

# REALTOR®

RealtorMag.REALTOR.org

*Marta Karpel*

## Demining Cambodia

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FREE from  FREE to live

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**ប្រយ័ត្នគ្រាប់មីន!!**  
  
**Danger!! Mines!!**

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**Danger!! Mines!!**

MINE RECOGNITION



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of REALTORS®

See page 10 for tips from REBAC Hall of Fame inductees.



REALTOR® MAGAZINE'S

## 2011 GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARDS

*Meet five REALTORS® who are making a profound difference in the lives of others.*

# Extraordinary Giving

It's rough out there.

War, recession, unemployment, food shortages, and homelessness seem to be touching more and more lives each day. Luckily, there are people dedicated to lifting and empowering others. They're people who don't look away from those in need, people who give even when they face challenges in their own lives. For 12 years, REALTOR® Magazine's Good Neighbor Awards program has been recognizing REALTORS® who make extraordinary commitments to community service. The program has honored nearly 120 REALTORS®, while supporting their efforts to improve the quality of life for others, and we're proud to introduce the 2011 winners and honorable mentions. This year's winners volunteered a combined total of nearly 10,000 hours last year—that equates to an average of 20 hours a week for each of them, a truly incredible commitment on top of their business lives. The 2011 Good Neighbors' passions have drawn them in different directions. Their common passion is making the world a better place. They exemplify the power of one to make a mighty difference in the world.

We proudly introduce you to the 2011 Good Neighbors Award winners.

### For the Winners

The Good Neighbor Award winners will be honored on Nov. 12 during the REALTORS® Conference & Expo in Anaheim, Calif. To help their charitable organizations continue their work, each winner will receive a \$10,000 grant and a \$2,500 Lowe's gift card.

Five Good Neighbor Honorable Mentions (*their stories appear on page 36*) will each receive a \$2,500 grant and a \$1,000 Lowe's gift card for their cause.

Nominations are being accepted for the 2012 Good Neighbor Awards; the deadline is May 22. For more information, go to [REALTOR.org/gna](http://REALTOR.org/gna).

## 2011 GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD WINNERS



**LeRoy Bendickson**  
cycles for those sidelined with multiple sclerosis.  
**Page 26**



**Marta Karpel**  
aims for a mine-free Cambodia.  
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**Vito Pampalona**  
lends a loving hand to war-injured veterans.  
**Page 30**



**Judy Pitt**  
helps bring clean water to Western Kenya.  
**Page 32**



**Wayne J. Shaffer**  
lives the lesson: "love your neighbor as yourself."  
**Page 34**

*"You see the effect of your work quickly."*



REALTOR® MAGAZINE'S  
**2011 GOOD NEIGHBOR**

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By Erica Christoffer

# From the Ground Up

*Marta Karpel's work is bringing life back to one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world.*

Looking out onto a cleared land mine field in western Cambodia during a 2007 visit, Marta Karpel saw row after row of white sticks, each marking an area where a mine had been removed. The sticks serve as a visual reminder of the progress that's been made de-mining the one of the most heavily land mined countries in the world. Yet Karpel couldn't help but think that the quiet field was reminiscent of a cemetery.

"That first trip was very emotional. If those mines had not been removed, the white sticks may as well have been headstones," says Karpel, a practitioner with Alain Pinel, REALTORS®, in Carmel, Calif.

Karpel has dedicated the last five years to supporting the Carmel-based Freedom Fields USA, a nonprofit

organization dedicated to the humanitarian removal of land mines in war-torn countries. She has traveled to Cambodia twice to witness land mine removal firsthand, the first time in 2007, and to meet with villagers who are benefiting from her efforts.

After that first trip, Karpel dreamed often of those white sticks. For the people of Cambodia, who lived through 30 years of regional war and now struggle with severe poverty, the mines those sticks represent have been a vicious nightmare. The Southeast Asian country is now in the process of rebuilding, but the land mines scattered throughout the countryside have held back economic growth and farm development.

"Once the land mines are removed, the next morn-

ing you'll see people going out and planting vegetables," says Karpziel. "You see the effect of your work so quickly. Yesterday they couldn't walk in those areas, and today they're cultivating crops." Of the 14.7 million people in Cambodia, about 80 percent live in rural areas, and more than 90 percent depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Freedom Fields USA is the second-largest private donor group to Halo Trust, the world's oldest humanitarian land mine clearance organization. More than 63,500 land mine casualties have been recorded in Cambodia since 1979, and with more than 25,000 amputees, Cambodia has the highest ratio per capita in the world.

Karpziel, a native of Poland who immigrated to the United States in 2001, gives 10 percent of her income to Freedom Fields and serves on the 13-member, all-female board. "[At first] I wasn't making any money and I was just getting my business going, but I felt it was something I should do," Karpziel says. "I was so thankful to be [in the United States] and be blessed with a better life, I felt I should give and help others to have an opportunity for a better life."

Karpziel is Freedom Fields' marketing coordinator, but her work has reached far beyond that. Her fund-raising efforts have resulted in more than \$250,000 in donations, and 75 percent of her real estate clients support Freedom Fields.

To date, Freedom Fields USA has raised about \$600,000 for Halo Trust (that number is expected to rise to \$800,000 by the end of 2011) and made safe 160 acres of ground, destroying about 6,000 land mines in the process. "They've benefited approximately 21,000 Cambodian residents," says Amy Currin, program officer for Halo USA. Freedom Fields' goal is to make Cambodia mine-free in five years.

"Seeing people, especially children, without legs or hands is really striking," Karpziel says. "The removal of the land mines is really the first step to help the economy in Cambodia grow."

Karpziel developed a fund-raising tool—a map of Cambodia divided into parcels so that donors have more of a connection to how they are helping. As the parcels are purchased, Karpziel fills in the names of the sponsors on the map.

"Marta extends her whole self to her cause," says Hamwey. "It has not been enough for her to donate her money, time, and talent. Upon finding a shack of a schoolhouse on mine-cleared land, Marta saw to it that a new, concrete school was built and that each child had a backpack, books, and school supplies."

In a one-night fund-raiser, Karpziel organized a coupon drive where donors could buy a desk, door, chair, or blackboard. Freedom Fields raised \$20,000 for the



According to the Cambodia Mine Victims Information System, in 2010, every five days, four people are killed or injured by land mines. "The communities in mine fields are living there because it's cheap land," says Kurt Chesko, vice president of Halo Trust USA. "It's very difficult for them to improve their economic situation. That's something Freedom Fields understands."

school that night. The building was in place by the time she took her second trip to Cambodia in 2009.

"Every time you come back from a trip, you have so much motivation and so much inspiration to do more because you know you've made such a huge difference," Karpziel says. "I'm receiving so much more than I'm giving. The satisfaction that you get from helping and knowledge that you're saving people's lives—there's no measure for that." ■