



A MESSAGE FROM GEOFF AND LYNICE

Welcome to the third edition of “Friends of Empower”. We are continually grateful for your support and encouragement as together we endeavour to “empower the privileged to empower the poor”. In one sense we are mindful of the enormity of the task as we seek to secure the future of more young women living in vulnerable circumstances. However, we are reminded of the “Starfish Parable” each day... to focus on securing the future of one girl at a time. (If you aren’t aware of the “Starfish Parable”, check out our website www.empower.org.au)

As part of “empowering the privileged”, we are introducing the concept of “Ambassadors of Empower”. So.... What is an Ambassador of Empower?... you ask. It is someone who:

- represents Empower with excellence
- champions the cause of Empower
- promotes the work of Empower
- protects the values of Empower

As you ponder over this, you will realise that it is not a role to be taken on lightly. But it may be that something stirs within you – a desire to be involved – an opportunity to make a difference – to do something significant. We are seeking ambassadors to use their resources, abilities, enthusiasm and initiative in a variety of ways on behalf of Empower. Your role as an Ambassador of Empower may be one or more of the following:

- Fundraising

- Donor
- Sale of products
- Markets
- Advertising/Promotion/Awareness
- Encourage friends via social media etc to purchase products from our online store
- Volunteer

We all have different gifts, interests and opportunities which can be used to contribute to the work of Empower. We are looking for committed representatives to come up with innovative ways that they can contribute to the goals of Empower. It may not be as “out there” as a camel trek fundraiser, but you never know! If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador of Empower please send us an email (geoff@empower.org.au) outlining your proposed involvement. All ambassadors will be supported, trained and encouraged as the need arises. Please take the time to consider whether a role as Ambassador of Empower is for you. We would love to hear from you.

As always, we encourage any suggestions or feedback about this Friends of Empower newsletter, or any other aspect of Empower, so we can improve what we do.

Geoff and Lynice
Wigney



EMPOWER HIGHLIGHTS

July • August • September

- A new volunteer staff member, Lisa Trelvelick has recently commenced working in our Empower retail store. Lisa has a background in “events management”.... So watch this space.
- The 2014 Charity Camel Trek took place during August. An amazing achievement by the 6 women adventurers and an awesome fundraiser for International Justice Mission. (see page 5)
- An amount of \$15,000.00 was provided to International Justice Mission to help fund the rescue of girls from sexual slavery in Cebu, Philippines.
- Lynice Wigney and Vivienne Young spent one month during August/September in Mongolia visiting a producer group named Artis Altai. (see page 3)
- Child sponsorship in the sum of \$5,167.00 provided to Clear Skies House in northern Thailand to help support the children between October and December this year.
- The opportunity to promote Empower and to raise awareness of the issues caused by poverty and a lack of value attributed to women by completing “talks” at Bairnsdale Garden Club, Sunrise Rotary (Bairnsdale) and North Gippsland Group CWA International Day.



INTRODUCING ARTIS ALTAI

Empower has sold the beautiful products made by our partner group “Artis Altai” ever since our retail store opened in August 2011. We were introduced to Artis Altai by Vivienne Young, an artisan from Orbost who has been involved with this producer group over the last few years.

Lynice and Vivienne have just returned from one month in Mongolia, visiting this producer group which is situated in a small city named Gobi Altai – on the edge of the Gobi Desert in rural Mongolia. It is in a very isolated location, with a population that varies with the seasons. The countryside is vast, magnificent and in many ways, untamed and it is a very harsh environment in which to live. The winters are particularly severe and long (think -35 degrees C) and in recent years, several bitter winters have led to the devastation of many herds of animals – resulting in great hardship, poverty and vulnerability to these herding communities.

The workshop has provided a secure, friendly and affirming place of employment for local women seriously affected by various issues relating to poverty. The women learn to use their indigenous felting skills, by using sheep and camel wool, dyed with non-toxic quality dyes. The women make hand felted and hand crafted products including felt bead jewellery, felt mobiles, baby’s booties and silk with wool scarves.

Nine women have just formed a legal co-operative and are in the process of learning how to successfully maintain and grow a business.

They are in a crucial transition period as Western supervision and assistance gradually steps back and the women move towards self-management.

The current workshop is unsatisfactory, being situated in an apartment building, being of very poor quality and not suitable for use as a workshop in the long term. Artis Altai has been saving money diligently over the last couple of years to enable the purchase of land within the Altai city centre and to construct a purpose built workshop with a small retail shop. Empower is currently raising \$20,000.00 to contribute to the cost of this project.



The time to construct the new workshop is over the summer months of June, July and August 2015. The land will need to be purchased in the next few months. By this time next year the women will be working in their centrally located, well designed, safe and clean facility. It will have both hot and cold running water, a toilet, power, internet and plenty of heated space in which to work. You are most welcome (and indeed encouraged) to contribute to this worthy project.

PHOTO GALLERY



Women at Artis Altai sorting dyed felt (above) to create the vibrantly coloured jewellery (below)



The town of Gobi Altai during winter



Lynice with some of the women from Artis Altai (above)



The women at Artis Altai are learning new skills to grow their business (right)



UPDATE ON CHARITY CAMEL TREK 2014

During August a group of six women, Tara, Cyndie, Jesse, Keran, Tori and Sam completed a seven day, one hundred kilometre camel trek through outback South Australia. The 2014 Charity Camel Trek was the brainchild of Tara Lea, who felt inspired to use her interest and expertise with camels to raise funds for the rescue and rehabilitation of girls from human trafficking in the Philippines.

Tara gathered the team of adventurers together and inspired them to keep going in the dry, hot and harsh conditions, despite the physical and mental challenges of migraines, diarrhea, back problems and blistered feet. The women were determined to complete the journey – all the while motivated by the thought of young girls being sexually exploited, being abused and battered physically and emotionally and feeling unloved, worthless and betrayed by humankind.

The camels made wonderful desert trekking companions, with a delightful calm and peace about them as they casually walked across the desert carrying all the gear and supplies. The scenery was varying and breathtaking, including sand dunes, mountains, valleys and rocky plains.

The team was joined by Tara's partner, Russell Osborne, and children Charlotte (5), Tate (4) and Owyn (12 months).

The women were aiming to raise \$10,000.00 to be on-forwarded by Empower to International Justice Mission, to fund the rescue of girls from human trafficking in the Philippines. Such was the commitment of the women in their fundraising that they have exceeded their goal, having raised \$15,369.00! This will enable the rescue of many girls from horrible circumstances and enable them to be rehabilitated and treated with dignity and respect.

Empower is very grateful to Tara and her adventurous team for their amazing achievement. For more details about the 2014 Charity Camel Trek go to www.CharityCamelTrek.com. A book containing an edited version of the journals written by the women before and during the trek will be on sale shortly in Empower. If you've been inspired by the fundraiser, you may want to start preparations for the 2015 Charity Camel Trek – applications are now open!



Charity Camel Trek participants enjoying a well deserved rest (left) and posing at Lake Torrens (above)

HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you are interested, there are some ways you can assist us in our vision to “empower the privileged to empower the poor”. You could:

- Consider becoming an Ambassador of Empower.
- Make a donation towards the land and new workshop for Artis Altai in Mongolia.
- Donate funds for a specific project or by way of a general donation – either in our retail store or online. (100% of funds donated are used towards projects)
- Purchase products from our retail store at 188 Main Street, Bairnsdale.
- Purchase products from our online store at www.empower.org.au (free postage)
- Promote Empower to your family, friends and associates.
- Forward this newsletter to those who may be interested in Empower.
- “Like” Empower on Facebook and encourage your online friends to follow us.

REMEMBER: Christmas is just around the corner and Empower provides an ideal opportunity to purchase beautiful hand-made gifts and at the same time support the work of Empower.

So.... Before you buy someone a present, think..... “Can I get them something from Empower?”

Perhaps you know someone who would like a woolly Santa (right) made by the ladies at Artis Altai?

