



THE HARPSWELL FOUNDATION

Empowering a new generation of women leaders in Cambodia

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June 24, 2015

Dear Friends of Harpswell:

Greetings from New York City. I am writing to you having completed my first four months with Harpswell and my second trip to Phnom Penh, and wanted to provide you with some of my first impressions and reflections.

I had a fascinating and productive trip with Alan to Phnom Penh in late May: meeting with partners; sitting down for planning meetings with senior staff; learning about the physical plant at the dorms; meeting with this summer's wonderful group of Leadership Residents (five and counting); troubleshooting; and spending time with the always talented and inspiring Harpswell students. Alan and I brought evening ice cream to the dormitories, which was a huge hit. And I had the privilege of presenting a Leadership Seminar to students and alumnae on my life experience and lessons learned, my family background, and the path that has led me to Harpswell.

I have begun to dig into the day-to-day work of Harpswell, big and small, with great enthusiasm. The work ranges from getting to know the students and alumnae; involvement with the new recruiting season; establishing core curriculum schedules; revising rules and policies; getting to know the US Harpswell Fellows program; meeting partners; looking at and forging new partnerships; physical property management; financial accounting procedures; Leadership Resident recruiting and management, etc. All of this work is important to the running of Harpswell, and Alan and I are beginning to identify and set some of the priorities for the year ahead.

I am particularly interested in strengthening our Leadership Resident (LR) program. These young women are vitally important to Harpswell's success, both as role models for and teachers to the Harpswell students, as well as potentially important connectors as Harpswell continues to grow and thrive. These high quality, educated women are leaders themselves with intimate knowledge of our program. Many of them will go on to important work and will become influencers in their own right. Building upon Alan and David Roe's excellent program, we hope to improve recruiting, strengthen systems and reporting, capture information and ideas from the LRs after departure, and be an active link to current and former LRs through the LR Alumnae Network.

We are grateful for our continuing and new relationships with Bowdoin, Agnes Scott and Rhodes colleges, and Christian Brothers University. We will also need to think about and find more American colleges interested in accepting Harpswell students for a post-baccalaureate year in the United States.

I have also been working with Alan and our alumnae on strengthening the Harpswell Alumnae Association (HAA), hoping to further solidify their commitment and their ongoing influence on each other and on their younger sisters. As the number of alumnae grows (five years of graduates-- 100 women-- and counting), Harpswell will have to grow with this astonishingly talented and accomplished group of women, and learn how to develop and manage a mature HAA that will benefit Harpswell, its students and graduates alike.

The longer-term agenda for increasing Harpswell's global impact is also the subject of our discussion and planning. The possibilities include building new Harpswell facilities in other countries; student exchanges; a summer leadership program for outstanding young women in Southeast Asia; speaking at international conferences; mentoring and serving as a blueprint for new organizations involved with the empowerment of women; and forming new partnerships with other international organizations involved with women's empowerment. These topics and more will be discussed at the September Board meeting, and I look forward to working with Alan as we explore these and other options and share some of Harpswell's lessons learned with new audiences and partners.

My experience thus far confirms my early impressions: Harpswell is a high quality, thoughtfully run organization, fulfilling its mission with care and consistent expression of the highest values. Every organization that Alan and I met with in Phnom Penh, and every external partner I have spoken with, including UN Women, the Peace Corps, the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, reaffirms this.

I am so fortunate to be working with the uniquely gifted Alan Lightman. It has been delightful to work with Alan on problem solving, and he has been a patient and generous teacher. It has also been a pleasure to get to know the Trustees and our committed staff. And of course, our students. This is such a talented and hardworking group of young women: they inspire me daily, and I take seriously the responsibility of serving as a role model and mentor. (Certainly my experience as the mother of three daughters has given me somewhat of a head start in this regard.)

Thank you for all the support and counsel you provide to Harpswell. Please feel free to contact me at any time at alison@harpswellfoundation.org, or at 917 273 1793. As I move forward in my new role, I hope to have the opportunity to meet many of you.

I hope you have a wonderful summer.

With warm regards,



Alison