

School in Cambodia memorializes L-S students who died too soon

By Staff reports

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SUDBURY - In an act of remembrance heard round the world, the Lincoln-Sudbury Memorial School opened its doors on October 1, in the rural Battambang Province of Cambodia, almost 9,000 miles from the high school on Lincoln Rd.

The new school was the result of a busy year planning and fundraising by L-S alum Mira Vale, '09, who sought to create a living memorial to all of the students and alumni that "we lost too soon" during Lincoln-Sudbury's first half-century.

According to Vale, she first conceived of the idea for the Memorial School Project in the winter of 2007, her sophomore year at L-S. She recalls that it was a difficult time for anyone connected to the school. In the aftermath of tragically losing several members of the community, she began to wonder, "What could I possibly do to make this situation a little better?"

She recalled a December 2006 column by Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times detailing efforts to build schools in rural Cambodia, where war, genocide, poverty and the sex slave trade had destroyed the lives of many youth. She wondered, "What if L-S could help build a school as a means of healing our own?"

In her senior year, Vale - now a student at Yale - initiated an ambitious effort to raise the required \$13,000. She and a small circle of friends and faculty organized t-shirt and bake sales, a roller-skating event, several benefit concerts, a community yard sale, and Facebook appeals. With contributions from students, staff, and alumni, a generous grant from the LSPO, and a gift from the Class of 2009, the goal was finally reached last spring. Construction on the school then began under the aegis of "American Assistance for Cambodia" (AAfC), which has helped build over 400 schools in that country.

Last month, the Lincoln-Sudbury Memorial School opened and the first photographs arrived shortly thereafter.

"After more than two and-a-half years, this project was suddenly so real," says Vale. "It amazes me that thousands of miles away, there is a school with our name on it, one that our love and community built, which is providing opportunities for a better life for people who wouldn't otherwise have the chance to go to school.

"I'm proud of the efforts of the Lincoln-Sudbury Memorial School Project, and I'm profoundly grateful to the support we've received along the way. Thanks especially to Bill Schechter, John Ritchie, and Ann Kramer for helping to move this project to action, to the L-S students and alumni who baked cookies, played music, and fell down on roller skates for a good cause, to my parents for their support in so many different ways, and of course to the L-S community for their contributions to this project."

Schechter, a retired L-S history teacher, noted that the two Lincoln-Sudburys are very different in scale, but that "the hopeful looks on the faces of the Cambodian students are the very same as those I saw every year on the first day of school in Sudbury.

"Everyone who has seen the memorial list is shocked by how long it is. But alumni have also said how good

they feel that their friends are being remembered in a way that will help other young people who have suffered so much.."

The story of the new school and the names of those to whom it is dedicated will be preserved on the new Lincoln-Sudbury Memorial School Web site, which is located at: [//LincolnSudburyMemorialSchool.Org](http://LincolnSudburyMemorialSchool.Org). Names can be added to the "virtual plaque" and corrections made through a link on the page. The Web site will soon be accessible through the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional H.S. home page.

Presently, there is no easy way to contact the Cambodian school, because the remote area does not receive regular mail service. If additional funds can be raised, it would be possible to supply the school with an English/computer teacher, solar panels, and a low-power computer capable of sending and receiving email. Contributions can be sent to L-S English teacher Ann Kramer. Checks should be made payable to "[American Assistance for Cambodia \(AAfC\)](#)."