

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

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August Newsletter, 2013 - Volume 10 Issue 5

Annual Fundraiser (August – December 2013)

- The annual message from the FVSO President, Dave Chaix
- Announcing the 2013 Matching Fund Program
- “In Their Own Words,” personal messages from FVSO Board members
- Bread-n-Butter at Vinh Son 4

Officers

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

Board Members

Hank Gonzales
Rich Lahey
Clyde Lewandowski
Bart Ruud
Patrick Leary
Alan Brooks



THANK-YOU Sister Khiet!
For a life of devotion to others.
81 years young, the hero of Sao Mai!

Orphanage Facts

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

Donation Information

- 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

As has been our practice, each year we actively solicit donations beginning in August through the end of December. While we graciously accept donations throughout the year, this is the period when we receive the lion's share of our budget, which dictates our level of support for the following year.

Our overall target for 2013 is **\$125,000**. Year-to-date donations total **\$59,223**, leaving a balance of **\$65,777**. **That's the number!** With the Matching Donation Program, this is a realistic goal, but we need your support.

So far this year, we have accomplished much, acting alongside our dedicated non-profit Partners, the hard-working Sisters and Care givers at each site, and the children themselves. They are totally devoted to one another, attending school together, and standing side-by-side to complete their daily chores. Their unselfish spirit permeates each waking hour.

The Basic Needs for all orphanages have been or will be met for 2013, which includes food, clothing, dental and medical care. Also, many projects have been completed or are progressing, though not all our goals have been achieved. Of course, none of our efforts could have been realized without you.

The kids are counting on you! Please consider FVSO as one of your charitable priorities. Please help us continue the mission. On behalf of everyone at Vinh Son and Sao Mai....**THANK-YOU!**

Dave Chaix, FVSO President

Phase 1 of the 2013 Matching Donations Program

The Fundraising goal is \$65,777



Double Your Donation



Matching
Gifts

Matching Donation Program

We are very fortunate to have benefactors who help enhance and maximize our annual fundraising appeal. Beginning in August, every dollar donated to Friends of Vinh Son will be **MATCHED** up to **\$26,000!!** The program ends on December 31, 2013 or whenever the cap is reached, whichever comes first. It's a great way to make your support count **TWICE!**

Join us in thanking our benefactors

- Dave & Claire Christensen
- Scott & Valerie Hanson
- Bruce & Susan Herron
- Bob & Carolyn Lee
- Paul & Nancy St. Pierre
- Tim & Ann Sullivan

PROJECT UPDATE

Now Funded

- Parasite medication (\$850)
- English school (\$1,200)

Not Funded

- \$5,194 School fees
- \$3,330 VS-1 Girls washroom
- \$1,965 VS-4 Fence
- \$2,750 VS-4 Repair girls dorm
- \$2,470 VS-5 Vaulted house

Total \$15,709 in unfunded projects

“In Their Own Words”

The long road home for some FVSO Board Members

It was 1968. The two boys, sitting beside me on that jeep, are the reason I've been back to Vietnam 9 times since returning home. Despite the dangers of war, they became my first sons, and opened my eyes to a culture I never knew existed. The Montagnards. In 1994, we were reunited, but both of my sons (Kenh and Prot) would be dead within 3 years of that reunion. As part of their legacy, I became involved with FVSO. Whenever I visit the orphanage, I see their faces in the smiles of the children. And that makes me happy.



Mike Little (right, with Kenh and Prot)

Long lost friends. Little faces full of cheer that brought smiles to our faces when there was nothing to smile about. Those smiles certainly helped us to survive. An orphan who struggles with the memories of youth on a daily basis. A realization that our actions may have caused some kids to be orphans. A reconciliation. Many people who hear my story try to tell me that it is not my responsibility. I agree with the comment, and will hand off the responsibility when and only when someone steps up to care for them all.

Clyde Lewandowski (left, kneeling with his kids)



It was 2003, my 1st return trip to Vietnam. I came, I saw, they conquered me with their smiles, laughter, and the love they shared with each other. I knew their forefathers from 1968, the "Yards" who served with us at Dak To, Kontum, and other places. I felt it was time to do something positive to help them and the Vietnamese. I have been humbled to see how the Spirit can move people to do good things to help others they have never met. This contagious disease is called love and spreads like a forest fire. So many people, consumed by this fire of love, have literally changed the lives of so many children for the good. I love watching this fire burn and spread.

Dennis Coyne (right, Sr Imellie Y Tis & toddler A Ga Ney at lunchtime)



My first return trip in 2007 was initially driven by desperation to find redemption. Those not exposed to the violence of war likely do not understand how such exposure changes one who has seen battle action up close; likewise they may not understand how the demons in one's mind have an unwavering presence. Anything that might help reconcile the memories of those trying times is a consideration. My trust in Dave Chaix led me to overcome the fear of returning to a place that was incomparably life changing. That trust, and memories of supporting war orphans during my deployment were the single two items that helped me break through the barriers that I once thought could never be breached. Return trips are less difficult now but experience shows a country unlike that known during deployment. Seeing the good work accomplished by FVSO and knowing that our donors and caregivers are changing innocent lives for the better is incomparably rewarding. Giving back through provision of assistance to FVSO lends itself to finding avenues of redemption.

Bart Ruud



Pat Leary

It occurred to me that my pictures from Vietnam fall into two categories. The big cities (Saigon, Na Trang, Da Nang, Hue) are all beautiful Asian cities. They have developed way past the rubble of war, to places of commerce and lifestyle unrecognizable to veterans. Then, there is the countryside of Kontum and Pleiku. This photo was taken in a small open air recreation room we built at VS6. Just outside this room is the Vietnam we veterans left 45 years ago; rutted dirt roads, thatched huts, mud brick structures, the smell of charcoal fires in the morning, mud to your ankles, dust to your knees. It struck me as a prime example of what we at FVSO are doing. We are providing a little bit of sunshine to kids who live on the edge. By your donations, we are providing the hope and promise we left them 45 years ago. I am so privileged to be a part of it.

Bread-n-Butter at Vinh Son 4

Close your eyes and breathe in the aroma of freshly baked bread

Recently, Board member, Clyde Lewandowski, was approached by *Spoonwiz*, an internet magazine. They had heard about the wonderful bread baked at Vinh Son, and wanted to learn more. While the complete article can be found at <http://www.spoonwiz.com/>, as well as on our web site, below is a savory “taste” of the story. Looks like Vinh Son is becoming the culinary capital of Kontum!

The bread is baked by a handful of older children who are assigned to this project. The children awake early in the morning to gather the wood to heat the oven, prepare the dough, knead it, divide it into appropriately sized pieces, and manage the baking process. Mostly everything is done by hand, and the children beam with pride as trays of baked bread are removed from the oven.

Each day, the fruit of their physical labor is 200 loaves of wonderful fresh bread for meals at the orphanage and another 200 to be sold in the village. The children feel empowered as artisan bakers, sellers, and a recognized part of the local economy. Most importantly, with this small bakery the Sisters move their charity one step closer to social enterprise and self-sustainability.

The mini baguettes are light and fluffy inside with a crisp crust that seems to taste better than anything I have ever eaten. Each time I have a banh mi sandwich here in Minnesota, I always think of the bread made by Sister Lieng’s children. I offer up a little prayer for them and yearn for the time when I can visit them again.



Food & Wine Social Enterprise
Orphanage Bakery

<http://www.spoonwiz.com/orphanage-bakery/>

Spoonwiz

“An insightful culinary resource that connects users with a trusted network of food experts and savvy diners. We help users discover great restaurants and enrich their food experience, providing everything one needs to know about eating well. We are an inclusive network of independent critics, journalists, food writers, bloggers, and culinary professionals.”

It might be a long ways to go, but according to Spoonwiz, these rolls are worth the trip!

And finally.....Please share this annual appeal with friends & family, neighbors & church groups, or anyone who might be interested in helping the kids. “...continuing the mission,” is possible because people like you are expanding the FVSO family. THANK-YOU!

Organizations supporting FVSO

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts
- 4th Infantry Division Association (NY & NJ Chapter)
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours



MilSpec Tours
(800) 953-5812