

Former Clintonian is still growing

All Photos Special to The Clinton Courier

By Brenda Wilder

Alli Mellon, a Clinton native and the founder of The Hard Places Community (HPC) in Cambodia, recently visited Clinton with her newly-adopted infant son. HPC is an international group of like-minded Christians whose mission is to see justice prevail, pain redeemed, hope reborn, and life restored in the hearts of those in the darkest corners of the world, and their work has exploded with growth in the last two years. Mellon says the organization, which she founded in 2008, has been supported greatly by her hometown and expresses that she is blessed to share the good news of tremendous growth and expansion of the ministry.

In Cambodia, HPC offers sports programs, English and computer skills, a school of worship, outreach for exploited children and teens, counseling/play therapy/social work, and job training. Mellon and her staff now have eight hundred children ages three through fourteen in their programs that fight against child trafficking. A restaurant called Century 9 has opened and is staffed by young men from male brothels, which gives them not only a

new job opportunity but a sense of family, acceptance and belonging. A hair salon training school for young men has opened, as well as an Arts Center that brings healing through various arts.

Believing that the relational model of restoration used in Cambodia to bring healing to the most broken can translate into any culture, HPC staff members have been to Greece three times

in the past nine months. They recently announced they had received permission from the Greek government to officially begin work in the country with refugees who've been trafficked, traumatized, victimized repeatedly and who are currently stranded in refugee camps. This summer, a set-up team will travel to Greece for six weeks to begin work, and a long-term team to be stationed there is being recruited.

Ministry has also begun in Madagascar, a beautiful but very dark country.

Individuals are being

interviewed for a team to work with people being victimized there. HPC is always looking for the next hard place, stepping through the doors that God opens for them.

Mellon's adopted Cambodian children are 10, 9, 6, and almost 5, along with a new addition named Scotty. The child is named for Alli's brother, Scott, who passed away from cancer two and a half years ago.

Mellon was not expecting to adopt another baby, but she was approached by the government of Cambodia last

fall and asked to open a safe house for abandoned babies, who are often abandoned and at high risk of being bought and sold. HPC said "yes" to the government representative and planned to open the safe house in

April 2019. In December 2018, the representative called and said there was a baby boy abandoned at a local hospital, and he asked Mellon to meet him there immediately.

It was the week before Christmas and a sacred time for Mellon and her children. It was their favorite week of the entire year,

and her first thought upon getting the phone call was, "No! Not the week before Christmas!"

Then she thought about a tiny baby lying in the hospital alone at Christmas time. She says the voice of the Lord spoke clearly and said, "Alli, do you know what I want you to do with your life?" She thought to herself, "Well, Lord, am I not DOING it already?" He said, "I want you to spend it. All of it."

Mellon says she knew in that moment that nothing would spend her at fifty years of age like having a newborn baby. She knew that at the end of her life, she did not want to die with trea-



The Century 9 restaurant in Cambodia

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