

We have our eye on Phymean Noun

by Elaine



Cambodian-born Phymean Noun thought she knew suffering. In 1975, when she was 10, her parents were sent to separate work camps by the Khmer Rouge. They survived the genocide but later divorced. Throughout this ordeal, she lived with her mom, who died when Phymean was 15. She then struggled to raise an abandoned niece, finish school and find a job.

One day in 2002, she watched in horror as street kids scavenged chicken bones she'd tossed away after lunch. The children, she discovered, lived among hundreds of poor families at Phnom Penh's largest dump. There, they slept, ate and eked out a living in the giant mounds of trash, scavenging for recyclables to trade for rice. "What they told me kept me awake at night," recalls the 38-year-old mom of two, who now lives in Toronto. "I knew there was something I could do." Months later, she left her job and used her own savings to start the People Improvement Organization (PIO) – which provides free education to Cambodian street kids.

Today, the group educates 700 children in three PIO-operated schools and also offers vocational training for its graduates. "If we leave these children without education," says Noun, "we are letting our world waste away."



Crush of the month

by Siri Agrell

Jason Schwartzman If you like 'em slightly nerdy – and aren't a stickler for height – then we have a guy for you. Jason Schwartzman, best known for his quirky supporting roles, first won our hearts with his oddball wooing of Claire Danes in *Shopgirl*. (As evidence of our own geeky leanings, we swooned when he said he was creating a font for her.) This month, the slight, shaggy-haired 29-year-old plays a C-list actor in *Funny People* – a fate we're confident will never befall him.



HAVE YOU HEARD?

by Anna-Kaisa Walker

We've seen many a restaurant trend come and go, but here's one that hits the spot: Bistros from Montreal to Melbourne are offering pay-what-you-want menus, bringing out recession diners in droves. Simply leave what you think the food and service were worth, guilt-free. Chances are, you'll feel like tipping a little extra.

From the headlines

The Daily Mirror

"Undercover with the escorts trying to recruit through MySpace" by Siri Agrell

Unscrupulous advances are an annoying by-product of the internet, be they in the form of spam, pop-up ads or plaintive emails from an ex. But here's a new one: A British escort service has been combing MySpace profiles and contacting "fun-loving" ladies, offering them the opportunity to "earn over £100 an hour." You don't have to be Nancy Drew to deduce the line of work in question, but the technique has netted at least one new escort: "Jane," who signed up after losing her job. *The Mirror* points out that prostitution poses "a significant risk to personal safety" – to which we say, No kidding. Sadly, unlike many other gigs, it also appears to be recession-proof.

It's time to... by Tralee Pearce

START

taking a technology vacation. Thanks to our ever-increasing use of the internet, there will be almost no distinction between personal and work time by the year 2020, at least according to a recent Pew Internet & American Life/Elon University Predictions Study. Now's your chance to start a resistance movement: Power down your BlackBerry outside the office and go offline during the evenings and weekends. Yes, at first it'll be tough to make like it's 1994 again, but after a few weeks, we guarantee you'll stop hearing phantom email pings.

STOP

dreading house guests. You'll appreciate visitors more if you spell out your limitations, says the Winnipeg-based etiquette expert Karen Mallett of Civility Works. Be clear about just how long Aunt Carmela and Uncle Tony can crash in the guest room, give them an idea of how your household runs and don't apologize if you have other obligations while they're staying with you. And when it comes to mealtime, Mallett suggests asking guests to get involved. If Carmela makes a killer lasagna, for example, have her bring the recipe and book one night to cook together.