



ISSUE 3 · NOV 2023

# DORIS DILLON NEWSLETTER

~ grab a cup of coffee & get cozy as we update you on the latest! ~

## Our Gala Was a Success! – Over \$20,000 in Donations

On Saturday, September 9th, the board of the Doris Dillon School in Cambodia hosted their annual fundraising Gala at the Almaden Golf and Country Club. Board member, Elaine Gould, spoke to about 80 attendees about Doris Dillon, the incredibly talented teacher and mentor for whom the school was named. Even those of us who knew her were amazed by her accomplishments and her dedication to teaching even after being diagnosed with ALS. She is certainly a fitting role model for our school.

With air miles donated by Bill Gould, Sokna Chhin, our in-country school director, traveled from Cambodia to share news of the school and students, providing insight into how the school has advanced educational opportunities for its students, especially for its girls and women graduates.

Volunteers from San Jose who visited Cambodia in February (for the first time since the Pandemic) also shared their heartwarming experiences at Doris Dillon School. Our next volunteer trip is tentatively scheduled for February 16 - 25, 2024. Those interested in volunteering are required to pay their own travel and housing expenses. If they are minors, an adult must accompany them. We will be having meetings for interested travelers, adults or minors, in November.

The funds raised at the Gala are once again keeping the school doors open and the girls and boys studying, thus enhancing opportunities for college education, careers, and the general development of the students, their families, and the village. Founded and sustained by Denise and Jim DeLong (and other school teachers from San Jose – as well as students, friends and family of Doris, as well as the Almaden Community), the Doris Dillon School is now 16 years old and thriving. The students are doing very well, many continuing their studies into high school and college (girls now have an option, and they no longer need to drop out to help their families by working).

We want to thank all our donors, those who attended and those who could not. Your generosity and kindness have allowed us to serve this community half a world away.





## Sreylin Chey – The Best in The Nation!

A highlight of this year’s Gala was news from one of our alumna – Sreylin Chey – she won the Asean Data Science Explorer 2023 National Finals and will be representing Cambodia in the upcoming regional round in Jakarta, Indonesia! She is currently a senior majoring in software engineering and attends the Kirirom Institute near Phnom Penh on a fully funded scholarship from the university.

Additionally, she will be traveling (her first time on an airplane) to South Korea in November to participate in a startup forum and award training program.

Sreylin writes that she is “eagerly looking forward to” these two “awesome opportunities!”

We are thrilled with Sreylin’s success – which could not have happened without the generosity of all of our many donors! Sreylin’s father is a policeman and her mother is a housewife. They have no land, so growing rice to sustain themselves was not an option. She became one of our Scholarship Girls as a 7th grader attending Doris Dillon School. The scholarship continued to follow her for high school at Leadership Academy in Phnom Penh. Simultaneously, Sreylin was awarded another scholarship to study AI for one year at TUX Global Institute of Technology, where she earned an Associate of AI degree, graduated with honors, and won the award for Top Performing Student in Fundamentals of Mathematics in AI, Big Data, and Data Science. Besides her deep involvement in her studies, in 2018, she volunteered as a teacher for three months at Song Krous Cheat Secondary School in Kampot province. “I taught math, Khmer, and English to grade 7 and 8 students with the support of Doris Dillon School in Cambodia.”

She is so grateful of the opportunities Doris Dillon School has accorded her and thanks Jim and Denise for helping make these possible. We in turn want to thank all of you. None of her success or the success of our graduates happens without the collaborative efforts of all of us. If you ever doubt the efficacy of your donations, we want you to remember Sreylin. Her life was changed forever, and we couldn’t be more thrilled for her and for her family.

### Volunteer in Cambodia

If you’re a student looking for more community service hours or an interested parent, join Jim and Denise on their trip to the Doris Dillon School in Cambodia and change lives!

The trip is scheduled from Feb. 16 to 25.

If you’re interested come to the informational meeting on Sunday, Nov. 19 at 4 p.m. at the DeLong home: 1021 Mt. Darwin Drive

Contact Information (any additional questions?):  
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# UPDATE: Access Program



Given the success of the two-year after-school English Intensive program for village high school students, funded by a grant we were awarded by the State Department in 2021, we have continued to fund it thanks to our donors.

Designed as a program to advance English instruction to high school students in Cambodia, it has also familiarized students with American culture. While the U.S. Embassy only funded a program for 30 students, we had 46 regularly show up on weekends - on their own time. The program's teacher Samban, the local high school English teacher, had been recommended by some of our students as an excellent teacher to assume the duties required by the grant.

Its popularity and success has grown even though the State Dept. funding ceased in February. Now, 50 students attend sessions each weekend, up from a high of 46 during the State Department's funding. Because of its success, we have added an advanced computing session that is at maximum capacity. This program is taught by Lim Luy who is a welcome and talented addition to the staff. These English Intensive and advanced computing students are mastering skills that will allow them to attend the best universities and prepare for careers that will benefit their families, village community, and the nation.

Thanks to you, our donors, Cambodian students are being given so many opportunities for their futures. Your generosity and kindness is inspiring them to strive to achieve their best.





Drive to Sony's village

## Worlds Collide

BY: Nikita Anand

In February 2023, I had the wonderful opportunity of traveling to Cambodia to volunteer at the Doris Dillon School. Other than connecting with the children at school, I was also able to visit Sony's village, a Doris Dillon graduate who is now pursuing Food Science at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia.

Having been in touch with Sony for a year prior to this trip as a mentor to help her gain confidence with her English skills, I had gotten to learn a lot about Sony's life. Be it through our late night Zoom sessions (due to the time difference) or our frequent text message exchanges. When I landed in Phnom Penh, I was so excited to finally meet Sony in person! Sony was our travel guide for the next few days, as she took us around the Royal Palace and negotiated in Khmer with the local tuk-tuk drivers to take us to the Russian Market and several other locations. On our long bus ride from Phnom Penh to school, we bonded even further as we spoke and laughed about the most random things.

Later, she invited us to visit her home which was only a few kilometers away from the Doris Dillon School. A short drive through fields of green on Sony's motorbike led us to her home, where we were immediately welcomed by her family with fresh coconut water. We toured her home and pig farm which gave us an idea of her family's day to day life. Being able to visit her village and witness the environment that shaped her to be the young adult she is today was a very humbling experience. Although Sony and my life are both incredibly different, we still formed such a strong connection through our shared interests in learning and mutual respect for each other. I hope this bond with Sony lasts for years to come, as we continue to stay connected and cheer each other on through our future endeavors.



Sony and her family!