“Gold”
MISSION

Elephant Care International is a service organization dedicated to the health, welfare, and conservation of elephants. We foster information sharing among elephant professionals and promote the harmony and well-being of humans and elephants where they share natural environments.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

In 2016, Dr. Susan Mikota, Director of Veterinary Programs and Research, continued to expand our network of elephant professionals and our information sharing.

Two scientific articles, co-authored with Nepali veterinarians mentored by Dr. Mikota as part of our Nepal Elephant HealthCare and TB Surveillance Program, were published this year, plus a book chapter co-authored by Mikota and Nepali associates.

The Chi Institute published and offers Dr. Mikota’s Elephant Acupuncture Chart. Dr. Mikota is certified in veterinary acupuncture.

Work with Vietnam Elephant Initiative (VEI) partners and the Government of Vietnam to develop an Elephant Conservation Center and Program is moving forward with WWF-Vietnam contributing conservation guidance. “Gold”, a delightful two-month old Asian elephant was rescued from a well and with VEI advice and training is now thriving. Jun is also recovering from his snare wounds and doing well.

Collaborators and contributors are essential to accomplishing our Mission. Dr. Khyne U Mar facilitates our educational work for veterinarians and mahouts in Myanmar. Dr. Janine Brown of Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and “Dr. Sam” (Dr. Suomolya Kanchanapangka) provided airfare and accommodations for Dr. Mikota to present at the 3rd Asian Captive Elephant Working Group meeting and to lecture at Rajamangala University of Technology in Thailand.

I created and launched a totally new website for our organization (www.elephantcare.org) and received recognition from the Asian Elephant Specialist Group for creating and serving as their webmaster for the past eight years.

Following are more highlights from our in situ work in Southeast Asia.

Hank Hammatt
Executive Director
Elephant Care International
MYANMAR

January 2016 saw the completion of a 14-week long field visit in Myanmar during which Dr. Mikota travelled with Dr. Win Htut’s mobile clinic, assisted Dr. Khyne U Mar and her staff with Myanmar Elephant Research Project activities, and travelled to Delhi, India to present a paper.

At the conclusion of the trip Dr. Mikota assisted in a workshop “Capacity Building for Myanmar Mahouts on Target Training” held at the Nat Pauk Elephant Camp. The workshop was organized by long-time colleague Dr. Khyne U Mar to introduce gentle methods to mahouts that care for Myanmar’s logging elephants. Target training is a Positive Reinforcement Training (PRT) method that uses rewards to teach elephant behaviors that are important to their care. No force or punishment is ever used.

Skilled trainers Dr. Gerardo Martinez (right) and Dr. Salas Rodrigo (left) using target training techniques to teach a young elephant to present her foot for examination at the Nat Pauk Elephant Camp in Myanmar. Watch this You-tube video to see Gerardo and Salas in action.
Instructors and graduates of the workshop on Capacity Building for Myanmar Mahouts on Target Training

Dr. Mikota handing out certificates to mahouts who completed the Target Training course
Many of the monasteries in Myanmar also serve as schools and orphanages. Dr. Mikota and Dr. Mar visited the local monastery to make a donation.

THAILAND

Working to Improve the Welfare of Elephants Used in Tourism

In June, Dr. Mikota was invited to attend the 3rd Asian Captive Elephant Working Group (ACEWG) meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Thank-you to Janine Brown for supporting airfare and to Dr. Sumolya Kanchanapangka for covering other expenses! This group of regional elephant specialists, veterinarians, researchers, and conservationists was formed to provide recommendations to improve health care and management practices for captive elephants in Asia. During the meeting Dr. Mikota was invited to become an advisor.
Inspiring the Next Generation of Elephant Veterinarians

Following the ACEWG meeting, Drs. Mikota and Kanchanapangka (Dr. Sam) travelled to southern Thailand to address senior level veterinary students at the Rajamangala University of Technology, Srivijaya Nakhon So Thammarat Campus (RMUTSV) in southern Thailand in June. Two presentations were given: “Elephant Welfare and Tourism” and “Overview of Tuberculosis in Humans and Elephants.” Dr. Mikota gave the presentations in English and Dr. Kanchanapangka translated into Thai. A tour of the new large animal clinic under construction followed. Many thanks to the RMUTSV staff for the invitation to speak and for their kind hospitality!

Dr. Susan Mikota (left) and Dr. Sam (far right) received a warm welcome at the veterinary school.
**Visit to the Southern Elephant Hospital**

Thailand was the first country in Asia to establish an elephant hospital (the Thai Elephant Conservation Center in Lampang). Now there is a branch facility that serves the elephants in southern Thailand. After speaking with students, Dr. Mikota and Dr. Sam visited this facility and met with their head veterinarian.

Dr. Boonsprasert Khajhonpat is the head veterinarian. Elephants are treated free of charge and they also have a mobile elephant clinic.
VIETNAM

Elephant Care International is part of a team working to help elephants in Vietnam.

The young bull calf (Jun), whose trunk and left front foot were injured in a snare in 2015, required on-going care as the foot wound was slow to heal. We suspected that part of the snare wire might still be embedded in the leg and that was why the external wounds were not yet healing. This was found to be the case when our colleague Dr. Willem Schaftenaar was able to borrow an x-ray unit from Hanoi. Dr. Schaftenaar performed field surgery in April and successfully removed the wire.
Dr. Schaffenaar and ECC staff x-raying Jun’s foot. The x-ray showed a piece of snare wire embedded in the foot.

Dr. Schafenaar anesthetized Jun and was able to remove the wire (below).
In February 2016, ECC staff rescued a 2 month old calf from a well. Attempts to reintroduce him to his herd were unsuccessful so he is being hand-raised at the ECC. Gold got off to a rough start (he was very thin and had diarrhea) but thanks to expert advice from nutritionist Dr. Ellen Dierenfeld and 24/7 care from the ECC’s dedicated staff, he is now healthy. Many thanks to volunteer Hollis Burbank-Hammarlund for sharing Gold’s story on U-tube: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4438URDpgE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4438URDpgE).
USA

In July, Dr. Mikota assisted Buttonwood Zoo veterinarian Dr. Whitney Greene with a difficult medical case. The zoo’s 58-year old Asian elephant Ruth was suffering from a gastrointestinal impaction. This is a serious condition in elephants and can be fatal. Following two weeks of intensive treatment and thanks to the 24/7 care by dedicated keepers Ruth made a complete recovery.

ASIAN ELEPHANT SPECIALIST GROUP

Dr. Mikota participated in the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) meeting in November in Guwahati, Assam, India. This was the first meeting of the AsESG since 2001 and the goals of the meeting were wide ranging:

- to help frame policy statements covering Asian elephant range countries
- to frame range wide Action Plans for Asian elephants
- to review the status reports of Asian elephants in the wild and in captivity
- to discuss various organisational matters and mandates for this group

Both Dr. Mikota and ECI’s Executive Director Hank Hammatt are members of the AsESG.

Hank was recognized by the AsESG for his eight years of service as webmaster, creating and updating the AsESG website.
SHARING INFORMATION

The following book chapter and scientific articles were published in 2016:


**Dr. Mikota received acknowledgments from PLOS and Emerging Infectious Diseases Journals for reviewing articles.**