

Spring 2016 Newsletter

News on Trailblazer Foundation's activities during the past quarter.



'Tis the season for new blossoms at Trailblazer Foundation

Note from the Executive Director

Hello All.....

With spring breaking out across the northern hemisphere, Trailblazer Foundation is experiencing some new blossoms as well - mostly as a result of a great visit that I made, along with Tom Skeele, TF's Communications and Development Director, to Cambodia in February.



For starters, after extensive strategic discussions with our staff in Cambodia, we committed to expanding two of our four programs: Food Security and Economic Development. We will be significantly increasing the number of agriculture trainings we provide villagers throughout the year, and we are working with local community leaders and a women's development center to launch two pilot projects to expand income opportunities for our constituents.

Next, on March 15th, we broke ground on a new primary school in the village of Sret, for approximately 500 students (kindergarten through sixth grade), from seven nearby villages. Construction should be completed in October.

Finally, to help support these new projects, as well as our on-going well drilling and water filter activities, Trailblazer Foundation hired a new Program Manager in Cambodia. Kevin Weiser is essentially filling the role I held when I was in Cambodia, while Scott Coats continues to serve a critical function as TF's co-founder and Project Advisor.

You can read more about these new developments below. I would also encourage you to visit our [new website](#), which we think has a better look and feel to it (not to mention more information about our mission, programs, rural community development strategies, and staff).

As always, our important work, and our ability to grow the staff to meet our blossoming programs, could not happen without your support. On behalf of the staff and Board, I offer a deep-felt thanks for your support - financial and emotional. It keeps us going in every way possible.

All the best,

Chris Coats

Health

World Travel Company Abercrombie & Kent Supports Trailblazer's Well Drilling and Water Filter Delivery Activities

In terms of staff and finances, most of Trailblazer Foundation's resources are devoted to our Health program, which focuses on providing access to abundant, clean water through the distribution of wells and water filters, and better sanitation through the construction of latrines.

This work ties into a worldwide health strategy known as WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), to improve health, life expectancy, student learning, and other benefits in developing countries.

Within this context, Trailblazer is best known for our efforts to drilling new wells and provide water filters to rural families and villages. Each year we set out to drill and deliver more wells and water filters than the year before (66 wells and 420 water filters in 2015). We expect to reach that goal with the support of an important, and notable, partner - Abercrombie and Kent Philanthropy.

As you may know, Abercrombie and Kent (A&K) is the world's foremost luxury travel company, and has been offering adventure and luxury vacations throughout the world since 1962. Working through Abercrombie & Kent's global offices, Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy (AKP) is dedicated to preserving natural habitats, protecting wildlife and promoting the welfare of indigenous communities throughout the world.

Late last year, Trailblazer signed an agreement with AKP to deliver a new well and water filter to forty-five families in the Siem Reap area - one of A&K's travel destinations. We are both pleased and honored to be working with AKP, both because of their commitment to the places they visit, and because their support will help Trailblazer meet our well drilling and water filter goals for 2016.

Please visit our website for more information about [our Health program](#).



Recently, Trailblazer initiated a fundraising campaign to purchase a new delivery truck for our field team in Cambodia. As of this writing, we are just about three-quarters of the way to our goal of \$6,000 (or the equivalent of three out of four wheels).

To those who have contributed to this campaign, thank you so very much. If you have not yet supported this effort, please consider doing so. As a reminder of our need for a new truck, and to make a donation, please visit [our website](#).

Food Security

Trailblazer Offers Big Boost in Number of Agricultural Trainings

As you may recall, Trailblazer Foundation chooses our projects based on an annual assessment of village needs, led by the local village and commune governments. We are honored to be one of only a handful of non-government organizations invited to this annual planning meeting. Through this bottom-up process, Trailblazer has learned that the villagers in Siem Reap province would like to receive more agricultural trainings on a variety of topics.

To meet this need, during 2016 we have committed to significantly expanding the number of trainings we offer - from 4 trainings in 2015, to 30 trainings in 2016.

Each two-to-three day workshop will be devoted to one of the following topics:

- Soil Preparation and Management



Trailblazer Foundation provides five

- Horticulture (garden cultivation and management)
- Mushroom Production
- Raising Chickens
- Fish Farming.

different agricultural trainings, including one on fish farming (seen here).

All but one of these trainings takes place in the villages where the participants live. The Mushroom Production trainings take place at Trailblazer's Siem Reap office, which houses our agricultural research and development plots, including our mushroom growing facility.

These trainings may well be the best representation of Trailblazer's commitment to not just giving our partner communities a proverbial fish, but helping them learn how to "fish" for themselves, in ways that are both empowering and self-sustaining to our constituents.

For more information about our Food Security program, please visit [our website](#).

Education

Out With The Old, In With The New

Great news.... in mid-March, Trailblazer broke ground on the construction of a new primary school in Sret village, in Siem Reap province. The students for this school will come from seven nearby villages.

As our readers may recall, last fall, Trailblazer Foundation's Board of Directors re-doubled the organization's commitment to building schools, as part of our overall strategy to empower and improve the communities we serve in rural Cambodia.

We are pleased to have already received enough funding to move forward with this project, and are grateful to the British Schools Foundation and Four Girls for Families for this support (see the article below about Four Girls for Families). This includes \$3,000 that the village itself contributed, to help cover the costs of demolition of the existing building.

This new school started with the demolition of an existing school building that was built in 1965, by monks from 3 pagodas and the local community. This older school had no concrete foundation, but rather was built with just cement and bricks. It was in significant disrepair, and needed to be replaced.

As part of the start of this construction project, the locals held a Breaking Ground Ceremony in celebration of a new school coming to their community.

We look forward to sharing updates about this project through the coming months. In the meantime, you can learn more about Trailblazer's commitment to [education here](#).



The "Design Sign" of the new school, which was displayed at the Breaking Ground Ceremony in mid-March.

Economic Development

Farmer's Coop, Women's Development Center

While providing our constituents with clean water and nutritional food meets their most immediate needs for survival, their lack of a substantial and sustainable income is what keeps these villagers from moving beyond a state of poverty and subsistence living.

Trailblazer's Economic Development program is designed to help our partner communities enhance their infrastructure needs, so they can produce and sell greater quantities of their primary products - agricultural crops and textiles.

During their recent travels to Siem Reap, Trailblazer's U.S.-based staffers Chris Coats and Tom Skeele met with our Cambodian counterparts, local government officials, and staff from a local women's training center to discuss:

1) launching a farmers' cooperative, through which rural farmers would grow crops specifically for the tourist restaurant market in Siem Reap, and sell those crops to cooperating restaurants;

2) establishing a formal partnership with the local Women's Development Center, where Trailblazer would support the Center in meeting its infrastructure (electricity), equipment (sewing machines), and marketing needs, so that the Center can be profitable and sustainable.

There was significant interest from all parties to pursue these ideas. To that end, Trailblazer Foundation and our Cambodian affiliates at Trailblazer Angkor, in collaboration with our new local partners, are now designing the business plans for these two new projects. These projects represent a significant expansion of our commitment to, and investment in, the economic development of our village partners. Pending funding, we expect to launch both projects in late summer or fall.

For more information about our Economic Development program, please visit [our website](#).



Trailblazer Foundation recently donated seven sewing machines to the local Women's Development Center, as a first step in establishing a formal working relationship with the Center.

Staff/Board Profile

Meet Kevin Weiser, Our New Program Manager in Cambodia

Kevin has lived an amazing and adventurous life, beginning with his family's move to Kwajalein Island, part of the Marshall Islands, when he was only four. Since then, Kevin has lived and worked in seven countries, on four continents. An international perspective is his by experience, and choice.



Kevin's professional career began on his first foreign assignment in Belgium, where, at the age of seventeen, he carried his boss' toolbox on a major construction project. In the forty-two years since, Kevin has worked his way up the business management ladder, enjoying many interesting and diverse positions, including serving as lead contract manager for many international companies and projects.

Kevin joined Trailblazer's staff in February, and feels blessed to be starting a new adventure with an organization he has known of during his nine years in Siem Reap.

Funding Partner Profile

Four Girls For Families

Trailblazer Foundation is blessed to have a wide diversity of institutional, individual and business supporters. This includes individuals from around the world, family foundations, rotary clubs, world travel tour companies, community organizations, student groups, and other non-profit or non-government organizations.

One of our most inspiring contributors is a group of four girls from New York (USA). They call themselves *Four Girls for Families*, and they first

contributed to Trailblazer in 2014. This year, they have already donated \$15,000 to help build a new school (see article above), and continue raising additional funds for this important education project.



We wanted to support them in kind, as best we could, by highlighting their home grown organization.

Here is how they describe themselves on the website of their organization:

We are a group of real kids. We range in age from 9 to 15. Email us or call and leave us a message. We will call you back on weekends when we are not in school. We are united for a very important mission: To bring clean water to the millions of people worldwide who do not have sanitary drinking water.

When we traveled to Cambodia 5 years ago on a family trip, we had to do something when we saw how extreme the living conditions were. We have been working 5 years on our clean water mission. We sell items we make by hand to raise money, and we travel to Cambodia once a year to personally distribute water filters and oversee the installation of wells. This way we know the money we raise is getting to the people who need it.

To date we've raised close to \$200,000, and we have personally delivered over 3,000 water filters. We have also built more than 20 deep water wells and built 3 houses. We don't have any salaries -- we are kids and luckily our parents support what we do.

Wow... that is fantastic, as a story, and more so as a commitment to the people of Cambodia. Thank you girls, for all you do, in general, and now for Trailblazer Foundation.

You can visit Four Girls for Families [online here](#).

Trailblazer Foundation | PO Box 3694, Jackson, WY 83001 | 307-399-2192
info@thetrailblazerfoundation.org | www.thetrailblazerfoundation.org

STAY CONNECTED:

Like us on Facebook 

Follow us on 