



A Grandmother's Quest to Empower the People of Cambodia

Helping the orphaned, the elderly, the abandoned, the maimed and the homeless

Many of us would have dreamed of doing something about the widespread poverty in other lands but few actually go and do it - or achieve as much as Lesley Hewett has within the space of a few years.

She is the first to disclaim any accolades, but you only have to listen to some of her stories to realize that this outreach to the orphaned, the elderly, the abandoned, the maimed and homeless in Cambodia is a story that must be relayed.

One of the few charities that is operated purely by volunteers, the self-sacrifice demonstrated by Lesley and her volunteers is heartening.

Lesley's story began in her late teens, when her dreams of serving overseas to the impoverished began. Marriage and motherhood followed and swallowed up over forty years, but in her mind and heart, the dream lived on.

Meanwhile, her experience in raising a family of four and involvement in business with her husband was giving her valuable life experience to be able to manage complicated and demanding tasks in a foreign land.

Lesley's dream began to materialize when she travelled to Cambodia in 1994 where she admits "she left her heart behind".

Fundraising with a small group of volunteers back home followed in the ensuing years, with the supply of a four-wheel drive vehicle to a charity being one of the major accomplishments of that time.

Four years ago, at an age where most are contemplating retirement, the dream took on a new



Lesley Hewett, in Perth (December 2009)

dimension as Leslie began to reach out into many different projects to help the most disadvantaged people of Cambodia.

She often met with resistance from officials, difficulty in being able to import much needed supplies from home, and initial mistrust from many sources.

One project led to another as her heart responded to those most in need and she began to orchestrate help from many avenues, often from the Cambodians themselves.

Lesley firmly encourages, trains and enables. Over seven programmes are now in place spanning four provinces and many more are in the pipeline.

Lesley has also been recognized by the Cambodian Government for setting up a Sister School arrangement with 18 schools in both Cambodia and Perth and has been consulted by the Government on how to



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