A touch of humanity brings hope

CHOMRONG, of Cambodia, was a struggling mother of three earning 88 cents per day, until she was taught to sew.

Through the Human and Hope Association, which is co-founded by Gawler East woman Georigie McRae, she was offered training to establish her own business and a new life for her family.

Now, her products, along with those made by her fellow graduates, will be on sale at the Gawler Lions Market this Sunday.

“They are lovely products and they are for a really good cause,” Miss McRae said.

“It’s a great value when you’re not only getting something that you enjoy, but you’re also getting something that makes a difference in someone else’s life and keeps them in a great program which is doing such wonderful things.”

Program

The Human and Hope Association was established in Cambodia in 2011; a year later, the Australian chapter was formed to offer support and raise funds and awareness.

The organisation offers educational programs, English classes and, most importantly, sewing workshops.

“It’s so much about confidence and empowering women to feel like they can start their own business, gain employment and make their own choices – and they can raise their children while they do it,” Miss McRae said.

“Everything is made with recycled fabrics, so, they have a staff trip where they go down to Phnom Penh, the capital, and pick out second-hand fabrics.

“We also offer a micro-finance program; so if the women want to buy a sewing machine to start their business, we lend them the money and they pay it back interest-free.”

The association also offers community workshops on topics like domestic violence, Cambodia’s labour laws, road safety and first aid, as well as outreach programs in more remote areas.

Products

The program’s graduates make everything from children’s toys, technology cases, home décor items, women’s clutches and much more.

“You can see the skill that the women are developing in the products,” Miss McRae’s mum, Sue, said.

“These things are made with the idea of giving the women skills to go on and make dresses.”

Those products, which cost from $1.50, will be sold at the Gawler Lions Market this weekend, with all funds going back to Cambodia to help those living in poverty and to make the sewing program sustainable.

The handicrafts can also be purchased online (humanandhopeassociation.org) or at local stores, Halo Chic or The Sanctuary hair salon.

“It’s a great value when you’re not only getting something that you enjoy, but you’re also getting something that makes a difference in someone else’s life and keeps them in a great program which is doing such wonderful things.”

- GEORGE McRAE