

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

P.O. Box 9322 Auburn, California 95604-9322 - Email: info@FriendsofVSO.org -Web: www.FriendsofVSO.org

October 2012 Newsletter - Volume 9 Issue 6

## “Dreams do come true.” Patrick McKee



Dave Chaix – Patrick McKee  
Clyde Lewandowski  
with Sister Gabriel, Vinh Son 3, Vietnam

### Patrick A Ga Ney update

Seen below, Ney was baptized on July 29<sup>th</sup> but has been hospitalized ever since. Current reports indicate his condition may have improved somewhat, but he still requires intensive care. Ney’s caregiver and travel companion, Sister Marie Kham, is also quite ill, possibly tuberculosis. Please keep both in your prayers.



### In This Issue

- Patrick A Ga Ney medical status
- The Kiwi connection
- Dental clinic a huge success
- Trip observations from FVSO travelers
- Annual Appeal: Update

At the end of August, three FVSO Board members once again traveled to Vietnam. You’ll find their photos and observations to be quite inspirational and informative.

*“It was a great trip and the most productive ever. It was a source of revelation and enlightenment that I would never have expected. We were able to visit each of the 6 Vinh Son locations & Sao Mai, along with the Pleiku dentist who treats our kids each year.”*

### New Zealand to Vinh Son

Lynley Mulrine, a nurse from New Zealand, was looking to do volunteer work in Vietnam, and friends recommended the Vinh Son orphanage in Kontum. For 5 memorable weeks during April & May, she got her wish.

#### In her own words

I have to admit that I was quite anxious about just turning up, but turn up I did and met one of the Sisters and Miss Bil on my arrival. I asked if I could come for awhile and help in any way.

**(Rt: an impromptu classroom)**



I was welcomed and sent off to play with the small children. In a day or so I had a routine of spending time with the smaller children in the morning and then taught two English classes to the grade 3-5 children each day. It was so rewarding watching the children having fun while learning. Miss Bil and Miss Him do a wonderful job with very little resources; their commitment is inspiring. I gained such a lot from my time there; I grew to love it and will definitely go back, hopefully for some time each year. I stayed for 5 weeks and after that time it was very hard to leave. *Lynley Mulrine*



# Making those smiles possible



## Healthier teeth for a brighter future

One highlight was seeing and participating in the EastMeetsWest dental clinic that saw many of our children from VS 1, 2 & 5. This was certainly a wonderful event conducted for the 4<sup>th</sup> time in 5 years. The dentists and dental students were from around the world. Also in attendance was our good friend and previous FVSO Board Member, Mel Potter. Mel is instrumental in making this clinic happen. He not only helps to coordinate, but provides equipment and supplies from the States.

Also in attendance was the EMW National Dental Program National Coordinator Tran Thi Minh Huong. I had met Minh before in Sacramento and it was good to reconnect. She is affectionately known as “the Boss” by those that work at the clinic. In all, 690 children were seen and treated in the 4 day event. Really something to behold!

We visited the dental clinic in Pleiku where the kids are taken by Ms. Thien for care. We thanked the dentist for caring for the children and for discounting his rate. Thien told us that when she started this project she had been making each trip with the kids, but now that it's set up, she coordinates with the sisters and one of her good drivers cares for the kids.

## Eye-opening discoveries during the August visit

Imagine waking up every morning and your dominate thoughts were on how you would get enough food for the day. Imagine that you had 50 children in your care and that you had to get food for them also. There is little time for thoughts of medicine, clean water, education, shelter or clothing. An uncertain future, for sure.

That is what the Sisters and caretakers faced before FVSO. Since they never had time to think about anything but the present, I, for one, assumed that they didn't have the luxury of thinking long term. A revelation for me on this trip was that the Sisters can plan and execute tactics that allow them to take charge of their own destiny. Since FVSO, and others, have taken the burden of basic needs off their back, the Sisters have been able to catch their breath and begin working toward a more secure future.

Besides FVSO, there are a number of generous non-profit groups who have partnered with us to help make this happen. Today, nearly all of the sites produce items they can sell, like manioc, coconuts, bananas, pigs, chickens, bread, prayer bags, woven items etc. While these enterprises are presently on a small scale, they do show that they are moving in a direction we dreamed they would one day. It's happening! Dreams do come true.





# “Working for a better future” – More trip summaries

## Life-saving “Super Woman”

Sister Lieng showed us around VS-4 and we asked about the increase in head count. Turns out that 35 of the children came from a Sedang village on the other side of the mountain. That village had been built along a river and was destroyed by a flood which washed away all the buildings and crops. The parents will stay there to rebuild and when homes and crops are ready, the children will go back to their homes.

Another group of kids came from a village in the mountains where the crops were so poor that the people were forced to forage in the forest. They had been eating poisonous mushrooms and many people died.

A blind person who was more or less abandoned by his village stays at VS 4 where he plays guitar and teaches music to the kids. We can all be proud of Sister Lieng who just keeps on giving more and more of her passion to provide help for the needy.



2 kids from VS-6

## Sao Mai, Pleiku

Sister Khiet is 81 years old and proud of what she and the other Sisters and caregivers have done to help the disadvantaged. She will retire next year. The orphanage is very-well run and organized...toys, shoes and clothes all put away. Praise awards were earned by 16 of the 50 children living there, quite a feat considering they care for so many handicapped. A very impressive operation!



Y Uyen (left ) also known as Penny Clyde (at right) with his newest friend

## Helping FVSO get better

A young woman from the Convent, Y Uyen, has been helping us with the communication and coordination between FVSO and all the orphanage sites. She brings a very unique perspective. Since she was 2 years old, the Sisters at Vinh Son had help raise her. Although she was born in Kontum, she and her mother moved to HCMC at an early age. She was, however, sent back to the convent to spend each summer.

Y Uyen is now 22, loved and respected by all the Sisters, including Mother Superior, who is very protective and wouldn't let her ride her motor bike to meet us for dinner because it was too dark. She speaks excellent English, Bahnar, and Vietnamese. We got her a new camera, but she could also use a new lap top. She has a phone and a decent motor bike, which allows her to safely visit all the orphanage locations.

We had productive discussions with Y Uyen about what she could do to assist our efforts. She has a very positive relationship with all the Sisters, and is willing to share that goodwill for the benefit of the children and those trying to improve their lives.



## Sister Superior

We met with Mother Superior to explain the position paper we had sent ahead. When we explained that we were very concerned about the future and our ability to continue to raise money at the current level, her response was, “Don't worry about it. With all your help over the years we have been able to acquire more land and we are planting rubber trees.” A great meeting!

# The final word – “We still need your help”

The Sisters themselves are all top flight. The ones I didn't know so well are now my new heroes, having learned what they are really about and what drives them. They are very comfortable with the funding cap and are firmly focused on the future and some measure of self sufficiency.

It was a great trip and I'm really glad to have gone. It makes working for them even more important to me and I have a new will and energy for the work that lies ahead. *P. McKee*



Children from Vinh Son 2 and 3



## Matching Donation Program Progress Report



Beginning September 1<sup>st</sup>, every dollar that is donated to FVSO will be **MATCHED** up to **\$20,000!!** The program ends on December 31, 2012 or when the cap is reached, whichever comes first. What a great way to make your support count **TWICE!**

**GREAT NEWS:** Thanks to you, donations toward the annual fundraiser have nearly hit the \$20,000 mark. And the **GREATER NEWS** is an additional \$10,000 in matching funds has been pledged from these benefactors:

- Bart Ruud
- Mike & Sharon Bauerly
- Al & Chris Brooks
- Connie & Clyde Lewandowski
- Pat & Dennis Coyne

### New Videos Available on YouTube

1. The story of Sao Mai orphanage (formerly Tu Tam)
  - [Tu Tam / Sao Mai Orphanage](#)
2. Meet baby A Ga Ney
  - [Little Irish Blessing A Ga Ney](#)



### Veteran Organizations supporting FVSO

- 189<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts
- 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division Association (NY & NJ Chapter)

### 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  
 Pat Keegan  
 Alan Brooks

### 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