

June 2016 On The Ship Of Life

June 30, 2016 - Report 6
Kevin & Catharine Carson - Cambodia

With the month of June comes “slightly” cooler weather and the beginning of the wet season. We are starting to have a heavy rain shower most afternoons. This is welcomed moisture as the country is experiencing the worst drought in 50 years. The drought has temporarily affected the water treatment raft that Partners in Progress operates. The raft draws it’s water from a large pond that was dug in the village to catch and hold rain and runoff so that there would be water for the dry season. Unfortunately, due to the drought, the water pond has run dry before sufficient rain has come so at this time we are unable to filter and treat water for the village until more rain replenishes the pond. However, while we wait for rain, Sophin and his wife are still serving the village by delivering the New Mother / Newborn Baby care packages to each woman from the village that delivers at the local health centre. This month we were blessed with visiting medical students and professionals from two different countries. Lauren Merewether, a student in Harding University’s Physician’s Assistant Program, completed a six-week clinical rotation with us on the ship. She practiced under the supervision of Dr. Panha and was able to learn a great deal about health issues in Cambodia as well as contribute a tremendous amount to the work of the ship. With her cheerfulness, initiative and hard work Lauren was an excellent Christian example and a real hit with the crew. The day she left the crew were already asking her when she would be back.



Lauren & Sovannara’s Birthday.



The crew say goodbye to Lauren.



Our second group of visitors included two nursing instructors and three student nurses from Thailand. This partnership was developed by Bill McDonough and Pragai Jirojanakul. Pragai is a member of the Church of Christ in Bangkok and a faculty member in the Faculty of Nursing at Suan Dusit University in Bangkok, Thailand. The nursing program at Suan Dusit tries to develop volunteerism in the students and so Pragai was very interested in her students experiencing a Christian medical mission effort like The Ship of Life so they could see Christian love in action. On the day the students arrived they went right from the airport to church with us in Phnom Penh. Although some in the group were familiar with Christianity, most had never experienced a Christian worship or seen a Bible





before that morning and they commented to me on the joy and the genuine reverence they saw in the Christians at church. While on the ship with us they worked with patients in triage, volunteered with both the doctor and the pharmacist, and helped out in the eyeglass clinic. They also taught health classes at a village primary school. Wonderful, warm friendships developed between all the Thai visitors and the crew members. The visitors were extremely hard-working, thoughtful and gracious and they thanked us over and over again for their experience on the ship. It is very encouraging to see a project that is a blessing to everyone involved.

The Thai nursing students made a video of their experiences on the ship. Go to youtube and search "The Ship of Life in Cambodia" if you want to see it.

The Cambodian Ministry of The Interior and The Ministry of Health have launched a new NGO mapping website. All 590 NGO's that are registered in the Cambodia and that are involved in the medical field, including Partners in Progress, are identified. Once the website is fully operational, anyone will be able to see information on all the NGO's, including where they work in the country and what their main projects are. The goal is for this to help the various NGO's and government ministries to work more closely together. I had the opportunity to attend a full-day information meeting about the implementation of the website.



Each year Partners in Progress must give an annual report to the Technical Working Meeting of the Ministry of Health in each of the five provinces that the ship operates in. This month it was our turn to present in Kandal Province. I used photos from the ship and statistics from our monthly doctor's reports to prepare the presentation and then Bunthoern gave the presentation and answered questions. The chairman of the meeting was very familiar with Partners in Progress and The Ship of Life and commented that he had visited the ship in

the past. He also asked me why I had not brought cake to the meeting like the previous ship managers did. I'm still not sure if he was joking or not.

One of our patient referrals this past month was this little boy who had a horrible genetic skin condition on his feet. It is terribly painful and it results in him barely being able to walk, let alone run and play like a normal boy. We took him and his mother to the hospital in Phnom Penh where he was seen by a specialist and given medication to take, and we also provided shoes and socks to help protect his feet. He had a followup appointment after a few weeks, and he will continue to have followups each month with the specialist. We're sure hoping for it to get better for him. Bunthoern, my assistant in Phnom Penh, keeps in touch with all of the families we refer to the hospitals and who are returning for followup care. When we were in the village we were told there was another family with two children who have the same or a similar condition. Perhaps if this boy is helped by the doctors something can be done for the other children.





We continue to marvel at the beautiful sights we see along the Mekong River. Beautiful sunsets and sunrises, awesome storm clouds, and magnificent trees so large that children can sit in the tangle of their exposed roots. Catharine said this amazing tree with the exposed roots made her think of this Bible verse in the Old Testament in Jeremiah 17: 7-8.

***“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.***

Follow us on Facebook: Catharine Kevin Carson, Ship of Life in Cambodia,
Partners in Progress
Email: kevincarsonpip@icloud.com
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Website: partnersinprogress.org