



Summer 2019 Newsletter

*News from Trailblazer Foundation—
Ahead of Schedule...*



Volunteers Anna, from New Zealand, and Sarah, from Bahrain

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Developing Ripples of Sustainability through Community Water Projects

A Note From Trailblazer's Executive Director



Hello Trailblazer Supporters,

This edition will update you on two major pieces of exciting news. First, we have two new members of Trailblazer's Board of Directors. Second, working with our in-country partner, Trailblazer Angkor, we have met or exceeded the midyear objectives for our 2019 work plan in most of our four program areas.

Our three (relatively) new Board members are Nick Munro, Cortney Ward and Justine Auton. Justine joined our Board last fall, while Cortney and Nick just joined this summer. Justine, whom we introduced in our fall 2018 newsletter, lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Nick and Cortney both live in San Francisco, CA. All three got interested in Trailblazer as a result of volunteering with us in Cambodia. On page nine, Justine writes about the trip she just took to Siem Reap as a Trailblazer volunteer, her third such trip in three years. Elsewhere in this newsletter, Cortney and Nick tell their story of how and why they got involved with Trailblazer.

As for our 2019 work plan, I am pleased to report that we are on, or ahead of, schedule to meet our annual objectives for each of our four programs: health, food security, education and economic development. Within each program's update below, we have provided a breakdown of that program's 2019 objective and our progress at the six-month mark.

As you know, Trailblazer's products and services make a significant impact on the lives of thousands of rural villagers every year. I hope you, as a contributor to these products and services, feel the same sense of accomplishment and reward that the staff and Board feels, knowing we all have contributed to the development and empowerment of these families. Your investment of money, time and/or labor makes a profound difference to the individuals and communities with whom we work.

Again, we wish to thank our donors and volunteers for all that you have given to help our cause. We value your contributions in all its forms and are grateful for your generosity and hope that it continues. Have a great summer.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Coats". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chris Coats
Co-Founder and Executive Director

Health Program

Health and Wellbeing

Recently we had the pleasure of having a family that has been longtime supporters visit the Trailblazer work site to see firsthand our work in the field. Before exploring the countryside, the family helped sift sand for water filters and learned about our local field operations. And here is what the donor said about their experience.

"We had a wonderful visit to the local office in Siem Reap. The kids had a blast sifting sand for two hours, and the information about the importance of clean water left a lasting impression. We were picked up in the late morning and drove up to Banteay Srei with a tour guide that runs a foundation which supports about 2,000 local students. She mentioned that she's seen your filters all over villages. We ended up making a quick stop along the way when we found a filter along the route"



Our minimum goal each year is to install 425 bio-sand water filters and drill 110 wells. So far this year, 252 water filters have been installed and service 1,170 people, and 50 wells have been drilled and service 250 people.

These beneficiary numbers are based on an average family size of 5 persons. But often families are clustered and so a water filter or well may service 5-15 people.

[DONATE NOW](#)

Please visit our website for more information about our Health Program:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/health-program>

Health Program

Health and Wellbeing (continued)

In the Executive Director's opening letter she mentioned Trailblazer's new Board members and the sharing of their personal experiences. Here is video that speaks to the filter and well drilling work Nick and Cortney did eight years ago to help our Health Program, and the video gives you a taste of what life is like for our village partners.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=73&v=jKT-KOj8CUK

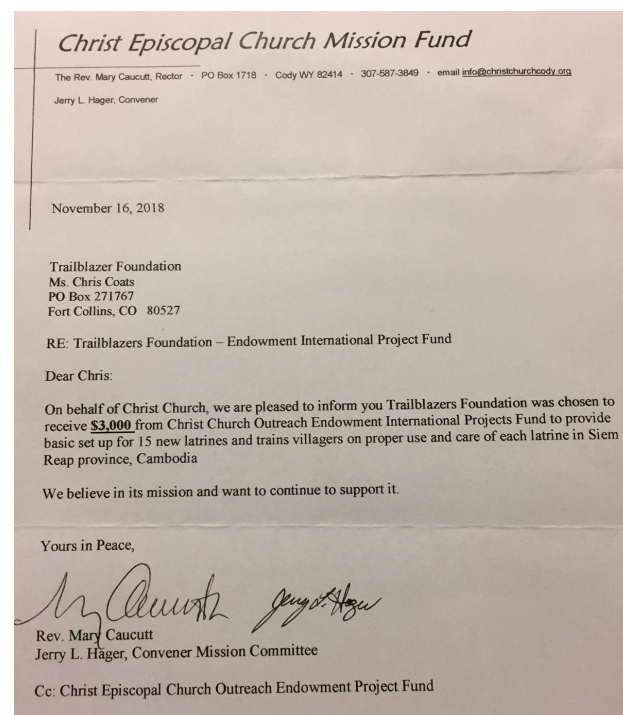
Since this video was made, we now have new well drilling equipment that is far less labor intensive, is faster, more productive, and a more efficient use of your donor dollars.

[DONATE NOW](#)

Latrines Serve a Critical Purpose

Latrines serve a critical purpose in the health and well-being of a family. We are psyched to have received a generous \$3,000 Bargain Box grant from the Christ Episcopal Church in Cody, Wyoming last fall. And with additional support from two individual donors it enabled the construction of 17 latrines this quarter. With a recent donation of \$5,000 from a private individual, Trailblazer has begun the construction of another 28 latrines.

We are very thankful to these donors for their contributions, especially because we understand a latrine is not a "glamorous" gift to give. But, can you imagine for yourself what life would be like without one?



Latrine recipients – the family provides the walls and roof according to their financial ability



Please visit our website for more information about our Health Program:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/health-program>

Food Security Program

Reducing Hunger

The focus of our Food Security program is on reducing villagers' hunger by providing training in ways to be more successful in their homestead gardens, and, thus, better able to feed their families.

Just like it may be for some of us in the Western world, we are not all gardeners and so we need some training to have a successful garden. Perhaps we take an agriculture class or go to Home Depot to learn some pointers about the impact of PH levels or what is the best organic fertilizer to use. It is the same for villagers in Cambodia and farmers continually seek to learn more.

Improved garden techniques result in better health for families and for the entire community. An added plus, if the gardens are extra successful, the farmers can sell their excess produce. This income helps the families take a step further out of poverty.



Farmers participating in horticulture training, and using that knowledge in their gardens



Farmer who received horticulture training working in her garden

To date, Trailblazer has conducted 38 agricultural trainings on horticulture and soil management, composting, and organic pesticide and fertilizer to 570 people (at an average of 15 participants for each training course) all totaled, including the farmers and their family members, these trainings benefitted 2,850 people.

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Please visit our website for more information about our Food Security Program:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/food-security-program>

Education Program

Happy Bicycle Recipients

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Life for rural Cambodians is not so easy. They are less well endowed with infrastructure and economic resources. There is no municipal transportation system in Cambodia. You can think of it as having a bike versus taking the bus. We are excited to report that we have distributed 40 of our 2019 100 bicycle goal. However, the students who received a bicycle will be able to continue their education in secondary school.

The bicycle project so far this year was made possible, in large part, because of Buy1Give1 (B1G1) their moto is: *helping you create more impact in our world...than you ever imagined possible*. We wanted our readers to know about B1G1 who enables businesses to donate to organizations in need, and has been supporting Trailblazer since 2014.

It started with an out of country person introducing Trailblazer to an in country business person in Phnom Penh. The business owner got intrigued about what we were doing and registered her business with B1G1 to help support our cause, which began our relationship with B1G1. We are happy for B1G1 and how the relationship has grown over the years.

B1G1's 2015 donations totaled \$2,706. So far this year, donations have reached \$13,937. Their lifetime donation amount totals \$73,915. B1G1 now supports several Trailblazer's programs and has been a great success for us. This is one small example of how telling someone about Trailblazer can lead to others getting involved. If you have a business, please consider registering your business to support Trailblazer at b1g1.com. The more businesses involved, the better.

Thank you B1G1 for this significant contribution to help our programs be more successful!



Happy bicycle recipients –
funds for these bicycles came from several private donors, and business donor B1G1

Please visit our website for more information about our Education Program:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/education-program>

Economic Development Program

Fostering Economic Development



Village fund recipient Sophoan with Village Chief Suy Kin. The blue notebook in the lower left is the loan record book.

Trailblazer continues helping rural communities establish a Village Fund to support the economic development of our partner villages. Village Funds are an innovative approach to microfinance that enables villagers to get the capital they need to start or grow a business, buy livestock, seeds or fertilizers, secure medical care, or purchase a motorbike or bicycle so they can have better access to work and school. These funds are a village-owned and managed micro-loan program, built to foster economic development for the residents of that village.

This year, Trailblazer has provided 35 Village Fund refresher courses to ensure those Village Funds are operating successfully, and made introductions about Village Funds to seven new communities that are interested.

Sophoan is one of our recent Village Fund recipients and here is her story:

Ay and Sophoan have a farm in Sras village where they grow cassava. Cassava is a root vegetable grown in tropical regions of the world. It is a rich affordable source of carbohydrates and can provide more calories per acre than other cereals.

Last year, they had difficulty in preparing their farm land because they lacked the money to hire laborers to help clear the bushes and termite mounds, and to buy the cassava to plant. They borrowed \$400USD from their village's Village Fund at a 2% interest per month with a 12 month payback period.

Ay reports, "I had a great time this year. I earned more money from selling the cassava and I have money for my family. I am happy to have the Village Fund in my village. Me and my neighbors have the opportunity to improve the living economy using the Village Fund. It is easy to borrow money because it is in my village, run by my village committee members."

In 2019, because Ay is not borrowing the money from the Village Fund, it gives other Sras villagers the chance to take a turn in borrowing money for their own interest.

[DONATE NOW](#)

Please visit our website for more information about our Economic Development Program:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/economic-development-prog>

Board and Staff

Learn More about our New Board Members

Trailblazer Foundation's Board of Directors and staff welcome two brand new Board members to its team: Nick Munro and Cortney Ward. Nick and Cortney have a rather long history with us and a passion for Cambodia, having found Trailblazer in 2010 and volunteered for us January/February 2011.



Cortney Ward lives in San Francisco and works as a product designer in the tech industry. A native Texan, she lived and worked in Austin before moving to California. In 2010, Cortney traveled and volunteered extensively throughout South East Asia and South America.

It was in Siem Reap where she and her husband Nick Munro eventually crossed paths with Trailblazer Foundation. Helping build filters and dig wells in rural Cambodia was an integral point in Cortney's life and travels. Continued contributions to Trailblazer's clean water mission has been a true joy for her. Cortney just became a Trailblazer Foundation board member and is elated to be joining the team.

With over 15 years of advertising and product design experience, she's looking forward to help develop and evolve the organization into its next phase of success.



Nick is a native Texan who currently resides in San Francisco, California with his wife Cortney. He works in the technology industry, where you can find him designing and sketching a range of new products and services.

When Nick isn't designing, he loves to travel, which is how he found Trailblazer in 2010 while taking a sabbatical in Southeast Asia. He and Cortney volunteered with the Trailblazer Foundation building filters and digging wells. That experience left a lasting imprint, and they have contributed to the organization since.

Nick just joined the Trailblazer Board and is excited to be a part of such a dynamic organization. He looks forward to adding his design and technical expertise to assist Trailblazer in its continued growth and success towards their mission of bringing clean water to the people of Cambodia.

Trailblazer's Executive Director, Chris Coats, talked with Nick Munro about his volunteer experience. You can see the entire conversation at this link <https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/from-our-volunteers-1>. But, here are a few questions and comments:

What inspired you to volunteer with Trailblazer?

When I was in my early twenties and working at my first job, I got a bit restless and realized it might be a good time to see the world....There is no better way to visit a country, meet the locals, and make a positive impact. Fast forward another few years and my girlfriend, Cortney, and I were in South East Asia looking for the same experience. Luckily, we found Trailblazer.

What did you like the most about the experience?

Trailblazer in particular, proved the importance of the interaction between an organization and the people they are serving. The communities were so involved that it made the work that much easier and fulfilling. Seeing the direct impact to each family, in only a few days, was beyond our expectations.

Did your volunteer experience impact the work you do now? How?

We both work in advertising and design, which seems worlds away from installing water filters in Cambodia, but there are some very key parallels. Volunteering for organizations like Trailblazer, teaches you how to fully utilize your creativity and ingenuity. Things often don't go as planned, and improvising on the fly is a valuable skill.

Please visit our website for more information about our Board Members:

<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/our-board>

Board and Staff (continued)

Update from Board Member Justine Auton



Volunteering – Round Three!

I would never have guessed seven years ago that the food poisoning from eating lettuce washed in local Siem Reap water would have changed my life. But here I am, back again in this lovely Cambodian town doing my third volunteering stint at Trailblazer. Cleaning up the water, one sand bio-filter at a time!

I've brought a good friend from home this time for a two-week tour of duty. It's great fun to do this work with a mate. It's all new to Anna but she's embraced the experience with gusto. I've really enjoyed being the experienced mentor in the workshop and watching Anna getting to grips with the range of tasks on offer. I was surprised her favorite job ended up being sifting sand. Mine is painting the water filters, or anything else instead of sifting sand! The rhythm of it is relaxing she said. Each to their own.

This is one of the reasons I love volunteering at the work site. The manual work that is sometimes grubby, always sweaty and often repetitive is a relaxing antidote to my day job at home in New Zealand. I think of it as an exercise in applied mindfulness. Carefully washing a bucket of sand five times requires a singular focus on the color of the water along with counting to five. Somehow this edges out all the other noise and thoughts which usually fill my head.

One of the reasons I keep coming back is to learn more about Cambodia and deepen my understanding of the challenges this country faces. With volunteering only taking up the morning, we've had lots of time for more local learning.

There are about 300 NGO's working in and around Siem Reap on a wide variety of projects. It's insightful to look at the work of other NGOs. We're not in competition; there seems to be a lot of complementarity and collaboration happening to improve outcomes for local people. This time I took a close look at the amazing work done by hero rats – specially trained rats who sniff out landmines. This is an innovative approach to saving lives and loss of limbs from the mines that still cover a lot of the rural area, including land near some of the villages we work with. (<https://www.apopo.org/en>).

So, how many volunteering stints is enough? I don't know that yet, but I know there is more to do and more to learn. I'll be back next year and, because this place gets under your skin, it looks like Anna might be there again too.

Are you or anyone you know going to Siem Reap? If so, check out Trailblazer's VOLUNTEER page on our website. Or contact us directly info@thetrailblazerfoundation.org.

We love to have visitors and volunteers.

For more information about volunteering:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/volunteers-2>

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL

In Other News

Other Ways You Can Help

Here are some different ways you can support Trailblazer Foundation:

1. **Monthly contributions - a relatively pain free way to contribute more to Trailblazer.** Research has shown that people are willing to contribute a little more to their favorite charity if they break their donations up into monthly giving. This takes some of the sting out of a once a year larger contribution. If this is of interest to you, you can either sign up on our website ([via the DONATE button](#)), or call us to talk about how best to do this.
2. **Help build our public profile.** It's a simple equation, the more people that know about us the more support we get. You can help build our public profile in either or both of the following ways.
 - a. **Share our newsletter with people you think might be interested.** You can do this by either forwarding our newsletter email to those people, or download (from our website) and forward our newsletter to those people.
 - b. **Share our social media posts.** Trailblazer is on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter. Please help us by sharing our posts with your online community.
3. **Host a small scale fundraising campaign via our Facebook page.** More and more people are choosing to use Facebook's "Fundraisers" function, with many people using their birthday as their motivation for giving. Please consider asking your Facebook friends to support Trailblazer this way.
4. **Did you know that places of worship make contributions to programs like Trailblazer?** Please consider approaching your church, synagogue or temple about supporting our work (see article on page 4 on how this can benefit Trailblazer).
5. **Support Trailblazer Foundation through Amazon.** As some of you may know Amazon.com has a charity program called AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is a website operated by Amazon with the same products, prices, and shopping features as Amazon.com. The difference is that when you shop on AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price of eligible products to the charitable organization of your choice. If you shop through Amazon please consider using AmazonSmile. We would be grateful for your support.



Supporter Sam W, seen sitting in the tuktuk recently started a Facebook Fundraiser.

Please visit our website for more information:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/other-giving-options>



Bio-Sand Water Filter, donated by Rotary Club Zurich. Delivered with the help of volunteers from Globalteer.



For more information about volunteering:
<https://thetrailblazerfoundation.org/volunteers-2>

FROM OUR VOLUNTEERS



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