



House Building Report

2007 Campaign

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The “Rockin4Tabitha” 2007 Event:

In 2006 we held our first fundraiser in support of the Tabitha Foundation. The event was a success and we met our goal of raising sufficient funds to build 4 houses for poor families in Cambodia. We walked away from that build with a commitment to return.

In 2007 Rockin4Tabitha was held at the Lonestar in Ottawa. Our goal was to raise sufficient funds to build 8 houses. Eight houses was a big commitment but Bob’s theory is “You have to aim high - Go big or go Home!”

The new venue was a little larger than last year’s, and definitely more music friendly, featuring a large stage, and a great house PA sound system.

Once again the evening proved to be a tremendous success, with a fun crowd of several hundred friends of Tabitha supporting our fund-raising efforts.

Our musical lineup kicked off with the very talented Danny Sylvestre performing several songs off of his recently released CD. Danny’s back-up was a “no show” but, Danny felt the event was worthwhile and said he would play solo if need be. He performed a great set – thanks Danny!



Texas Flood’s “Bobbie Ray” Carver

Then it was event organizer Bob Carver’s turn onstage. With his band-mates Steve Hollingworth, Brad Campbell, Wayne Wahab, and some guitar backup from Ross McRae, Bob belted out a blues set a la Stevie Ray Vaughan, and ‘pushed my comfort zone’ – singing a Sam Cooke tune- ‘Ease My Troublin Mind’.

Once again, the evening headliners were the fabulous Hitmen – featuring original members of the 5 Man Electrical Band Les Emerson and Ted Gerow. How often can you get to see and hear the guys who brought us such legendary tunes as Signs, Absolutely Right, and many more chart toppers! (Visit our web site for more event photos!)

Thanks again guys.



A big thanks to our corporate supporters...

In addition to our healthy ticket sales for the event, we received generous support from:

Greg Richards (Learning Systems International)
Salem MacDonald
Johnathan Browne.

Thanks to their kind generosity, we were already well past the halfway point (to reaching our goal of 8 houses) before the night of the event even began.

Once our hard costs were covered (see financials on page 12), we were very excited to see that we were now able to build **9** houses for the planned January 2008 build trip.



Building a dream... in progress.

But there was another surprise in store. Lisbeth Mosseau, a long time Tabitha supporter and Board Member turned 80 years of age. Lisbeth said that she did not need anything for her birthday and requested that friends and family donate funds towards a house for Tabitha. Lisbeth's request was honoured and a few weeks later we received a message "Bob, can you build another house?"

Our original goal of building 8 houses was big – **building 10 was huge** – we would need a bigger team – a strong team.

Bob's theory – "Aim high!" appeared a bit daunting but, determination is high on our list.



Our Build Team:

This years' team was twice as big as last years with 14 members.

The team consisted of 'repeat builders: organizers Bob Carver and Wendy Cunning and Thai Boxing Academy Instructor Nathan Weiss, new members from the Thai Boxing Academy Dr. Paula Piiilonen, Dr. Natalia Rybczynski and her husband John Kim, Meghan Butler, Tabitha Canada board member Lucia Dolcetti, and Ottawa family Mark, Hajrija, Miriam and Robert Conrad.

We also gratefully wound up with two International members; Dave Anderson of New York City, and Serene Ong of Singapore.

Our team: (left to right)

*Back Row;
Dave Anderson NYC,
Nathan Weiss-TBA,
Miriam Conrad,
Meghan Butler-TBA,
Paula Piiilonen-TBA,
Mark Conrad,
Hajrija Conrad,
Wendy Cunning-TBA.*

*Front Row;
Lucia Dolcetti-Tabitha Canada,
Bob Carver-TBA,
Robert Conrad,
John Kim.*

*Middle;
Natalia Rybczynski-TBA,
Serene Ong-Singapore.*

Everyone made their own travel plans, with one thought in mind: You must be in Phnom Penh on Saturday, January 26th, for orientation at Tabitha Headquarters. Having learned some lessons from last year's build – some team members had stayed at different hotels and it was hard enough to actually find the hotels let alone the team members – this year we asked everyone to book into the same hotel, which was only a few minutes away from the Tabitha building.

Tabitha founder Janne Ritskes gave her orientation lecture to the group. Part history lesson, part cultural awareness, all to the point. Poignant and moving, the orientation is a crucial part of ensuring that our team is aware of, and sensitive to, history and cultural norms of the villagers we are here to help. All new team builders are obligated to visit the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Genocide museum as part of their orientation. There was sufficient time to complete these visits on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. We also needed some time to pick up much needed supplies/munchies as there was no grocery store in the town where we would be staying.

This year we were building in the seaside province of Kampot. We have two Tabitha Staff with us; Srei, who accompanied us on our 2007 build, was going to join us again to ensure that our build would once again be a success. We were also grateful to be accompanied by a Tabitha employee for the Province of Kampot.

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Srei before first day liftoff

On Sunday afternoon we all piled into two vans – along with our luggage, groceries, munchies and Dave’s bike - for the three hour drive to small seaside resort town of Kep. The road proved to be a decent one and the trip went smoothly. While Kep is small, it does support a small tourist economy. Its’ main claim to fame is being the sea-side residence of the former King. Kep is much quieter than the larger beach destination of Sihanoukville. There were a few small hotels and guest houses but there were not many tourists.

We were expecting very rustic accommodations but were pleasantly surprised with the guesthouse. After settling into our rooms, we all met for dinner and coordinated for the next day -

our first day of building. With 10 houses to build we were a little nervous but set a goal of completing 5 houses our first day.

The village we were going to build in was about an hours drive from Kep. Our village is in Kampot province, in the Ko pong Trach area, and is called Kom Tmey. About half the trip was on paved highway. The second half on a very ‘rustic’ dirt ‘road’. Those last 10 or 12 km took another 30 minutes.

House-building is a bit of a whirlwind. Local contractors have erected the shell of the house, and put on the corrugated metal roof. Our job is to complete the house, while under the watchful gaze of the locals.

During Janne’s orientation we have been made aware of certain local beliefs that some would find superstitious or quaint. In order to complete our build successfully, we do not want to commit any faux pas that would have Janne and the Tabitha staff doing damage control after we leave.

Once we were off the vans, we quickly broke into two teams. Each team picked a house and started working.

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First House - Water Break

A funny thing about Asia - the only way to know how hot it really is, is to watch CNN, or luck into a thermometer (very rare). It is always hot. There are two seasons Rainy (hot), and Dry (hotter). I guess living in our Canadian climate makes us somewhat obsessive about how hot or cold it is - in Cambodia it is always HOT!

We were building in the hot dry season and frequent water breaks are an absolute necessity. If you happen to fall behind on your hydration, heat stroke will be stalking you.

There were six houses in the section of the village that we were in on Day One. Janne had explained that we would at first be looked at with trepidation – the villagers would be fearful that their houses would not be completed – westerners are

considered “soft” – we would not be able to put up with the heat much less the “wood from hell”. They would be wary. Towards lunch hour the heat started to take control of one team member but determination was set on his face as he continued to hammer away. Lunch hour was a short break – we felt if we took too much time, it would be more difficult to get our bodies up and moving again. One doesn’t realize the toll the heat and build pace can have on you.

As the day passed and the houses progressed – the villagers started to smile – and as each house reached completion, the smiles got bigger. This day was a dream for them and we did not want to disappoint anyone. We now had a strong rhythm going – the hammering pace picked up – we were on a great roll and we finished all six by 3:30 in the afternoon!

Our ill team member insisted on finishing the day with us and we extend our thanks to his strong hammer hand. Added to that is the fact that there were only very minor injuries – We’re all smiling – we have had a successful first day.

The best part of the day is when we have the pleasure of officially ‘handing over’ the houses to the families.

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Most of these families have been involved with Tabitha for approximately three years. They typically begin with a ten-week savings program that returns 10% interest. This encourages the family and starts them on a road of hope. Tabitha has many programs to address these issues - house-building is only one of their initiatives.

Many families have still not psychologically recovered from the results of the Khmer Rouge, and still suffer from what we would call 'post traumatic stress syndrome'. Rebuilding a sense of self-worth is a long and difficult process.



Day 1-Happy Families!

The Khmer Rouge had the following 'policy' on the value of an individual's life: "To keep you alive there is a cost; to kill you is no loss." Few families were untouched by the brutality of the KR. It will take several more generations to overcome its' legacy.

The families must save and contribute \$30 towards their new house – a huge sum considering their circumstances. All the families gather around while Srei explains our part in their new house – how we have raised the funds and traveled to their village to build them a new home.

We see nothing but smiles as they bless our team the Cambodian way. We, in turn, thank them for the honour and opportunity of allowing us to come into their village and build these homes. Each family receives a new quilt to accompany their new house. We tend to get a bit teary at this point, but they are very happy tears.



Day 2 - More Happy Families!

These families have waited a long time for their new house, so it is really not the time to 'bond with the locals'. We leave as soon as the ceremony is over to allow the families to begin life in their new home. We get back in the vans without hanging around too long and as we start driving out of the village all the families are waving good-bye and smiling.

The drive home is often very quiet and reflective. These people are so nice, and have so little. I think many of us are reflecting on how much we have, and how easy our lives are in comparison.

Day 2

We are up bright and early – perhaps moving a bit slower – but we know that Day Two will be shorter in comparison to the first day and this provides encouragement. Our team member that was ill is now back in top form and we are ready to get the next four houses done.

About an hour into the build the heat claims its second victim who returned to the shade of a few sparse trees to take a breather. The one thing that he will remember is – knowing how little these people have, it only took a few minutes for an elderly lady to come out of her hut with a pillow and place it under his head. That one moment goes a long way to demonstrating the heart felt thanks of these people. We tore through the last four houses and we were finished by 12:30.

We took a longer lunch break on this day as we know our job is done and many of us are finding it hard to move anywhere.

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Before & after... as night is to day.

Once again we end the day with the blessing ceremony and handing over the quilts and their homes. Some of the villages walk with us to our vans, some of us are teary eyed, some of the villagers even give us a hug, one lady is crying while she thanks us over and over again – we climb into our vans with everyone waving goodbye for a very long time.

What a feeling!

The feeling of satisfaction is hard to describe. This year ten families totaling more than fifty people have a dry, secure house. Some of the kids will sleep indoors for the first time in their lives – they have a home, they feel safe.

That night, after the build was completed, the team had one more group dinner. Our fears of committing a faux pas in the village is gone, our fears of not being able to complete the 10 houses is gone – over 50 people are safer and that makes us very happy and thankful for having had this opportunity. The food and the company are great – we all have huge grins and some of us are already planning on a return trip next year!

I cannot speak for anyone else, but I find myself thinking about those families from time to time, and I always feel great. Because of the many people who supported Rockin4Tabitha, our build team members, and Tabitha, we were able to provide real help to these families...yeah, it is very personal, and it feels GREAT.

The next day everyone headed their separate ways - some went to Sihanoukville to see its' beaches - others went back into Thailand - others flew back to Canada. Everyone left, I think, changed forever....it is that kind of an experience. .

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Thank you !... to every member of our Build Team

- Nathan:** for bringing his experience from last year, his dedication in returning for a second build, as well as his last minute recruiting skills
- Paula:** for her fearless attitude in climbing 15ft. up the ladder and her much needed hammering strength
- Natalia:** for her pleasant and positive outlook in that each and every house would be finished and her "no fear" attitude of eating fish heads
- John:** for providing us with his constant humour and his attention to detail by trying to replace any floor nail that was not up to code
- Meghan:** for being a team player & building while she was ill and forgiving us for involuntarily leaving her behind on Day 2
- Lucia:** for being a solid flooring person and never giving up on the many uncooperative nails
- Mark:** for his excellent, much needed hammer strength on the ladder/wall team and building even though he was not in the greatest of health
- Hajrija:** for her solid flooring techniques and her calming attitude and persistence about getting the job done
- Robert:** for proving that a boy of 9 years of age can remain focused, and contribute to a build team and meet his commitments
- Miriam:** for proving that a girl of 12 can get the job done - as well as amaze us with her ability to consume 3 breakfasts
- Dave:** for his dedication in making the rendez-vous ontime even while travelling by bicycle & providing a strong hammer hand on the ladder/wall team
- Serene:** for joining our team on a last minute recruitment, providing needed strength and impressing us with her dedication to aid those less fortunate

Again, a sincere thank you for your strengths, fundraising and commitment to the build –
it would not have been possible without each and every one of you.

We would also like to take this opportunity to once again thank our friends, old and new, our sponsors and the many others who supported the 2008 house building event. A special thank you to Stanley Berneche for his continued support in updating our web blog as well as the final editing and layout for this trip report.

We look forward to our 2009 build with both anticipation and excitement.

Bob Carver & Wendy Cunning



Testimonials:

Nathan W. Weiss (Ottawa)

This year's trip was my second time participating in a housebuilding project with the Tabitha Foundation, and I can say that these projects have been quite significant to me in terms of life experience. I cannot say enough about how amazing it is to play an active role in a humanitarian effort. There are many victims in this world who can benefit immensely from a helping hand, and Cambodia is indeed a victim of particularly cruel circumstances.

Our role as builders is to contribute resources through fundraising and to assist with the construction of the homes. It is not simply a handout however. We are helping people to help themselves as Tabitha's Savings Program is a way of enabling people to improve their situation through their own efforts and determination. These projects afford us the chance to demonstrate our capacity for selfless service. Through these acts, we can show our sensitivity to the interests of humanity as a whole rather than just our own. Furthermore, we are also showing our genuine desire to provide assistance by meeting the families and performing a portion of the work. When you meet the families, they can see that you are truly there to help and that you do so unconditionally. At the same time, you are contributing your labour to the project.

Once the homes are completed, your labour is a part of those homes. As such, you have given much more than just money, you have given a part of yourself. This is understood by the recipient families who display considerable joy coupled with tremendous amounts of gratitude, and these human feelings prove themselves to be quite universal as they are very easy to pick up on despite the language barrier.

Serene Ong (Singapore)

From my precious encounter with the Canadian house-building team and the Cambodians, it has provided support for the saying - "whatever lies before and after you matters little compared to what's within yourself- carry on growing gracefully and be gracious to others

Natalia Rybczynski, Ph.D. (Ottawa)

John and I found the experience to be extremely positive and more emotional than we expected. We were surprised that the people, even though they had gone through so much, were so warm and open-hearted. We felt they were sincerely grateful for our small help. Their immediate needs are so fundamental: a solid roof and four walls. Seeing some of the challenges they faced made us feel very humble.



Event Financials

Financial Balance Sheet: Rockin4Tabitha2007

Received

Corporate sponsors & personal donations	\$6,130.00
Cash sales from tickets and at the door	\$5,155.00
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Total cash in	\$11,285.00

Expenses

Professional entertainment (Hitmen)	\$1,500.00
Venue (Lone Star)	\$900.00
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Total cash out	\$2,400.00
(paid from door cash, not money donated to Tabitha)	

Donated Services and Items

Design , printing and web hosting
(including flyers, tickets, program, web components)

Balance Raised for Tabitha Build Fund	\$8,885.00
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You are cordially invited... to become
part of **Rockin4 Tabitha 2008!**

Orientation for next years build:

Friday January 30th, 2009 (confirmation closer to actual date)

Our goal

to build 40 houses, with a volunteer build team of 25.

We will be building in Battambang, the first houses to be built by Tabitha in this area.

Contact:

Bob Carver, c/o The Thai Boxing Academy

306 Rideau St. 2nd floor, Ottawa, ON K1N-5Y5

Phone: (613) 233-6981 or email: carverb@on.aibn.com

Visit: rockin4tabitha2008.blogspot.com



Tabitha Foundation (Canada)

Patron: Her Excellency the Right Honourable Michaëlle Jean

C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D.

Governor General of Canada

The Tabitha Foundation is a non-profit, non-denominational Christian organization, respecting all faiths, seeking to help the suffering in various nations. The aim is to reach out to the despairing in their communities and enable them to address their needs in a holistic and sustainable way, thereby transforming their lives to fruitfulness, dignity and beauty.

Tabitha's current programs affect 1% of Cambodians; presently over 267,000 people in eleven provinces of the country. Over the 13 years of its operation, Tabitha has lifted more than half a million Cambodians out of poverty and despair, into lives of dignity, hope and active participation in their communities.

The Tabitha Foundation is a registered charity #88939 9598 RR0001

For more information, visit:

tabitha.ca