

A Humanitarian Non-profit Organization Approved by IRS Code 501(c) 3 & California Section 23701D

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## February 2015 Newsletter - Volume 12 Issue 2

### In this issue

- Thoughts and feelings from others who help the children
- Introducing the Advisory Committee, inviting you to participate
- The story of Operation Babylift the focus in a new novel
- Collaboration at Vinh Son 4 a huge success

**We often receive emails from friends who visit the Vinh Son orphanages, expressing their observations and recommendations. Reprinted here are two such messages.**

Dear Dave (Chaix),

A long time between emails I know but it seems we are all continuously plugging away & working towards improving conditions at the orphanages.

Derek Smith is a good friend so am in regular contact with him and am looking forward to seeing the new dorm he built at VS4. More dorm renovations needed but a wonderful start. I'm sure you would be aware of the orphans sleeping conditions.

I am going back in December, and now making plans. Teeth cleaning, education & health checks high on the agenda. Scabies treatment if required but because of improved living conditions there was no evidence of Scabies last year. Hopefully that is the current status.

I have heard FVSO funded the building of a sewing room at VS4 which is fabulous. Is it income producing, and/or a training facility as well as producing clothes for the orphans? Am trying to determine ways to assist income production but it is difficult for the Sisters to manage because there are so few of them and they have too much to do all ready. Income is the long term plan for the bakery I had built at VS3 but at the moment the children are at least getting bread.

Hope all is well with you  
Sue Gray, Australia

Hi Patrick (Leary),

First of all, I wish all of you a very Happy New Year,

I arrived to Kontum beginning of December and will leave beginning of February, so unfortunately, I will not meet you.

Just a few words about the two orphanages in Kontum. Your money, and the support given by other NGOs, has brought a big change, at last. The buildings are well maintained, the children get better food, better hygiene, better clothes. Especially, the youngest ones at the first stair in VS1 get good care from a new young Sister, Sister Nar, who is a hard worker and does a wonderful work.

The last issue, but not the least, is education. Of course, they get classes of English and, now, get classes of French, but when they enter the primary school, after the kindergarten, they have a problem with the Vietnamese language. I tried to find a Vietnamese teacher to teach Vietnamese to the youngest ones, but without success. Maybe, a big NGO like yours, Patrick, could work on this issue, education. If the children could speak Vietnamese when they start at the primary school, they will feel better at school, and maybe, would not fail like most of them.

As far as I am concerned, I take every day two young children outside to a restaurant for dinner and they write and design. We spend two to three hours outside from VS 1 and all the youngest children have their turn. I convinced them that if they do not make pipi during the night, they will get a gift. And it worked for most of them.

Best wishes  
Michelle Hedouin, France

## Expanding our reach Announcing the formation of the FVSO Advisory Committee

### Would you be willing to volunteer time and energy to help the children at the Vinh Son and Sao Mai orphanages?

The Friends of VSO is a humanitarian non-profit organization where 100% of administrative costs are paid by Board members and Officers, who are also unpaid volunteers. They take on all the administrative tasks required to run a non-profit organization under IRS Code 501(c) 3 and to ensure the accountability of the funds raised and disbursed. We could consider expanding some existing programs and even creating new ones if we had more volunteers.

#### Here are some potential projects we are considering, but are currently unstaffed:

- Should we connect donors to individual children who they would sponsor and develop personal relationships with? How logistically would we do it without overburdening the sisters?
- To be successful in government schools and the broader Vietnamese culture, the children need to be fluent in Vietnamese in addition to their native ethnic languages. How well are the children learning Vietnamese today? Is lack of proficiency in Vietnamese holding them back in school or as adults? What can we do to improve their Vietnamese language skills?
- Should we fund sending more of the older children / young adults to offsite vocational and professional training? How would we ensure accountability of such programs? If we do sponsor higher education for young adults, can we set up opportunities for them to give back by volunteering at the orphanages after they graduate?
- Are there grants we should be pursuing that would amplify the funds provided by our donors? How would we go about identifying such grants and writing applications for them? If we do receive grants, would they add new administrative, accounting and/or reporting responsibilities to our organization and what would it take to comply with them?
- What haven't we thought of that could make a big difference in improving the lives the children and positioning them better to be self-sufficient and successful as adults?

We are looking for people to join an Advisory Committee to consider the feasibility of ideas like these and develop solutions. If exploring ways to expand and extend our efforts to help the children at the Vinh Son and Sao Mai orphanages is something you could feel passionate about, please contact us at:

Email: [info@FriendsofVSO.org](mailto:info@FriendsofVSO.org)

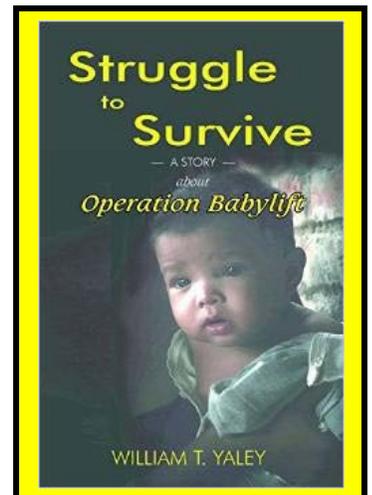
Attention: Advisory Committee

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Vietnam veteran, Bill Yaley and his wife, Arlene, are loyal FVSO supporters and it's our pleasure to recommend Bill's new novel...**Struggle to Survive**. Below is a brief blurb describing the book's focus on one of the Vietnam War's little known episodes.

*As the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese Army was imminent, a new chapter in American courage and care was written by the brave people who were part of President Gerald Ford's "Babylift" that evacuated some 2,500 babies and orphans to safety.*

*In this historical novel, William Yaley captures the intense drama of the two-month period leading up to the American Airlift. He tells the story through the eyes and flashbacks of an American combat veteran, John Ellis, who returns to Vietnam as social worker intent on saving the children, especially those who are part Vietnamese and part American and referred to as "Amerasians." After the North Vietnamese take over, these orphans will likely be killed or left to die because they represent "Imperialist America."*



Available at Amazon

**The Vinh Son 4 dormitory project is the perfect example of combining resources to make it happen. Together, we did it!**

The total project is 2 bedrooms, bathroom and shower for the girls.

**Funding came from**

- Derek Smith's Australian Group
- Steve Holley – a veteran from Colorado
- Steve Fisher and Joanne Glah from Pennsylvania (Steve is a veteran of the 173rd Airborne). Their funds came from selling Christmas and Greeting cards made from drawings from the children at Vinh Son
- Sue Gray – nurse from Australia – funding new beds, mosquito nets and mattresses.
- VVA Chapter 535 Nevada County, CA

**The new dorm (below left) is open for business**



**Long-term supporting organizations**

- 189<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts
- 14<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects



**Vinh Son & Sao Mai Orphanage Facts**

- Population – approximately 830 Montagnard children in seven orphanage facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal & St. Paul Chartres
- Location – Kontum/Pleiku, Vietnam
- \$12 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for one month

**Officers**

- President** - Dave Chaix
- Secretary** - Dennis Coyne
- Treasurer** - Colleen Sands
- Senior VP** - Pat McKee
- 1st VP** - Sr. Marie Dominique
- 2nd VP** - Michael Little

**Board**

- Hank Gonzales
- Rich Lahey
- Clyde Lewandowski
- Bart Ruud
- Patrick Leary

**Donation Information**

Please make checks payable to FVSO or Friends of Vinh Son  
 Donations are gratefully accepted year round  
 100% of administrative costs are paid by the Board and Officers