Potters Without Borders

NEWSLETTER

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Greetings friends;

This is the first issue of the Potters Without Borders newsletter! A lot has happened since we started working towards the creation of this organization, and now we have the time to write about it.

Our first meeting was back in the spring of 2006, Reg Kienast, Joan Crebo, Don Pegg, Kai Morrill and Burt Cohen were there. The name of Potters Without Borders (PWB) was born, and along with the help of our other roaming board members Nicole Reidmuller in Vancouver and Samantha Sherer in Toronto we were able to lay the foundation for this new non-profit association.

A lot of brainstorming went on during that meeting to try and figure out what kinds of things were going to get into as an organization. Although we are still open to pretty much anything, this past year we have participated in projects principally related to fundraising and the development of Ceramic Water Filters and the technology involved in their production.

Fundraising efforts have been incredible. Last year we raised over $3500 with the help of private donations and a few dedicated volunteers.

It began in July of 2006 with the "Footprints" exhibition at the Roundhouse Community Arts Centre in Vancouver BC, where various ceramic artists auctioned original artworks in support of Potters For Peace and Potters Without Borders.

Shortly after, a group was put together to set up an information booth at the August, Komasket Music Festival in Vernon BC, the festival lasted for three days. This was the debut of the PWB raw cotton T-shirts, beautifully designed by Bill and Claire, members from up in Wells BC. The Ceramic Water Filter (CWF) display was well received and prompted many interesting discussions as well as garnering a few new members.

The booth worked so well we were then invited to present at the Roots and Blues festival in Salmon Arm BC, another three day event which was a great success. We sold piles of shirts and brochures, I couldn't believe how many interested folks would wander up to have a chat, we might have to go back!

The March Silent Auction at the Shooglenifty dance and concert in Salmon Arm BC, was a great success. We want to thank the incredible artists who donated their beautiful works to this event, we raised over $1000!

This year we will have further opportunities to raise money in support of the kinds of projects you'll read about below, and also to explore new possibilities in other areas.

Last August PWB sent Burt Cohen (one of PWB's directors) off to Calgary AB to meet with the members of the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST). Here we were able to help compare the various benefits of various methods of water sanitation and learn more about where our CWF technology fits into the big picture. Some important contacts were made and much information exchanged.

Burt also worked as a technical adviser to the Colombian Ceramic organization Artierra during February and March of this year. This assignment was undertaken through the generous support of the organization Canadian Executive Services Overseas (CESO) and their Colombian counterpart FICITEC, as a part of their Volunteer Assistance Program. Burt worked with seven pottery workshops in various aspects of production including kiln firing, clay, glazes, and forming processes. At the same time he was doing groundwork for a new CWF production workshop in Colombia to be sponsored by Oxfam, thanks Burt.

Since October of last year PWB has put significant effort into improving the design of the Dutch hydraulic filter press. After many weeks of patient laboring and the help of master machinists Art Gavel and Barry Cawston a new model, now referred to as the PWB double scissor press, was born. This press is made from very basic steel materials, using a 20 tonne jack, and two machined aluminum moulds. Thanks to Ben Morrill you can go to the PWB website to see a video of the press in action, as well as various schematics for its reproduction.

The press was put to use right away and the Northfire Pottery studio at O'keefe Ranch in Vernon BC, became a research facility. Engineering students working with Professor Frank Shih from Seattle University came up to produce the first in a series of test batches designed to experiment with CWF production. These students will be continuing their research as part of their senior projects.

The research facility in Vernon will continue to explore various potentials in the creation of Ceramic Water Filters, we are doing our best to publish all of our findings to the PWB website for public perusal.

In April Potters Without Borders will cooperate in the development of a CWF workshop in Sanaa, Yemen. At the request of the German non-governmental organization GTZ we will send a technician to Africa in order to assist in the implementation of a CWF production facility. We will be using the PWB press in a practical in the field situation, very exciting.

We have been making our presence known at the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts (NCECA) Confrence in the United States. Sending a representative to this type of international convention has been an important way for our organization to make contacts in all areas of the ceramic industry. These contacts often lead to overseas contracts for PWB. The NCECA website is: http://www.nceca.net

We are also assisting with Gonzaga University's Department of Engineering in their efforts to develop a CWF filter factory in Benin this year.

Kai Morrill has been in Brazil and is investigating a possible partnership with another ceramics NGO in order to participate in projects for children.

Remember that research results, documents, and articles regarding Ceramic Water Filter (CWF) technology and Potters Without Borders activities are available for reading at http://www.potterswithoutborders.com, just click on DATABASE to see the articles. If there is anything you think we should include on the website, or in this newsletter, please contact me at kai@potterswithoutborders.com.

Enjoy springtime!
Kai Morrill