

Ella McAuliffe and The Kurt Hahn Prize

There is so much still to be done



Sreyleak held a vocational scholarship at UWCSEA, and she spent a year at the College developing her English and French skills. Sreyleak was a child of the dumpsite, having begun her working life at the age of 4. At age 12 she was, in her words, saved by an organisation who gave her the opportunity of education and that gave Sreyleak hope and a new life away from the horrors of Steung Meanchey dump site. With the dream of becoming a flight attendant, she developed her English and French skills and is now a training flight attendant with Angkor Air. It has been a long road for Sreyleak who was not given the opportunity to an education when she was a little girl.

When I was in Grade 3, I met John Wood and Greg Mortenson who have dedicated their lives to bringing education to those who would otherwise not have the opportunity to education and especially for girls. Their stories spoke to me and linked with my friend Sreyleak.

Without UWCSEA, I would be just another little girl who knew that other kids could not go to school. One school completed and others to follow—that is my aim. Being a UWCSEA kid, I know I can take action.

I have been so encouraged by three parents of the College community: Michelle Fisher, Fleur Thomas and Sara Bailes—thank you. Most of all, I thank my great teachers and mentors: Skilly, who has shown us all the way with the Global Concerns programme, Mrs Males, who took the time to encourage me and to build my confidence, to Mrs Daniels who is such a support and allowed me to be an independent fundraiser, to Kate Lewis who leads Tabitha with a combination of passion and great humour and always appears at my sales table. Finally, but not least of all to Janne Ritskes, the Founder-Director of Tabitha who tells me the real stories of development, who is at the front line of the hard work of breaking the poverty cycle.

At the opening ceremony of the 2012 Round Square International Conference, His Majesty King Constantine spoke so passionately that he was visibly moved to tears. He concluded his speech with the words of Mr Nelson Mandela, "Education is the most powerful weapon which we can change the world."

Whilst the King spoke, I was sitting front row next to Mr Niko Becker, the Head of Salem Alumni. These two gentlemen are almost the guardians of the Kurt Hahn Prize; a prize awarded annually by the Round Square Organisation for an "exceptional act of service to others."

It was indeed an honour to be awarded the [2012 Kurt Hahn Prize](#), and being the youngest recipient, there was much discussion about my age. However, I don't think that my achievement is especially 'exceptional,' nor is age a factor in taking action where one can.

According to a press release by Ban Ki Moon on September 26, 2012, 108 million primary school aged children were not enrolled in school by the end of the 1990s. United Nations statistics

claim that today that number has fallen to 61 million. 61 million children (and most likely far more) is an unacceptably high number for anyone to digest, especially for me who has the luxury of a place in one of the best classrooms of the world. So, what can we do about this disparity? For me, it has become a driven ambition to raise funds for school building in Cambodia.

As soon as I moved from Infant into Junior School, I began my fundraising efforts. At first, my sights were set on raising funds to buy chickens, then pigs, then water wells and finally I raised enough funds to build a house—all in support of the excellent work of Tabitha, which has become my great Global Concern passion.

I have had the benefit of building my understanding of development from asking direct questions, from meeting directors of NGOs, from many dinner table conversations, from eavesdropping and from the real life experience of a dear family friend, Sreyleak. Sreyleak is a hero of mine, and it is her story that made it a logical progression for me to try to put children into schools.