

A VOICE OF THEIR OWN

On Jan. 15, nearly 100 parents of students at the Harpswell Foundation in Phnom Penh traveled from all over Cambodia to visit Harpswell's dormitory and Leadership Center for Women. A non-governmental organization, the Harpswell Foundation's mission is to empower a new generation of women leaders in Cambodia by providing education, housing, and leadership training.

The following four speeches were given by Harpswell students to mark Parents' Visiting Day.

KEO SOPEAN

— Representing Harpswell's first-year students

Today, it is my honor to stand on stage on behalf of first-year students of the Harpswell foundation. My name is Keo Sopean, from Siem Reap province, majoring in mathematics at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Actually, I would like to say thanks to all first-year students who selected me to speak on their behalf. I would like to warmly welcome Mr. and Mrs. Alan Lightman, founder and fundraiser of the Harpswell Foundation, as well as all parents, guests, and staff of the Harpswell Foundation in Cambodia — and my beloved sisters from all generations.

This is a wonderful chance for me to be standing here. I am proud and content speaking to you. I have resided in Harpswell for about four months. The day that I stepped into the Harpswell dormitory, I felt really excited. All of the first-year students and I know each other now. We have a close relationship. In the period of time that I have been here, I have learned new things and gained a lot of experiences. I am taught new things, such as an English course, discussions about The Cambodia Daily's news, and we have a leadership seminar. I see the difference between my life at home and the center. For example, I have many friends here. I have learned to be self-confident, independent, tolerant, courageous, responsible and to be a good role model.

Anyway, I am inspired by analysis, consideration, communication, leadership and crit-



ical thinking. We improve other skills too, such as learning more about social events, how to accomplish something by ourselves, learning to work in a group, and learning to cook and house cleaning. I would like to say how lucky we are to have a chance to stay at Harpswell, which is a center that encourages women to be potential leaders — and which reflects the mission of the Harpswell Foundation to empower a new generation of women leaders in Cambodia.

Finally, all of the first year students are very committed. All of us will study harder and harder, and train ourselves to be potential leaders. We will improve ourselves and develop the solidarity as a sisterhood forever. If someone in the dorm meets obstacles or difficulties, we will be around and help each other. We commit to encourage and train ourselves for a better future. We will unify and start to raise women's rights in Cambodia to the highest point. Our mission is to develop our country and empower women to participate in social activities. We all love Cambodia; we are proud to be born here. We want to build Cambodia to be bright in the future with our ability and competence. Thank you very much for your attention and participation.

SRUN KEAVATEY

— Representing Harpswell's second-year students

First of all, I would like to say hello to all parents, honored guests, aunt Varony, aunt Sophal and all the Harpswell sisters.

I am Srun Keavatey, a sophomore of economics of the Royal University of Law and Economics. Today I am very happy to have this great opportunity to be a representative of the second-year students, and to give my impression of living in the Harpswell Foundation Dormitory.



After I have now been living for around 18 months in the Harpswell dormitory, I have found out that Harpswell is a special place for me where I have gained a lot of general knowledge and experiences. Here, I have gained a lot of knowledge from attending many classes such as English lessons, a Cambodia discussion class, a debating class, and a leadership seminar, which provided us with important knowledge such as realizing and analyzing world issues, improving our English, being brave to give and protect our ideas and developing ourselves to be good leaders in the future.

Living in the Harpswell Foundation Dormitory provides me not only with the knowledge that I have listed above but also experience. Since we are from many different provinces, our culture is also different. Therefore, we need to learn from one another and adapt to different habits of living. When I live separately from my family, all the sisters in the Harpswell dormitory provided me with warmth instead of my family; especially I received love and care from all the older sisters at the dormitory, which I had never got because I am the eldest sister in my family. We always share, care, encourage and help one another, especially when one is sick or is having problem.

About future goals, I have always dreamt about gaining a master's degree abroad after I graduated. Then, I want to have a high-ranking position in the Ministry of Economy and Finance because I think this job is a very good job where I can prove that girls like me, as well as girls in the whole society, can contribute to the development of Cambodia. I want to use my abilities and knowledge to help women and children receive care and attention completely in the future. I strongly hope and believe that I will reach my future goals.

Last but not least, I, as representative of the second-year students, would like to show our gratefulness to our manager of the Harpswell Foundation Dormitory who has provided us a great opportunity to live in Harpswell and helps us to facilitate every difficulty we meet. Also, I would like to thank all the parents, and especially my parents, that gave great chances to their daughters to pursue studies in Phnom Penh. Thanks for the valuable presence of the honor guests today and thanks very much for your attention.

SIVORN BORMEY

— Representing Harpswell's third-year students

Today it is my honor to be a representative of third-year students of the Harpswell Foundation. My name is Sivorn Bormey, from Sihanouk province, majoring in economics at the Royal University of Law and Economics. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of you in selecting me to represent you on this important occasion.

I've been residing in Harpswell for about two years and a half. When I took my first steps in to the Harpswell dormitory, I was inspired by its mission, which is to build Cambodian women leaders. I've gained many experiences and learned new things in life each day. Skills that I have learned from Harpswell are communication, leadership, debating, critical thinking, analyzing society and many other skills. These skills are learned through classes and the everyday living as a sisterhood. I feel safe, comfortable and full of love as a resident of the

Harpswell Foundation.

Living in Harpswell Foundation, I can see a promising future.... I want to work in the Ministry of Economics and Finance of Cambodia in a leadership role. I know it is not easy to have such position, but it is my dream to manage Cambodian finances, which come from mining, fishing, foresting and other sectors and spread it out to all Cambodian citizens in effective ways.

On behalf of the third-year students, I would like to say thanks for all the support that has been made by the Harpswell Foundation. We are committed to studying harder, respecting all rules and regulations of the dorm, and improving solidarity among our dorm mates in order to achieve the objectives of Harpswell, as well as our individual objectives.

I thank you very much for your attention and participation.



SOTHIDA TONG

— Representing Harpswell's fourth-year students

First of all, I want to say hello to all the parents, honored guests, aunty Varony, sister Sophal and all the girls in Harpswell. My name is Sothida Tong. I am studying mathematics as a senior student at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. I come from Kompong Cham province. Today I am pleased to be a representative of the fourth-year students at a great time when all parents are participating in Parents' Visiting Day. Afterward, I would like to tell you about my life, what I have learned and my future goals.

Harpswell is an organization that helps smart girls coming from the provinces to continue studying at university in Phnom Penh. Harpswell has provided us food, room, English-language classes, critical thinking and analysis,

leadership knowledge, library access and a computer room with Internet connection.

Personally, I think I've got not only these [resources] but I also know how to live with people as group. For instance, there are many girls coming from different places; therefore, we have different lifestyles.

At first, I can say it was not easy to live with other people whom I had never known. I could not adapt to this condition. However, my sisters in Harpswell did not leave me alone; they always talked and encouraged me, and I warmed to them. Another point, I became more patient and confident because I have given presentations, facilitated The Cambodia Daily discussions and faced difficulties in Harpswell.

Through what I learned, I realize that I understand and care more about the people around me. Moreover, I told the younger gen-

erations about my guideline to guide them together in Harpswell. I knew what they needed, what they faced when they stepped into Harpswell Foundation because I had already walked on that road.

Another thing, I also want to share my future goal. In the future, I strongly believe that I can work in the education field as a math professor at RUPP. To reach my goal, I have to study hard to finish my bachelor's degree successfully and then continue to a master's degree.

Finally, I want to express my profound thanks to all parents who gave their children a chance to go to school, especially my parents. In the name of fourth-year students at Harpswell, I also thank Mr. and Mrs. Alan Lightman and all supporters who give me and some smart girls in Cambodia an amazing place. I really appreciate all the honored guests here. Thank you for your attention and participation.

