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Prayer Items

- Praise God that we received approval from Canadian Food Grains Bank for some of our activities in Phongsaly.
- Praise God that we have recruited staff needed for the project and pray that they will settle in well and become a part of a strong team there. Ms. Chansamouth for Education, Mr. Bouahong and Ms. Bangneun for health and Mr. Vanxai for community organizing.
- Pray for villagers such as those in Namkhong and Saenta who live in constant fear of spirits. Pray for staff as they work with these communities for wholistic transformation.
- Continue to Pray for the villages in northern Laos which are facing rice shortages.

Traditions and an Entry Point

The Lord watches over you.

~ Psalm 121:5

Great News: since the last newsletter, The Canadian Food Grains Bank provided funds for food for work activities in villages in Phongsaly struggling with rice shortages.

Understanding Traditions

As staff implement activities they face a number of challenges. In Namkhong village, for example, the villagers changed the location of where they originally planned to construct an improved footpath after we had already designed it. The reason: the planned path direction passed by a cemetery and villagers feared that ancestors would not be happy with a road passing through.

In another village, Saenta, community members are

afraid to use mosquito nets, or even let visitors use them when staying in their houses. The belief is that if they sleep under the net their ancestors will not be able to find them and protect them from danger. Unfortunately, at certain times of the year there are many mosquitoes and thus an increased risk for malaria and dengue fever.

Working within such a context remains a challenge. Our long term goal is to be a part of the process whereby villagers examine and change harmful cultural beliefs without destroying what is unique about their own culture.

Development Entry Point

In every village where we



work we set up a Village Development Committee (VDC) consisting of 3 men and 3 women. We provide capacity building training and opportunities for the members of this VDC so that they can be involved in all aspects related to the development in their village especially after the project phases down activities. One member is a chairman, another is the treasurer, one is responsible for agriculture, another for education and another for health.

Update on the family

School was out on June 17. That same week we received report cards that brought us much cheer. Here are a few excerpts to explain why:

"Matthew has made exceptional progress with his social behavior this semester. He has learned to take more risks at expressing his thoughts and offering solutions to problems

that involve him, proving himself to be a thinker. Matthew is in good shape to enjoy the new challenges of his next school year level."

"Maria's keen interest in facts has meant she has been involved in more research, has made observation and connections to reflect on, acquire and utilize knowledge. Her

self management skills are very good, she has been organized and used her time management effectively and appropriately. While working with a group she was respectful and tolerant toward others suggestions and ideas. Excellent work this year Maria!"

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Family Update...cont'd

(Continued from page 1)

“Monica has a very positive attitude towards all aspects of school. She is confident in her abilities, is a great presenter and will persevere with difficult tasks. Monica is starting to assume more leadership roles in group situations and is

willing and able to support other students. Monica has a positive influence on her classmates when working in a team.”

Moe Moe, my amazing and beautiful wife, continued to organize our busy social and activity calendar (piano and

swimming lessons for the kids, visitors, soccer, etc), while holding down her full time job as school nurse and continuing to maintain her fame for her cooking and baking prowess.

~ Mike Fennema & Family

The Mystery



Your guesses were:

- a tool for sifting
- top burner for a gas stove
- bellows for getting a fire hot
- something to peel or shred
- lost part of a small American spy airplane from the war

And the correct answer is....

A bellows for getting a fire hot.

Since every family uses fire-wood for cooking their meals, such a bellows comes in very handy. Unfortunately, the fires are right in the house and ventilation is often very poor contributing to health issues related to indoor air pollution.

Thanks for all your guesses!



Using the bellows to prepare a fire for cooking

A Final Word



What's that for?

Take a close look at the photo to the right. What could this possibly be used for? Don't hesitate or be shy, but send your best guess to Mike at fivemfamily@gmail.com. The mystery will be revealed in the next newsletter!!

What's Coming Up?

During July we plan to take a few weeks of holidays, travelling to the

southern parts of Laos. Next year we will be coming back to the West to share with you once again face to face about our work here in Laos. We will have to start planning our agenda for that trip in the coming months. You will be hearing more about that. Let us know what you would like from us during that period of deputation.