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Davis Enterprise, The (CA)

DHS grad has a place in his heart for Myanmar orphans

Elisabeth Sherwin

Enterprise staff writer
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Max Harrington is continuing to support an orphanage in **Myanmar**, but he has a new interest in mind, too. In September, he'll be on his way to Vietnam.

"I had a wonderful time in **Myanmar** and I would love to go back but I need to see a new place," said Harrington, a 23-year-old Davis High School graduate who is back in his hometown for a few months this summer. In Vietnam, he will teach English at a private school in Hanoi.

He thanks generous folks in Davis for their help supporting his work with the **Myanmar** Children's Foundation and invites those who would like to learn about the country and his project to come to one of three presentations he has planned in August. A fund-raiser for the foundation also is scheduled for Friday, Aug. 24.

"In the presentations, I will talk about **Myanmar** and the situation of children there, the **Myanmar** Children's Foundation programs and how we've accomplished what we have, and what people in Davis can do to help," he said.

The Aug. 24 fund-raiser will be a movie night, and Harrington will show a short Discovery Channel documentary film about **Myanmar**. Light refreshments will be served, and he will have photographs from **Myanmar** and information on display.

"There will be a silent auction, and people will have the chance to adopt a child through our Stay-in-School program or adopt a volunteer **Myanmar** teacher through our TeacherCorps program," he added.

Admission is \$10, and all funds will go directly to the foundation's programs.

Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, is a country of about 60 million people sandwiched between India, China and Thailand. It has been Harrington's home for the past year.

Harrington is a 2002 Davis High School graduate who visited **Myanmar** for the first time in May 2005, while studying abroad on a University of California-sponsored exchange program in Bangkok, Thailand.

That first trip sparked an interest in the country that led Harrington to return to **Myanmar** upon his graduation from UC San Diego in June 2006.

He spent the past year teaching English in Yangon, the capital city formerly known as Rangoon. In November, he organized a new organization dedicated to helping **Myanmar's** orphaned children, the **Myanmar** Children's Foundation.

"In the past year we've raised \$8,000 from donors in Davis," he said. That money was used in part to build the Prahida orphanage, home to 184 children.

Located in an impoverished rural area of the country, a bumpy five-hour ride from the Yangon, the orphanage is run by a team of monks and volunteers from the surrounding village.

Over the past year, while the foundation raised the money and built the Prahida orphanage, Harrington thought he also would try to provide seed money for several projects to help the orphanage build a set of stable, community-focused revenue sources.

The revenue-generating projects included vegetable gardening, bicycle renting and micro-credit lending. But Harrington said the orphanage was able to secure money from other sources, including the Australian government, for those projects.

So his team was able to concentrate on supporting the orphanage, organizing a stay-in-school program for 55 students, conducting a pen pal program and starting a volunteer teaching program.

Harrington believes every dollar invested in the children now will multiply many times over in the future. The rural communities where the children come from will benefit from having educated citizens with good jobs, and the country will benefit by making sure that its poor and vulnerable aren't forever handicapped by a lack of education.

Harrington says he was fortunate enough to meet several English-speaking Burmese tour guides when he first came to **Myanmar**. Those men are now working for the foundation.

"I hope to go back in December to see how it's going," Harrington said. "But I can only help them so much since I'm a foreign visitor."

For more information, visit the foundation's Web site at www.myanmarchildrensfoundation.org, or contact **Myanmar** Children's Foundation assistant director Rita Montes-

Martin at 759-8434, or max@myanmarchildrensfoundation.com or rita@myanmarchildrensfoundation.com.

— Reach Elisabeth Sherwin at gizmo@dcn.org

[Learn more](#)

Max Harrington will offer three public presentations about the **Myanmar** Children's Foundation, on:

Wednesday, Aug. 8, from 7 to 8 p.m. in the Blanchard Room at the Davis Public Library, 315 E. 14th St.;

Friday, Aug. 10, from 10 to 11a.m. in the multipurpose room at the Davis Senior Center, 646 A St.; and

Friday, Aug. 24, from 10:30 to 11:30am at the Woodland Senior Center, 630 Lincoln Ave.

A fund-raiser for the foundation will run from 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 24, in the Community Room at International House, 10 College Park.

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