

PCF makes a difference

By Jody Houton

THERE are at least three charities set up to care for the stray dogs of Phuket and a few to ensure the protection and well-being of the elephants and gibbons on the island, but what about the cracks in Phuket society that are not covered by a specific charity, what happens to those needs?

These gaps are the areas in which the Phuket Community Foundation (PCF) hopes to fill. The foundation was set up on the final wave of the 2004 Asian Tsunami.

During that dreadful Thai winter, the world's eyes were on Phuket and Syngeros, a global philanthropist organisation that initially donated funds to help with rebuilding the island was instrumental in the eventual launching of the PCF.

They wanted to create something permanent and something longer lasting that is articulated in the PCF's stated mission to "help maintain or improve the quality of life in Phuket for everyone."

Board member of the PCF Alasdair Forbes explains the concept of Community Foundations, "It started in the States. It's a grant making organization, unlike specific charities that fund specific things."

The PCF board is made up of members from a variety of backgrounds including people who have worked in the leisure and care industry.

Their aim is to provide help non-discriminately without political, religious bias or based on upon any other agenda.

However, as the foundation is an American concept and therefore based upon an American model, they initially found it extremely difficult to adapt to Thailand, Alisdair said, "The whole concept of giving is so different here. People usually give to a temple or a Mosque. We are hoping to change that."

This was what partly prompted him and another member of the foundation to travel to the similar-sized country of Slovakia.

Now almost two and a half years since its official launch in 2007, Alisdair believes, "Finally, we are ready to do this."

The remit for submitting applications is simple; in fact as long as it's a great idea for improving Phuket anything will be considered.

There is even an interactive 'ideas' section on the PCF's homepage which asks for reader's submissions and thoughts. A current and successful project they have in operation is 'motorbike rear lights.' This was started on the back of the startling figures that despite only costing 20 baht, approximately one in four of all motorbikes in Phuket do not have working rear lights.

The foundation created a simple solution; first it printed and distributed hundreds of posters around Phuket, then contacted and managed to procure hundreds of bulbs via donations from motorbike dealers.

The Kusondharm Foundation lent them a tent and chairs which they then set up on the roadside. Then, they enlisted the help of students from the Vocational College, who volunteered to change bulbs when the drivers stopped.

Through the help of the community, the foundation only needed to cover the 7,000-baht printing cost of the posters. There have been four separate sessions in all, the most recent being on the 15th and 16th of August near the weekend market in Wirat Hongyok Rd.

231 defected bulbs were replaced during that weekend which brings the overall number of rear lights having been fixed to more than 700.

The ethos of 'helping the community to help each other' is integral to the success of a Community Foundation. It is the aim of the foundation to not only provide funds, (if needed) but also provide expert advice and contacts.

A current project that is in the early stages is an idea that was born out of Mike Flynn's desire to buy a new PC and give away his old one. He contacted the PCF to enquire as to if they would like to take it, repair it and donate it to somebody.

The PCF responded that indeed it was a great idea, but suggested that Mr Flynn undertake the project himself and they would offer help and financial assistance if required. As it turned out, help has not yet been needed, as much like the 'rear light project' the community has offered to help by fixing and repairing the computers, and costs have thus been kept to a minimum.

Mr Flynn has also taken on a project that will support local artists in Phuket, which will come to be known as the Annual Phuket Art Prize. The foundation will help with contacting Arts bodies and prizes.

They will be formally accepting applications for grants in December and the biggest investment that they are likely to make will be between 30,000 and 50,000 baht.

There are two rules with regard to applying for grants. Firstly, they will never fund anything completely, this Alasdair explains is because then the project will no longer belong to the community.

Secondly, after a year of funding they will withdraw so that the community can run it on their own.

Alisdair said, "The ultimate aim is to get people to initiate programmes, maintain them and then take them over."

The PCF is currently funded by many International organizations including major sponsor the Global Fund for Community Foundation.



PCF help to keep motor bikes legal

By Bupha Ravivot

A short film about Phuket to be shown on flights from South Korea into Phuket will also air at the Busan International Film Festival 2009 on 8 - 16 October.

The half-hour film 'Phuket' centers on gorgeous Korean superstar Im-SooJung and her attempted break from fame which sees her visit Phuket to try and recapture the peace and relaxation she once enjoyed when she came as a young girl.

She stays at a quiet hotel near to Mai Khao beach and is chauffeured around by Thai hunk Sorrapong Chatree, who ends up showing her more than just the local sights.

It is hoped that 'Phuket' will act as a travel guideline for tourists and help to promote Phuket culture and tourism. Deputy Secretary of the Prime Minister, Khun Aunchalee Wanich Theppabutr said, "The short film 'Phuket' is another way to tell people what Phuket is like."

The decision to cast popular Korean beauty Im-SooJung



Khun Aunchalee Wanich Theppabutr o set in the role is not just a co-incidence.

Although the tourism industry has slowed considerably in recent years, the flow of visitors from South Korea has remained constant. Last year, there were 138,292 tourists from Korea. It is hoped that Korean 'Honeymoon couples' will be inspired to visit Phuket after they have seen the film.

Khun SomBoon Jirayus, President of Phuket Tourist Association is confident that the film will be one further step to improving tourism on the island.

Sorrapong Chatree said he enjoyed the shoot, and said, "People are lucky to have been born in such a wonderful place as Phuket. It is a blessing from God."

Hopefully the movie will be a blessing for the tourism industry.

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