

# Families with Cambodian Children (FamCam)

(formerly Families with Khmer Kids)

FamCam is a parent support group for families who have adopted or are considering adopting children from Cambodia. FamCam's purpose is to provide education, support, networking and celebration of Cambodian culture throughout the year.

Website: [www.famcam.org](http://www.famcam.org)

FamCam strives to offer a connection to other families through:

- Newsletter-3 or 4 times a year
- Maintain website, [www.famcam.org](http://www.famcam.org)
- Annual reunion at the Water Festival in Lowell, MA
- Support and encouragement for local celebratory & educational events throughout the country all through the year
- Support for sub-groups
- Links to Cambodian culture and heritage organizations
- Education and support pre and post adoption
- An educator link with schools
- Contact and support with organizations that advance the welfare of the Cambodian community, especially children, both in America & Cambodia

FamCam is not associated with any agency or facilitator. Famcam supports all methods of adoption.

To find out more about FamCam and to receive an introductory copy of the newsletter (which contains FamCam membership information, \$16 annually, \$20 international), please contact:

Laurie Fenton  
20 Oakhurst Ave., Ipswich, MA 01938  
Voice/fax: (978) 356-5186  
email: [laurie@emilysbooks.com](mailto:laurie@emilysbooks.com)

## Chapters

**NW FamCam**, supporting families in Washington State and Oregon  
Carlee Savage, Publicity Chair  
[ccsavage@attbi.com](mailto:ccsavage@attbi.com)

**SE FamCam**, supporting families in Georgia, North and South Carolina  
Alison Keck, President  
[alisonkeck@yahoo.com](mailto:alisonkeck@yahoo.com), [www.geocities.com/familieswithcambodianchildren/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/familieswithcambodianchildren/index.html)

**NE FamCam**, supporting families in New England  
Laurie Fenton, FamCam Founder  
[laurie@emilysbooks.com](mailto:laurie@emilysbooks.com)

**Rocky Mountain FamCam**, supporting families in CO, WY, MT, AZ, UT, and NM  
Julie Huffaker  
[famcam@vincejulie.com](mailto:famcam@vincejulie.com)

**Families with Cambodian Children or FamCam**

(formerly FKK)

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Parent Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/ State/ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Person \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Person \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Information on each of your children (please include all of your children)

Name                      DOB              Date Joined Family              Orphanage                      Agency(City, Country)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to be included in the FamCam directory? The directory is open to both adoptive & waiting families. Yes No

Do you wish to be on our email list to receive notice of late breaking events, etc? Yes No

Please contact Laurie Fenton at [laurie@emilysbooks.com](mailto:laurie@emilysbooks.com) or 978-356-5186, if you are interested in becoming involved in FamCam. We have many volunteer opportunities available and we are always open to new ideas.

FamCam dues are paid on a calendar year basis and are due in Sept for the following year. Members receive the FamCam newsletter, a copy of the FamCam directory and updates about upcoming events. Anyone who wants to pay via PAYPAL should email Deb Schwartz at [dmerle@postmark.net](mailto:dmerle@postmark.net) Make checks payable to Deb Schwartz only (if you wish to put FamCam on the memo line, please do, but Deb can't deposit checks made out to FamCam) for \$16 (\$20 international) per year.

Mail to: Josh Dietrich  
46168 Aisquith Terrace  
Potomac Falls, VA 20165  
[Josh@dietrichs.net](mailto:Josh@dietrichs.net)

Please write on the back ideas for newsletter, area of interest or comments:

## Articles From Past FamCam Newsletters

### Introduction: Cambodian New Year

by Laurie Fenton

#### Celebrating in Cambodia

New Year is the most popular holiday in Cambodia. The joyous celebration is held in mid-April and lasts for three days. The celebration includes gathering at the Buddhist Temple for prayers and food, as well as classical dances, music and traditional games.

In Khmer (cah'MY) the New Year celebration is called chaul chnam thmey (CHOOOL chah'NAHM tah'MAY) which means entering the New Year. The greeting for Happy New Year is sur sdey chnam thmey ( SOO-ur sah'DAY chah'NAHM tah'MAY) or Happy New Year.

The date of the New Year celebration is set by astrologers by the lunar calendar to determine the exact moment when the new animal protector arrives. It falls around April 13 or 14 in the month of Chet., the end of the dry season in agricultural Cambodia. Like the Chinese, Cambodians observe the 12 year cycle of designating [each year by the name of an animal](#). Sanskrit numerals from 1 to 10 are sometimes combined cyclically with each name so that it takes 60 years to complete the cycle of all number and animal combinations.

Preparations are made well ahead for the New Year celebration in Cambodia. Silk is used to make new clothing. Men and boys typically wear white round neck shirts and black pants, while the women wear knitted shirts and beautifully decorated robes. Houses are thoroughly cleaned to rid them of evil spirits. The new clothes and clean house symbolize a new beginning.

[Buddhism](#) plays a central role in the New Year celebration as well as in everyday life. New Year is a time to show respect for elders, including parents, grandparents and teachers. By offering charity to those less fortunate, by doing good deeds and showing forgiveness, one gains merit in the coming New Year. New Year is a time to celebrate with families and friends, so traveling during the holiday is common.

The three days of New Year each have a special name and activity. The three days are called Maha Sangkrant (Moh-hah sahng-KRAHN), Vana Bat (WAHNA BAHT), and Loeung Sack (LEONG SAHR). Maha Sangkrant is the day of entry and marks the arrival of the New Angel, Thevada (DAY-veh-dah). Each year has a guardian angel who arrives at the moment the old year ends and the new year arrives. At a time specified by astrologers, the Buddhist Temple's drum or bell signals the arrival of the New Year. Home altars, have been prepared to receive the New Angel with five candles, five incense holders, flowers, fruit, bay sey (BUY SAY) and a bowl of perfumed water. The buy sey is a section of banana tree trunk with legs, to which 3, 5 or 7 layers of banana leaves, rolled up in finger shapes, have been attached as a farewell to the former angel and welcome to the New Angel. Families pray for happiness, health and good crops.

On the morning of Maha Sangkrant, families visit the temple, wear their new clothes and bring food for the monks. After prayers, the afternoon is [for playing games](#) such as jhun (CHOH'ohng), a scarf tossing game, and teanh proat (DIEN PROHT), a tug-of-war game on the Temple grounds. In the evening the community builds a sand mountain, preferably near a boddhi tree. The boddhi tree has special significance because it was under such a tree that Buddha slept, meditated and achieved enlightenment. The grains of sand are believed to be equal to one's health and happiness.

Vana Bat is the second day of celebration, which includes more praying. Children show respect and gratitude by giving their elders gifts of clothes, baked goods and money. Gifts are given to servants and

the poor. After completing their good deeds, the children play games, dance and sing at the Temple. The sand mountain continues to be added to.

On the third day, Loeung Sack, the monks bless the sand mountain. The Buddha statues are bathed with perfumed water, smaller statues are submerged, while the large ones are washed by hand. The cleansing of the statues is a good deed, thought to bring good luck, merit and rain for the coming crops. After the statues are cleaned, people wash themselves, the elders, monks and teachers with the perfumed water. The water ceremony (pouring or throwing water at each other) is to bestow good wishes and blessing on each other. Perhaps the most fun part of this closing of the New Year celebration is the ugly covering, the playful covering of each other's faces with charcoal and/or mud.

### **Celebrating in the United States**

The [Cambodian New Year celebration in the U.S.](#) is condensed into a two-day weekend observation. Some Cambodian/American communities have built temples, while others convert halls into Temples. Shopping for gifts for family and friends, buying fabric and new clothing, stocking up on special Cambodian foods not found in regular supermarkets and preparing family altars are done ahead of the holiday, as in Cambodia. New year celebrations have become important as a way for Cambodian/Americans to preserve and enjoy the arts and culture.

On Saturday, families go to the Temple early in the morning. They bring food, which is put on trays to be offered to the monks who lead the prayers called dak bot to Buddha. Late in the morning each person puts a spoonful of rice in the monk's rice pot. The monks must eat by noon, as tradition requires that they only eat breakfast and lunch. For the rest of the day, the monks may only drink tea or juice. Once the monks have eaten, everyone shares the delicious home-cooked meal. There is a feast of traditional foods such as peanut curries, noodles and tree mushrooms. Then the Buddhist ceremony is completed with more praying. The mountain is made with rice instead of sand, usually inside the Temple. Incense is lit and placed, along with flowers, in the mountain. The elders continue to pray and listen to the monks preach, while families and friends talk and the children play. Fortune telling and story telling are also part of the day. Other New year's games include lakhon siang (hiding and passing the scarf), ank ounge (a throwing game using a hard dry fruit) and sdich chon ("king" in the middle). Traditional folk and classical dances are performed in the afternoon, at a location other than the Temple. In the evening, young people dance to modern Cambodian and Western music.

Sunday morning, the families return to the Temple to pray and eat. In the afternoon, they bathe the Buddha statues and sprinkle holy water on each other for a sign of respect, and to bring good health, happiness and success in the coming year. The end of the ceremony, bot massau, where the splashing of water, cologne and make-up (including lipstick and powder) becomes a lively contest, especially among youths.

### **The Water Festival and FamCam Reunion in Lowell, MA, August 2002**

By Eva Ash

On a very hot and humid Saturday in August, many FamCam families were among the estimated 50,000 people who attended Lowell's Sixth Annual Southeast Asian Water Festival. With temperatures in the mid-90s, I for one was reminded of my trip to Phnom Penh. If only there had been air conditioned cars with drivers waiting to ferry us around! Instead we walked for what seemed like miles along the banks of the Merrimac River, eating spring rolls and pad Thai, buying Cambodian crafts (or even Spiderman balloons!), and listening to the vendors chatting to each other in Khmer. No matter how often I hear various languages, there is a rhythm and tone to Khmer that makes it unique and beautiful. There were times I forgot I was walking along the Merrimac and instead thought it was the Mekong.

The day began with the blessing of the pirogues that would later race in the river, powered by at least twenty people all rowing together. This was followed by a parade of women, dressed in traditional costumes, playing finger cymbals and singing in Khmer. When we ventured out of the shade towards the main stage area, entertainment included traditional Cambodian dances courtesy of the Angkor Dance Troupe and local Cambodian pop band Seasia.

Later that evening, once the kids (and parents) had a chance to unwind back at the hotel pool and gameroom, the FamCam events began. Children played together, parents socialized, and many people browsed and shopped at tables set up by Emily's Books and Taansooa, both of which feature adoption and Cambodian themed products. I was happy to purchase a bilingual (Khmer and English) Cambodian folk tale called The Mountain of The Men, The Mountain of The Women. A pizza and ice cream party followed. Laurie Fenton then led the children in a parade; many of the children wore traditional costumes or kramas tied around their heads or waists. For anyone who has a toddler, you know what a hit actually being IN a parade was!

Sunday morning allowed more time in the pool and gameroom, followed by a brunch and program sponsored by FamCam. Our speaker was Fred Lipp, the author of The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh. He was wonderful with the children, inviting them to sit on the floor in front of him as he read and acted out the story. Anyone who made a wish (and a donation) in order to let a caged bird fly free while they were in Phnom Penh will treasure this book. After the reading, the children were led in crafts or movie watching (Niok, the baby elephant from the Angkor jungle), while the adults were treated to Fred Lipp's slide show. He told us about his recent trips to Cambodia to establish a nonprofit organization, the Cambodian Arts and Scholarship Fund, which seeks out motivated girls in Cambodia and sends them to school. This organization does amazing work on a tight budget since everyone in the US who works for it does so as a volunteer, and in Cambodia the money goes far. Donations can be sent to Cambodian Arts & Scholarship Fund, PO Box 18186, Portland ME 04112.

### **COSTUME AND COLOR**

From [www.moi-coci.gov.kh/culture/lifestyle.htm](http://www.moi-coci.gov.kh/culture/lifestyle.htm) submitted by Anita

The Cambodian week corresponds to the Western week, while the Cambodian days represent by colors. The Cambodian people, especially women, prefer to wear dresses by colors of each day of the week, especially during formal ceremonies. The colors of the days also represent fortune and bad luck of the week. It is very important for the daily business of private individuals. Thus, in certain villages, one would neither want to sell goods nor lend money on a Monday, but would willing to go shopping, for all that is brought home that day will bear fruit or yield profit.

Day of the Sun Sunday Red  
Day of the Moon Monday Orange  
Day of Mars Tuesday Purple  
Day of Mercury Wednesday Green  
Day of Jupiter Thursday Colour of Clouds  
Day of Venus Friday Blue  
Day of Saturn Saturday Black

Saturday is generally considered ill fated, because it loved by spirits or demons and one would choose it for ceremonies in honor of these. The color of Cloud referred to for Thursday is a white-gray or bluish hue. White is a color of mourning. In the palace, the color of Cloud is reserved for those who carry sacred water.

## Massachusetts Cambodian Heritage Camp

Laurie Fenton ([laurie@emilysbooks.com](mailto:laurie@emilysbooks.com)) is the contact person for the mini-Cambodian Heritage Camp being held in Massachusetts. The mini-culture camp will be held on the Friday before the Water festival which is the third Saturday in August.

## Colorado Cambodian Heritage Camp

Susan Borst ([cambodiancamp@earthlink.net](mailto:cambodiancamp@earthlink.net)) is the contact person for the Cambodian Heritage Camp being held in Colorado. To join the mailing list for this Cambodian Heritage Camp, send an email with \*\*\*CAMBODIAN HERITAGE CAMP\*\*\* in the subject line. In the body write your snail mail, phone and email info. Send that email to [info@heritagecamps.org](mailto:info@heritagecamps.org). More information on the Colorado camp is included below.

**WHEN AND WHERE WILL CAMBODIAN HERITAGE CAMP BE?** The first Cambodian Heritage Camp is scheduled for the weekend of August 15-17, 2003. Programming is planned for Friday and Saturday with opportunity for families to attend the Colorado Asian Dragon Boat Festival on Sunday, Aug 17, 2003 (see [www.coloradodragonboat.org](http://www.coloradodragonboat.org)). The camp itself will be held in Denver, CO. Reduced rates for nearby lodging will be arranged. The Colorado Heritage Camps website is [www.heritagecamps.org](http://www.heritagecamps.org).

**HOW CAN I HELP TO MAKE CAMBODIAN HERITAGE CAMP A REALITY?** There are several opportunities, all of which are essential to making camp a wonderful reality for our children:

**Volunteer:** Parent coordinators and volunteers are needed for all aspects of the camp. Susan Borst, an adoptive mom of two Cambodian born daughters in Centennial, CO, has volunteered as director of the camp but planning a camp is much more than a one-person task! Parent coordinators and volunteers are needed for each aspect of camp—workshop programming, recruitment of counselors, the cultural market place, ethnic village, arts and crafts, fundraising, etc. Parents in areas of the world other than Colorado can do many of these tasks! All that is needed is a positive enthusiasm and willingness to create something meaningful and important for our children. Access to a computer for “email meetings” would also be helpful.

For information, see: <http://www.heritagecamps.org/volunteer.html>.

Or contact Susan Borst at [cambodiancamp@earthlink.net](mailto:cambodiancamp@earthlink.net).

**Donate:** Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc. supports individual camps by providing organizational support, logistics planning, mailings and non-profit status for donations. Individual camps are funded through a combination of individual donations, corporate contributions, and registration fees. Registration fees do not cover camp expenses, as they are kept low to enable more families to participate. Donations may include sponsoring a counselor or speaker, participating in employer matching donation programs, contributing to the annual “Somewhere in the World” fundraiser, contributing to a family scholarship, or direct contributions targeted for Cambodian Heritage Camp start up and operation expenses.

For more donation information see: [www.heritagecamps.org/donations.html](http://www.heritagecamps.org/donations.html).

**Attend:** Healthy, vibrant camps are well attended. The more participants, the more positive energy, the more ideas, and the more funding we have to develop in the future. It is the families who make the camps! We welcome your interest, support and participation in this exciting time.