



B.C. residents Rick Lennert and Adrienne Dartnall, centre, are devoted to building schools and health centres in Cambodia and other countries. ()

GIVING BACK BY PAUL WALDIE

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From shattered lives to a life of purpose

The Donors: Adrienne Dartnall and Rick Lennert

The Gift: Founding the Kids International Development Society

The Reason: To help impoverished children and communities in Southeast Asia.

Twelve years ago, when a drunk driver killed Adrienne Dartnall and Rick Lennert's only child, 21-year-old Danielle, their lives fell apart.

The couple took time off from their jobs, travelled and tried just about anything to recover. But nothing seemed

to work.

"Our lives were shattered," Ms. Dartnall recalled from their home in Nanaimo, B.C.

They eventually did some volunteer work in India, helping to build schools, and they found people who had also suffered immeasurable loss. Somehow, that experience lifted them and they began devoting more time to overseas volunteer efforts, taking periodic leaves from their work (he is a self-employed carpenter, she works in social services).

By 2002 they started working in the slums of

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, helping with schools and in other areas. "From then on it just started to build," Ms. Dartnall said.

Within a couple of years, the couple had created a Canadian charity called Kids International Development Society and expanded their activities to Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and India.

Working with local communities, KIDS has helped to build water-treatment systems, medical clinics and schools and to develop educational programs for orphanages. The group has also created a

women's development centre and a home for orphaned girls.

The couple raises about \$45,000 annually to keep everything going; this year, they expect to raise about \$200,000 which will help finance more programs.

"I don't think we'd be where we are today without KIDS," said Ms. Dartnall. "You have to find meaning in life. Without meaning life is pretty sorrowful. This has given us meaning."

Added Mr. Lennert: "It has given us a purpose."