

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

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Pat and Dave brought more than a smile Learn about their April visit to Vinh Son



Pat Leary (above) and Dave Chaix (right) spread FVSO cheer and goodwill wherever they went



Friends and Fellow Supporters of the Vinh Son Orphanages: A message from Dave Chaix, FVSO President

I recently returned from my 2nd visit to Kontum and the Vinh Son Orphanages this year. Normally, a 2nd visit isn't necessary; however, we felt there was a need to make firsthand observations of some of our major projects, and to tighten up the administrative procedures. With the language and cultural differences and being separated by 10,000 miles, there's just no substitute for being on-site, meeting and discussing projects and issues in person. Additionally, we are able to meet with other groups who are supporting Vinh Son, thus avoiding duplication of efforts. Like the earlier visit, this one was highly productive and well received.

Joining me this time was Patrick Leary, making his first trip to the orphanages as a FVSO Board Member. Patrick has worked in China for many years and brings much experience and insight to working in Asia. His energy and enthusiasm were infectious. Pat's summary is also included in this newsletter.

As we've done in the past, a complete spending recap is provided. On your behalf, we delivered \$5,811 worth of aid, and combined with February's fund distribution, FVSO has personally handed over \$17,061 to the children. As we've said many times, **"Your contributions make a huge difference!"**

Thank You!

May 2010

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Vinh Son Facts

- Population – about 630 Montagnard children in six facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal
- Location - Kontum, Vietnam
- \$15 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for one month

Verification and Accountability

These are cornerstones at FVSO

Fund Distribution

2010 – 2

April 17, 2010 – April 23, 2010

- Recreation Room and Furniture at VS6 - \$1,600
- Medical Fund replacement:
 - VS 1 \$225
 - VS 2 120
 - VS 3 55
 - VS 4 35
 - VS 5 115
 - VS 6 35
 - Total \$585
- Pleiku Dental program for VS3, VS4 and VS6 - \$850 – Will send the other \$850 when needed
- Electrical repair at VS6 - \$100
- Table, lights and fan at VS6 - \$130
- Funds Y Hoang for surgery advanced for Orphans of Kontum - Vietnam - \$600. There is \$670 in medical funds left from the previous trip for Y Ra. These funds will be treated as one pool.
- Discretionary Funds - \$1,946:
 - VS 3 – Begin building Security Wall - \$1,200
 - VS 3 – Fix air compressor - \$3
 - Convent - Funds for ongoing projects - \$300
 - VS 2 - Chainsaw, tools, oil and gas can and hand pump - \$300
 - VS 2, VS 3, VS 4, VS 5 and VS 6 hand pumps for bicycles - \$30
 - VS 4 – Medicine for head lice - \$3
 - VS 4 – Air Compressor - \$110

Total \$5,811

Related to the Fund Distribution summary, here are a few additional comments:

- We have replenished medical funds at all 6 orphanages – as they give us receipts for medicines purchased, we send back that amount of funds.
- We have allotted funds for visits to the Pleiku dentist for the children, Sister and caretakers. Funding provided by Dave and Claire Christensen. We receive receipts for every dental visit – about 10 children at a time – we also jointly fund the dental van each November with East Meets West and FoCH.
- We have provided funds for a VS1 child named Y Ra, who has a kidney problem, to be treated in HCMC. She has just had her 3rd visit and we are waiting for a report. I saw her while in Kontum and she looked much better. Diny of Orphans of Kontum – Vietnam sent \$600 for the treatment of another girl, Y Hoang and we were able to send the girls to HCMC together.
- Sister Gabriel at VS3 requested the building of a security wall around their complex. There is always the potential of thieves. We have begun an ongoing pig operation there and would like to begin with chickens, but the wall is needed to secure the facility for these and other assets. Dorinda Cavanaugh, TDH, Ontario, Canada and Patrick Leary's 189th Attack Helicopter Company Association have agreed to jointly fund this project.
- Patrick Leary's 189th Helicopter Company Association delivered funds to VS6 for the building of a recreation room at VS6.
- Jean-Pierre de Rouck delivered funds to VS4 for Orphans of Kontum – Vietnam, to begin construction of a recreation room at VS4.
- We were able to give a status report and pictures of current projects funded by Colour4Kids, the Netherlands – they are building a bathroom at VS4, as well as building a bathroom and remodeling a shower at VS6. They are also funding some repairs at VS4.
- We took pictures of the beginning of a chicken coop and operation at VS4 funded by Dorinda Cavanaugh, TDH, Ontario, Canada.
- Patrick Leary took repair kits for bicycles and held training classes where needed. He discovered a really good operation at VS4 with a boy A Yet. We purchased an air compressor for this operation and hand pumps for some of the other facilities. Patrick has thoughts of centralizing the bicycle repair for VS3, VS4 and VS6 at VS4 and funding its ongoing operation. There are many, many bicycles in need for repair and this could develop into something really beneficial for everyone involved.



Both of these boys (the "carpenter" above, and A Yet on the right) help out at VS4

There are many ways to enrich lives at Vinh Son



From the top down:

- VS5 Swing time
- VS1 Piggery
- VS2 Bakery firewood
- VS2 Classroom
- VS3 Dispensary

Observations, related by Pat Leary:

I went to Vinh Son with two specific missions in mind. The first was to see if we could improve the resources for bicycle maintenance. The second was to evaluate what we could do to support the educational needs of the kids. We made some significant progress on both goals, but as expected, came away with even more challenges.

I figured that there had to be a number of bicycles that needed at least flats fixed and other minor repairs at the orphanages, but really had no idea what to expect. As an experienced cyclist, I put together several tool kits, based on my hours on the side of the road, and hoped for the best.

All of the locations did, in fact, have bikes in need of various repairs, some more than minor. When a bike breaks down for any reason, it is a problem. The budget at each location is very tight. There are seldom extra funds for tools and repair kits, and often not even money for a tube repair. This means bikes with minor repair needs go unused.

All the locations have a person whose responsibilities include general maintenance. I need to tell you about a young man named A Yet at VS4. We had already visited several locations and I had come to the realization that bike maintenance was desperately needed and was going to be a challenge to organize. Skills, tools, repair kits were all lacking. When I was looking for the broken bicycle area at VS4, I found a hand-built wheel truing stand behind one of the buildings. A truing stand is what you need to make a bent wheel round again. I could not believe I had found this. Turns out Yet, a sturdy young man about 14-15 years old, had built himself a little bike maintenance compound and actually knew quite a bit, while lacking basic tools.

What a find and what a basis for building a lasting program. I also found a young man named Herb at VS3 (maybe 10 years old) who showed an interest in learning these skills. So, bottom line, we have tools in place at the orphanages and two young men who show great promise. With FVSO nurturing, an organized bicycle repair operation will provide benefits for not only the orphanages but the local population in general.

There are many avenues and directions we could take in the education field. We even stopped at Tay Nguyen University in Buon Ma Thout. It might be a resource in the future, but will need a lot of development work. We also found two resources in Ho Chi Minh City that may help the kids with computer technology. I think our best bet is to work on a trade skill program for the kids

But what an experience! At each and every location, we saw kids who would smile, laugh and play with us. We found older kids, like Yet and Herb, making significant contributions to the livelihood of their "homes." We witnessed dedicated and hard working nuns and staff, providing an unbelievably safe and enriching environment, despite scarce resources.

I found that FVSO makes a huge difference in their lives.



Now Available

The Friends of Vinh Son Collectable Cap

This great looking, one-size-fits-all, cap is still available for sale at \$20 each. Simply ask for it when making your donation to FVSO. All proceeds will go to the kids.

“Group Giving” really works!

Dave and I distributed funds (\$2,800) for the projects supported by the 189th Assault Helicopter Company. Former members of the 189th were most generous, and because of them, we were able to completely fund one project and co-sponsor a second. On behalf of FVSO and the 189th, I had the pleasure of personally handing the checks to Sister Gabriel and Sister Nhun (pictured on the right).

VS6 currently has one small building that serves as dormitory, cafeteria, and multipurpose room for all the children and staff, 25+ people. Through the generosity of the 189th we are now able to build a second structure that will serve as a cafeteria and multipurpose room. Funds were left with Sr. Nhun to construct the building and also to provide furniture and accessories as needed.

We were fortunate to have funds left over to co-sponsor a security wall at VS3 with Dorinda Cavanaugh’s group (Terre Des Hommes, Canada). This orphanage has had trouble with local villagers borrowing and not returning chickens and other supplies. We believe this wall will give VS3 and Sr. Gabriel the security they need to raise their chickens and other farm produce, which will provide a much improved diet for the 50+ children and staff.



This was the fun part!

The growing Vinh Son community

Sustaining Vinh Son is truly a community effort. By combining the efforts of FVSO and its many “partners” around the world, the orphanages are reaping the benefits and conditions are improving.

At this time, however, FVSO would like to recognize an individual who contacted us last year about a high school project he wanted to do during his senior year at Shorecrest HS in Shoreline, Washington. Hoang Nguyen’s idea was to develop a fundraising effort to “support children of Vietnam.” We supplied Hoang with all the information he needed, and with additional support from the Kiwanis Club of Shoreline, he made it happen. In April, FVSO received a check for \$623.47, the result of Hoang’s commitment to the Vinh Son children. In a letter to us, Mr. Loehr of the Kiwanis Club expressed it this way, “We are...very impressed with what he has accomplished.” So are we!

Thanks Hoang!

Please make checks payable to FVSO or Friends of Vinh Son

Donations are gratefully accepted year round

100% of FVSO administrative costs and travel expenses are paid by the Board and Officers

