



# LOTUS NEWS

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December 2009

**Dear Lotus Friends,**

Greetings and Happy Holidays.

The second half of 2009 offered Mongolia and Lotus several challenges. Due to the H1N1 virus all schools have been closed for four weeks and all social gatherings postponed. Fortunately, we have been able to continue some of our lessons and offered the children a few extra outings to the city and the countryside during this time.

November surprised Lotus with a email hacker, taking over the lotus children email account and soliciting gifts in our name. We highly appreciate all concern and consideration that everyone showed us during this time.

Our guesthouse concluded its first season, giving seven young lotus adults a chance to build a independent lifestyle and we also see more opportunities developing in Erdenet for especially more technical educational programs. We hope to continue this positive trend to support our older children in securing a livelihood for themselves.

Furthermore, we have opened a new location in the Bayanzurkh district of Ulaanbaatar to adhere to new governmental regulations for children homes in Mongolia.

We want to thank you for your support and wish you and your family all the best health and happiness for the new year,

Didi Ananda Kalika

# Lotus Guesthouse

by Aki, Guesthouse Manager

Until now, our new guesthouse has offered a temporary home to over 500 guests. Many of them Lotus volunteers, but also various local, international NGO's, and travel agencies have found their way to the guesthouse. Although international and Mongolian tourism has seen a drastic decline, we may call this first season a success.

During the season, seven Lotus young adults have been employed in the guesthouse and vegetarian café, who, over the past months, have been able to support themselves and have started to establish an independent, secure livelihood. Also they have been able to improve their level of English and showed to be able to work independently and to take responsibility for their duties.

Apart from renovation and maintenance activities, the Mongolian winter will be focused on:

- Improving our marketing by upgrading the Lotus website with additional information about the Lotus Guesthouse, Ananda Café, Voluntary Services and more information about projects within Lotus.
- Hire and train a Mongolian manager who will take responsibility for our guesthouse, vegetarian café and voluntary services.
- Develop and implement tours. Lotus will operate several tours herself (Lotus tours, meditation experiences and extended summer camp experience) and work with several experienced tour operators.



*Traditional Room. Lotus Guesthouse*



*Main Entrance. Ananda Café*

# “A Home Away From Home”

By María Fernández Oliver

All guests agree that they love to spend time with Lotus Guesthouse team. Kindness and humanity are some of the main remarkable characteristics that make this place “A Home away from Home”. They all welcome you with a big smile, show openness and bring joy to your stay.

Undrach, Enkhtuya, Zulaa, Bagaa are very lively and charming, and make you feel part of the big Lotus family. They are four young women that grew up in Lotus Centre and all contribute to create a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

Enkhtuya, one of the eldest, really enjoys working at the guesthouse because, as she says “it is closer to the heart” and she likes to talk in English to volunteers and guests. Undrakh, who finished high school, thinks that it really is an opportunity for all of them to train and develop their professional skills for the future. They are all very happy working together, care about each other and give their support when it is necessary. Zulaa is a very active girl that also helps volunteers with Mongolian language lessons. She is very good at it, and we really appreciate her patience and the time she spends with all of us.

Bagaa is married, just turned 20 and she states that is the best job she has ever had. The human side is very important and the fact that they grew up together, work together and keep sharing special moments really makes a positive difference.

Aki, the guesthouse manager, is a young Dutch man that takes good care of all his team and makes sure that all guests are happy. For him, this is a new experience, and even if the language barrier could be an issue, it can be overcome with kindness and a closer approach to people.

Lotus Guesthouse develops a training project that contributes to improve livelihood and working experience for Lotus young adults.



**Lotus Guesthouse Team:**

**Undrakh** (back left), **Aki** (center), **Enkhtuya** (back right)

**Zulaa** (front left) and **Bagaa** (front right)

# Updates

## **Lotus Children's Centre in Erdenet**

Erdenet is a small and calm city Located in the northern part of the country; it is about 150 miles northwest of Ulaanbaatar, and has the Asia's largest deposit of copper.

We expanded our Lotus apartments in Erdenet, sending there some of our grade 6 children from Lotus Children's Centre in Ulaanbaatar. In total, 18 children and teenagers live in 2 apartments in the northern town. They can find more schools here, and some teenagers left Yarmag to attend technical school in Erdenet. It is a very nice area and kids really enjoy studying and living here. We would like to set up a summer camp in this area, with two gers, a well and a vegetable garden.

## **Kindergarten House in Bayanzurkh**

The project was funded primarily through a number of generous donations by the Lions Club and Louise and Peter Warmerdam. Since the purchase of the property, a large amount of money in 2009 was spent on the maintenance of the building. During this year and following the Mongolian Government Standards, children were moved from six gers to the main house.

Kindergarten House was renovated to improve living conditions, in particular the installation of new indoor bathroom facilities and kitchens. The main building was renovated by our hardworking maintenance crew. At the moment 39 kids live here with housemothers. Often receive visits from volunteers and friends that want to spend time playing with them.

Playground equipment was built by volunteers abroad and trees were planted in the front of the house.



Above: Lotus Children in Erdenet

Below: Playroom area in Kindergarten



# Profile: Ariunjargal

Ariunjargal came to Lotus Centre when he was nine months old. His mother died when he was just a baby and the woman who was taking care of him, Erdenee was also taken by Lotus. He lived in Yarmag up until two years ago, that moved to Erdenet with other boys and girls; he is 10 now and is studying to become a Lama.

Ariunjargal attends normal school with other children in the morning, and goes regularly to Buddhist temple in the afternoon when the main Lama became his tutor.

In the month of May he started to learn Tibetan language and prays, and is very happy. During summertime he went to the temple everyday and preferred to spend the holidays in Erdenet this year.

His housemother supports him with the Lama Deel and clothes that she personally sews.



# Lotus Children Volunteers

Stefan and Alice are volunteering at Lotus Children`s Centre in Yarmag at the moment. Stefan arrived in September to serve for one year in Mongolia. He teaches English, computers , and sports to Lotus young boys at school in Yarmag. Stefan is German and came to Ulaanbaatar with DED Organization (German Development Service).

Alice is from Switzerland and came to volunteer directly for Lotus. She teaches English during the week at school, and loves spending time with girls and kids in the Centre.

Last month, during school holidays, they organized different outdoor activities, such as trips to Ulaanbaatar, visits to city temples, museums or mountain hiking.

Both feel very independent to use their best skills for the benefit of the children, and managed their time to be with them as much as they can.

All volunteers remark that interaction with Lotus kids helps them for self-development and to learn about other realities. It is such a rich experience for both sides that can see the results straight away.



**Stefan Schultze** (Germany) and **Alice Mueller** (Switzerland)

## Especially needed items...

While most items are available in Mongolia, there are some that are difficult to find and that would make things much easier at the Lotus Centre. To house, feed and clothe such a large group of children requires lots of goods, and we certainly appreciate donations of clothing, arts and crafts supplies and toiletries.

Below is a 'wish list' of such items. Mongolian customs sporadically charge us import duty on large shipments, so we ask that if possible goods are sent in small packages marked as gifts.

Please send them directly to: Gabrielle Dowling, PO Box 1018, Central Post Office, Ulaan Baatar, Mongolia .

For financial donations please follow the instructions on our website or contact us by email.

### Donations

- Vehicle for the guesthouse and children's centre. Price to be determined
- Ger for Makunda Approximately US \$1,200 (US \$ 400 already was donated)
- Bathroom for the boy's house Approximately US \$3,500
- Fencing for Gardens and Vegetable Growing Project Approximately US \$3,000
- Will for Summer camp. Approximately US \$ 5,000
- 2 Gers for Summer camp in Erdenet. Approximately US \$ 2,000
- Oven Approximately US \$900
- New Porter truck Approximately US \$4,000
- New car for Didi Approximately US \$7,500
- Donations and/or expertise towards setting up fundraising business for Lotus

### Items

- Seeds
- Arts and crafts materials
- Vitamins
- Shoes

### Volunteers

- A Baker Trainer to teach the teenagers how to bake bread and pastries
- A number of people with some gardening experience to help plant the garden in May and June
- Volunteer to work in administration. Teacher with experience in primary school.
- Volunteer to train and run seminars for teachers (Child Centered Education).
- A person with experience in the "Virtue's Project"





- Newsletter written and edited by María Fernández Oliver.
- Photographs by Stefan Schultze, Didi A Kalika and María Fernández Oliver.