivated JWOC teachers. Using existing Dollars for Scholars students, including the ten new female scholars who joined the JWOC volunteer group in the summer, we had a great group of eager young teachers wanting to share their knowledge.

Now the skills the scholarship students are passing on in the language classroom include classes in English, Japanese and for the first time, a traditional Khmer dance class. Many of the JWOC teachers who are now volunteering had some previous experience with foreign languages and dance skills, but by giving back to the community, they are gaining even more experience.

In the second room, we thought it would be wise to address another big problem for Cambodia – computer education. Skills with computers are highly marketable in the tourist-related businesses, but the poor have the least access to computers and training.

The computer classroom allows poor children who live in the area to get their hands on a computer for the first time. Hopefully this will open new doors of opportunity, the same way language classes have done for other

students. The thrill the students show when using a machine they thought out of their reach is tremendous motivation for expanding the computer classes.

With a big smile the venerable monk enthusiastically embraced the partnership of JWOC and Wat Chork, and JWOC now has over 150 students on a regular basis attending 8 classes with plans to add more in the future.



Top, students studying classes in English. Middle, Scholarship student, Kaghchna, teaches traditional Khmer Dance. Bottom, students studying at the new JWOC computer lab.



In the Field

Microfinance and the Power of Small Loans

Stories of Loan Recipients

By Brook Wilkinson, JWOC Volunteer

While visiting Cambodia earlier this month, I had the opportunity to meet some of JWOC's loan recipients. Here are their stories:

Kheng Lerb lives in a small, thatch-walled house with her husband and eight—that's right, eight—children. She operates a makeshift general store on her porch, selling skewered chicken wings, oranges, bananas, cigarettes, and other small goods. Before she received her first loan from JWOC seven months ago, she also collected recyclable cans and bottles in order to make ends meet. Lerb heard about the program from one of the Dollars for Scholars students, and eagerly applied so that she could expand her business. She's now on her way to paying back her second loan of \$125. I asked her what she's done with the extra money she now



Kheng Lerb sits at her small general store, which was made possible by a JWOC loan.

earns. Her father was sick several months ago, she told me, and she had to pay \$300 in medical bills—sadly, however, the treatment could not prevent his death. But she also proudly showed me a silver bracelet that she'd bought for herself. A rare reward for a life's worth of hard work,



Left, Tarb Chour before receiving a JWOC loan. Top, Using JWOC loans, Chour now has many people visiting her house each day.

I thought to myself. When I asked her what she pictured in her future, she told me that she wanted a university education for her kids, and a better house for herself.

Meas Sreipech, the scholarship student who was collecting loan repayments for JWOC and translating for me, then brought me to the house of Tarb Chour. As we talked, Chour related a heartbreaking story. One of her sons had lost his wife during childbirth several years ago. The son gave up his single son for adoption, then left his four daughters with Chour's sister back in their home village. With the children all off his hands, Chour's son remarried and ran away. He doesn't send a penny back to help raise the girls, so Chour and her sister must support her granddaughters themselves. Because of the loans she's taken out from JWOC to expand her own small food and dried goods stall, Chour hopes that one day the girls may be able to attend university, something she was never given the chance to do.

Sitting next to Chour was Soern Srey, a meat and vegetable retailer in the same village. Hers was a happier story. She bought her own house one month ago—one bigger than her

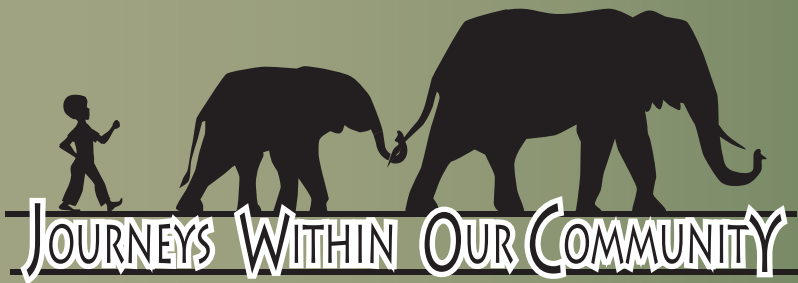
previous rental—with some of the extra money she's earned since getting a JWOC loan five months ago. She's also saved \$500 for the motorbike and cart that she'd like to buy to sell fish snacks around town (the total cost will be \$800).

It's amazing what \$100—the amount that you or I might spend on a moderately extravagant dinner—can do in a place like Cambodia. There are numerous other stories just like these three among the recipients of JWOC's microloans.

JWOC Microfinance Numbers

Number of clients served	97
Clients served who are women	81%
Number of active clients	82
Total amount loaned to date	17,477 USD
Outstanding Loans to be repayed	5,259 USD
Repayment rate (Number of loans repayed)	88%
Repayment rate (Dollar repayment)	91%
Number of clients per Scholarship Student	10

as of November 30, 2007



In the Field Clean Water Project

In the Field with the Clean Water Project



JWOC university scholar, Kimpouv, next to a completed water well.

By Brook Wilkinson, JWOC Volunteer

When I decided to donate a well during my stay at the Journeys Within B&B earlier this month, I asked John if I could visit the site of my future well. He said he could do one better: I could spend a morning visiting new wells with the scholarship students who oversaw the project.

Seven university students showed up at the B&B early on Sunday morning. All have received a full scholarship from JWOC, and in return donate five hours per week to the well project. Kimpouv Nou, a slight 21-year-old, sat down next to me and told me about herself. She lives in Puok district, 16 kilometers from Siem Reap. Her father died 10 years ago, so of course it was even harder than usual for Kimpouv's mother to support her nine children. Kimpouv was the only child to enroll in university, where her friend

Se told her about the Dollars for Scholars program. Not wanting to burden her mother further, but also not earning enough from her teaching position at the local high school to pay for college tuition, Kimpouv applied for the scholarship a few months ago. Now she devotes her only free day, Sunday, to the well program.

Once the students had all arrived at the B&B, I jumped on the back of Kimpouv's motorbike and we headed out into the countryside. You see donated wells along many of the tourist routes, but JWOC's locations are far from any idle visitor's path. We drove for 45 minutes over bumpy dirt roads, passing a man with one son on the back of his bicycle and another in the basket, a game of pickup volleyball, and shrubs



JWOC scholars test water from wells for traces of bacteria.

stained other with dust.

At the first well, which had just been dug earlier that week, John showed the students how to test the water for bacteria. I believe this is one of the most important aspects of

JWOC's programs: letting the Cambodians take charge. Progress was slow at first, but by the fifth or sixth well, the students had naturally taken on an efficient rhythm. Some would squat down to squeeze a few milliliters of water into a sample vial, others would record the GPS coordinates of the site, and the rest would gather the local families for a photo that would be sent to the individuals who had donated the well.

Toward the end of the morning,

we took a detour to the site where the well I'd donated would soon be installed. I played with a five-month-old girl who lived there. They say that in Cambodia, one in five children doesn't make it to his or her fifth birthday. With the help of my well, this little cherub would have much better odds. The cost of the well: \$100. The smile on her face: priceless.



Villagers of Don Kaio Commune group around a newly completed well sponsored by a JWOC donor.



Stepping into the Future Mobile Technology

Mobile Technology = Higher Productivity

Thanks to Doug Mooney and Littler Mendelson, P.C., JWOC received eight nearly-new laptops in November. These laptops were given to scholarship students who completed a computer maintenance training course and since then they never leave their sides!

While the modern PC has become ubiquitous in our daily lives, we sometimes forget the majority of people in the developing world do not have access to a computer. So having a personal computer is a unique gift for these scholars who use the laptops not only to take notes and prepare documents in university, but also to keep the JWOC projects running successfully.

When well scouts from the Clean Water Project return from the countryside every Sunday, they use their machines to record GPS coordinates, fill in data about the beneficiaries, and upload pictures of the wells and send to donors via email. This type of experience, using technology to connect Cambodians with people all over the world, is



JWOC university scholars are thrilled to have access to mobile technology.

changing the way these scholars see the world and prepares them for the dynamic future that lies ahead in their lives.



University scholar, Sedeeth, working on his new laptop.

“I use [my laptop] to report my studies and create my lessons for my computer class. When I take to class and have work, I can complete my work much easier. In my free time, I prepare the lesson and the book and I also use for taking class attendance. I am also studying Japanese now, and now I can practice my lessons on my laptop. It is so great.”

- Sedeeth

Scholarship student, Chum Sedeeth, loves his laptop so much that he decided to start teaching computer classes at Wat Chork Language School. He teaches 10 hours per week, and enjoys the experience of teaching in the classroom. In the future Sedeeth hopes to use his skills to work as an administrator for a company or an organization.



How to Help

How to Help

JWOC is making significant steps to improve educational opportunities and health standards in South East Asia, and the success of JWOC relies upon the support of its generous sponsors. JWOC asks for your help in making this possible through a donation to the projects of your choice.



I/We would like to support Journeys Within Our Community (JWOC) by making a tax-deductible contribution toward the following project:

Clean Water Project. Giving the gift of clean water. Enclosed is \$ (\$100 for one well)

I would also like to make a sign above the water well to include the following information (\$25 extra):

.....

Language School. Enclosed is \$ to support the Language Schools.

Dollars For Scholars Scholarship.

Enclosed is \$ to support one student for one year at university (\$ 400).

Enclosed is \$ to support one student through graduation of 5 years (\$ 2,000).

Peace Village. Enclosed is \$ to support the Thanh Xuan Peace Village in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Village Microfinance Fund. Enclosed is \$ to develop small businesses.

General Project Fund. Enclosed is \$ for JWOC to use as they see fit or as described above.

Operational Funding. Enclosed is \$ to be used exclusively for operational expenses.

Comments:

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Name(s):

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Address:

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City/State/Zip:

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E-mail:

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