

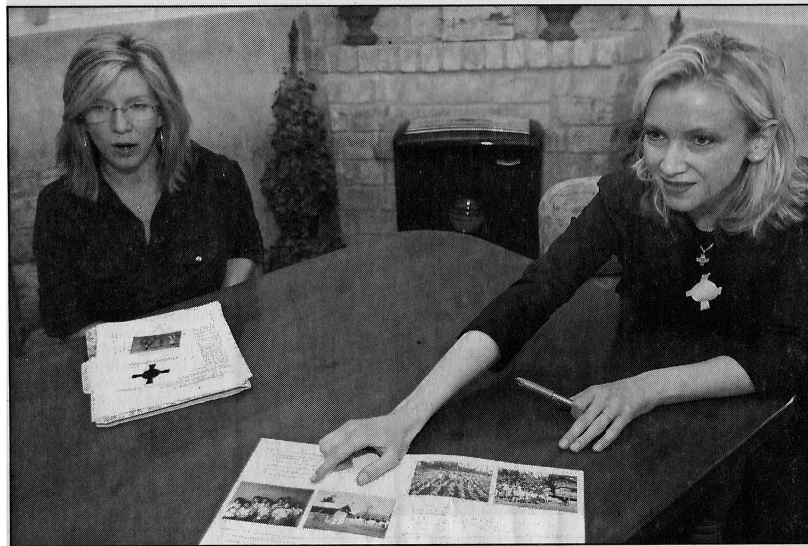
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Mia Hamway, left, and Marta Karpel discuss progress of Freedom Fields USA, an organization they founded.

ORVILLE MYERS/The Herald

GROUND SWEEP

CARMEL-BASED LAND MINE GROUP GAINS GROUND

By KEVIN HOWE
 Herald Staff Writer

A group of Carmel-area women, who first got together as a book group more than seven years ago, has formed an organization with an influence that stretches from Washington, D.C., to Great Britain and Cambodia. Freedom Fields USA founder Mia Hamway and board member Marta Karpel returned last week from a visit to Washington, D.C., to bring their cause of land

mine removal in Cambodia to the attention of the Obama Administration. Their work, in concert with the HALO Trust, has received recognition and grant support from the U.S. State Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. Its fundraising galas in Carmel Valley have

drawn internationally known guest speakers, including Richard Armitage and Sen. John McCain, R-Arizona. This year, Hamway said, the organization has invited U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to its Dec. 3 event at Tehama Golf Club, which will be hosted by Clint and Dina Eastwood.

The event, she said, already has received its first corporate sponsor, Sony Electronics.

Over the years, Freedom Fields has worked with the HALO (Hazardous Area Life-Support Organization) Trust — a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization based in the United Kingdom that specializes in the removal of land mines and other unexploded ordnance in post-conflict zones.

Please see Mines page A4



To learn more about Freedom Fields USA, see www.FFUSA.org or call 998-2058.

Mines

From page A2

They have funded removal of 6,000 land mines in Cambodia's once war-torn Kiemrieng District on the Thai border, the "K-5 Mine Belt," where an estimated 2 million land mines were sown during Vietnam's war with the Khmer Rouge.

Hamway, who also serves on the board of HALO Trust, has visited the area three times and Karpel twice to see the work done by HALO. L leftover land mines, Hamway said following her last visit, claimed a victim for every 250 inhabitants there. "We were never able to take a picture in Cambodia where there wasn't an amputee victim in the background."

Mothers no longer have to tether their toddlers to stakes to prevent them from wandering into areas where the mines lay buried, said Hamway, and farm fields that once lay fallow because the mines made them difficult to cultivate have been reopened to planting.

Freedom Fields' latest project, over and above the mine removal, was construction of a new school in the village of Ka Sien to replace "a shack" where students learned their lessons, Karpel said.

Last week, Freedom Fields members met with Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro and his staff, who are directly responsible for the United States' humanitarian demining program, she said. They were encouraged to apply for another matching grant. Freedom Fields received a \$60,000 matching grant from the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in 2005 for mine removal work.

Members also met with deputy special representative Kris Balderston of the newly established Office of Global Partnerships, a program begun by Secretary Clinton to encourage public-private partnerships in tackling global issues, Karpel said, as well as Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, and Cambodia's Ambassador to the United States, Heng Hem.

"We wanted to introduce ourselves to people in the new administration," Hamway said.

The original inspiration for the women's book group that formed the nucleus of Freedom Fields came from Hamway's sister, Kara Bue, who was then working in the U.S. State Department as an assistant to Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and suggested the land mine cause to them.

Karpel came away from her visit early this year to Cambodia impressed with HALO Trust as "a professional, frugal organization," that operates in the field with minimum expense on a "make it last, use it up, make it do" basis, hauling gear in 30-year-old trucks, working with surplus tools and using local labor for mine removal.

Hamway said she plans to go back to Cambodia this summer with her husband and three teenage children "so that they can see what we're doing there."

Kevin Howe can be reached at 646-4416 or khowe@montereyherald.com.

on veterans cemetery

The Monterey County United Veterans Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Veterans Transition Center, 220 12th St. to hear an update on the progress of the Fort Ord Veterans State Cemetery and discuss transportation to the VA Medical Center in Palo Alto, VA clinic and rehabilitation programs, and other issues affecting veterans.

For information call 375-1263.

SALINAS Mediation training sessions on tap

Restorative Justice Partners Inc. will offer mediation training for volunteers in its Victim and Offender Reconciliation program in two sessions, from 6 to 9 p.m. May 7 and 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 8, at the conference center and clubhouse of Creekside Apartments, 1701 Independence Blvd.

Fees are \$40 for committed volunteers for those seeking training with no commitment: volunteer mediation. Presenters will be the Connie White and retired Carmel Police Chief J. Fuesler, members of Community Restorative Justice Commission. Information or register contact Elizabeth Huschusbrj@comcast.i

SOLEDAD Resource Fair set in South County

The South County Resource Fair will be rain or shine 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday at the Soledad Community YMCA, 560 N. Walker Drive.

Service agencies, nonprofit groups and organizations interest providing services will available to the public

NEW ORLEANS — Crews raced to protect the Gulf of Mexico coastline Monday as a remote sub tried to shut off an underwater oil well that's gushing 42,000 gallons a day from the site of a wrecked drilling platform.

If crews cannot stop the leak quickly, they might need to drill another well to redirect the oil, a laborious process that could take about two months while oil washes up along a broad stretch of shore, from the white-sand beaches of Florida's Panhandle to the swamps of Louisiana.

The oil, which could reach shore in as little as three days, is escaping from two leaks in a drilling pipe about 5,000 feet below the surface. The spill has grown to more than 1,800 square miles, or an area larger than Rhode Island.

Winds and currents can

birds. The areas also have prime fishing grounds; are popular with tourists.

The oil began spewing of the sea floor after the Deepwater Horizon explorer April 20 and sank two days later about 40 miles off Mississippi River de Eleven of the 136 workers aboard at the time are injured and presumed dead; rest escaped. The cause of explosion has not been determined.

As of Monday afternoon, area 48 miles long and miles wide was covered by that leaked from the site the rig, which was owned Transocean Ltd. and operated by BP PLC.

Crews used robot submersibles to activate valves, hopes of stopping the leak but they may not know today if that strategy work. BP also mobilized rigs to drill a relief well

CIA plans language and technology imp

By LOLITA C. BALDOR
 Associated Press
 WASHINGTON

agency better battle emerging national security danger including terrorism, weap