



Real-life angels hard at work across the world |

JANINE HILL speaks with some angels who are rolling up their sleeves to do what they can to make the world a better place.

SOME people have a party when they turn 40. Others slide into a deep depression. Deborah Groves marked her four decades on the planet by giving up her business to work with the poor in Cambodia.

Deborah, a former Sunshine Coast wedding photographer, now lives in Cambodia where she is self-supporting and works independently of aid organisations to help the residents of a poor and tiny village called Psat Char, 20km from Siem Reap.

Deborah felt compelled to go back and work in Cambodia last year after visiting the country as a tourist in 2004.

Disillusioned with the materialistic way of life, feeling the odd one out as a 40-year-old unmarried woman with no children, and moved by the story of Geraldine Cox's work with orphans in Cambodia, she initially visited the country to find some direction in her own life.

"I thought I'd be able to come back and settle down, but the plan went wrong. Customers were ringing and I didn't want to talk to them. I decided, 'That's it'," she said.

Deborah returned to Cambodia, sought her tour guide, and arranged to visit people who needed help.

He took her to Psat Char, where the first man she met was desperately ill with tuberculosis. Although she was able to arrange for him to go to hospital, his disease was so far advanced that he died within days.

Since then, she has made it her business to support his family where necessary, but also become involved with the rest of the village.

She said it was amazing what a difference a little could make in a country such as Cambodia.

The purchase of watering cans worth a couple of dollars in Australia had enabled villagers to grow vegetables that they had not been able to grow, she said. Although her help has sometimes involved providing emergency funds to people, Deborah is particularly interested in helping the



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villagers help themselves and become self-sustaining.

She is hopeful that in the future they can make a living out of their vegetables, weaving, and the manufacture of soft toy dolls. She has also been asked to help build them a new school room.

Deborah does not let the scale of poverty in Cambodia, or the world as a whole, faze her and sticks to her belief

that in a small way, she is making the world a better place.

"If you thought of the big picture, you'd go mad. You just have to hope that in some way doing your bit helps, and if everybody does their bit, you can make a big difference," she said.

Deborah guarantees that 100% of money received goes direct to helping villagers (donors can even specify what they would like their money spent on).

Donations can be deposited direct into a St George Bank account (account name Deborah Groves, BSB no 114-879, account number 093 056 467) or use PayPal, the Ebay online payment system. For information, go to www.grovesphotography.com or subscribe to Deborah's newsletters by emailing grovesphotography@yahoo.com and typing "subscribe" in the subject field.