

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

November 2015 Newsletter - Volume 12 Issue 9

In this issue

- Fundraising update – matching funds still available – it's been a great year!
- Clean water systems a big problem - a unique solution is identified
- Scholarship review and special announcement

Fundraising Update

- Donations August to November 6th: \$ 37,875
- Benefactor's Matching Funds total: \$ 46,650
- Balance needed to maximize the Matching Fund

\$8,775

We are closing in on exceeding expectations for our annual donation target. Your continued contributions will help ensure that we meet every obligation, today as well as into the future.



**Because of you... We have
food on the table
THANK-YOU!**

In the United States, November is a most momentous month. We vote for our elective officials on the first Tuesday in November. The 11th is Veterans Day. The 4th Thursday is Thanksgiving. We have so much to be grateful for.

As President of FVSO, I am most thankful for the strength and support of our Board members. They do so many tasks that keep us on track and moving forward. We on the Board are most thankful for the generosity of our donors who help us do the work we do.

Most rewarding are the thank you and progress notes we get from the Sisters and the children throughout the year. We share them with you in our newsletters.

As we approach the Christmas season, please know that your donations are the answers to many prayers. Thank you for being there for the children.

Pat Leary, FVSO President



Clean water is a top priority at the Vinh Son orphanages



Meet A Coi and A Boi, 16-year olds living at Vinh Son 1, and our newest plumbers

During their April visit, Leary and Lewandowski noted that the Sisters do not have time to properly monitor the clean water systems. In fact, several systems were not functioning properly at all. Something had to be done to address this problem.

FVSO has approved a skeletal plan to employ two young orphanage residents, Boi and Coi, with supervision by John Ho, to undergo water system maintenance training under the tutelage of the MK Company of DaNang so that they will be prepared to complete a visual monthly inspection of the water treatment facilities at each of the six Vinh Son Orphanage sites. These inspections would serve to assess the functionality of each system, and each inspection will be followed by a written report detailing functionality and need for repairs, if any.

Boi and Coi speak some degree of the English language and have traveled to Australia with Derek Smith of "Australians Supporting Kids at Vinh Son Orphanage," ASK@VSO. Derek has mentored Boi and Coi for some time and he concurs that these young men are good choices for vocational training which will lead to their monitoring of our water systems.

The need for regular inspections and initiation of repairs is needed because operational functionality is sometimes compromised due to lack of knowledge and lack of time on the part of supervising site directors to manage their respective water systems. While the MK Company of DaNang is contracted to do regular filter maintenance, system maintenance issues sometimes occur between scheduled MK Company visits. Functionality issues might be better resolved with regular inspections, thus leading to fewer operational glitches.

Costs are projected to be \$30 per month. Payments of \$10 each will go to Boi, Coi and Mr. Ho, for a total of \$360 per year. The funds will be sent along with quarterly disbursements to Vinh Son.

Outcome: 1) Better working water systems, 2) vocational training for two teenage boys, and 3) foundation for improved communication.

FVSO scholarship program takes shape

Board member, Clyde Lewandowski, has been working tirelessly to bring this life-changing program to reality. Below is his report and announcement.

Implementing the scholarship program has been a long process, beginning in 2011, when one generous donor (whose donation was earmarked for scholarship opportunities) made the first of two installments on his pledge of \$30,000. After the funds were received, we decided to begin with my friend, Lyly, who was sponsored by my wife, Connie, and me rather than with funds from the donor. Using Lyly as a learning model, we learned about the testing process and how difficult it can be to be admitted by the public university or college that the student is interested in attending.

After Lyly had been in school for a couple of months, we learned that the sisters from VS-2 had sent Y Hoi to the same nursing college the year before, but that they had not given her enough money to pay tuition. Just before Christmas 2014, we learned that if she did not pay her back and present tuition in full within the next two weeks, all of the credits she earned in the past would be lost. At that point, Dennis Coyne, Janet Wheatley and Sue Zwinger (my sister) stepped up to cover tuition and living expenses for her. We are thankful for their support.

In Vietnam, public universities are more prestigious than many of the private schools. Minority students, who can meet specific qualifications proving they are poor, may receive a discounted tuition. Students are required to purchase school uniforms for some programs as well as school supplies. They are offered a health insurance policy which is always good to purchase because health care coverage in Vietnam is province specific, which means that if the student needs health care outside his or her home province, a specialist in the home province must provide a recommendation before anything is covered. The school policy circumvents this.

In the spring, the students apply for tests at up to three universities, then take the tests, and eventually learn how they scored in June/July. The response from the university may be that the student has been accepted, or that s/he did not quite pass the standards for that particular school but would be accepted by one of their "partner" schools, or that the student was rejected because scores were not high enough.

Universities in Vietnam run two semesters each year with time off for the Lunar New Year, Independence Day at the end of April, and a month or so off during the summer.

The students who go to school in Kontum will continue to live at their home orphanage while they go to school. Others who go to school farther away stay in a dorm, an off campus apartment, or with a host family.

True costs seem to be about \$600 annually for tuition and \$125 to \$150 per month for lodging, food, insurance, and school required uniforms and equipment. The students who have their own laptop or iPad have an advantage in that they do not have to wait in line to use the limited tech equipment at the schools. If we could find donors who would provide used laptops or iPads, we could pass them on to the students.

Here they are

Y Rin is from VS-6 and she will study pharmacy in Kontum (lower right)

Y Rim is from VS-2 and she will study nursing in Kontum (upper right)

Y Chut is from VS-2 and she will study music in Da Nang (lower left)

A Xok is from VS-1 and he will study technology and information in Hue (upper left)



Congratulations to our first scholarship recipients

Four young orphans from Kontum will start college this year on FVSO scholarships.

This group will receive \$75 per month in scholarships. We assume that they will use this money for living expenses, that the sisters will help them with tuition, and that they will work part time jobs to pay for the remainder. As time goes on, we hope to learn if this is enough or if we will need to provide more money per month. When we began working on this project with Sister Josie and Sister Marie Kham, we explained that we want them and us to be full and equal partners. We told them what we can provide and asked them to consider whether this was enough money for each student.



They are aware that the total budget is limited and that if we provide more money per month that means the number of students must be reduced.

We have sent the first monetary disbursement to each student. As per our scholarship documentation, we sent \$100 U.S. for each student to buy a new bicycle that they can keep, as well as the \$75 scholarship money. **End of report**

Offering a brighter future for eager ones like this

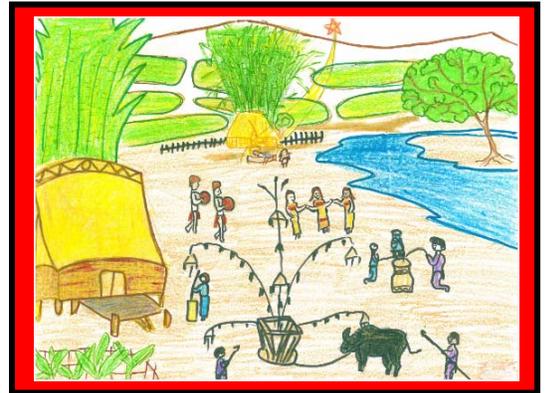
One-of-kind Christmas cards are now available at:

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/LoveWithoutBorders>

Last year, your purchase of these cards truly made a difference in the lives of the children, as witnessed by the construction of a new dorm and bathroom at Vinh Son 4.

This year, we're offering 4 new cards, reproduced from the Vinh Son children's drawings, beautiful depictions of Christmas as seen through their eyes.

All proceeds go directly towards the support of the orphanages.



Long-term supporting organizations

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

If someday they say of me that in my work I have contributed something to the welfare and happiness of my fellow man, I shall be satisfied.

---George Westinghouse

With all thy getting, get understanding

---Malcom Forbes

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

Board of Directors

- Hank Gonzales
- Rich Lahey
- Clyde Lewandowski
- Bart Ruud
- Dave Chaix
- Steve Fisher/J. Glah

Advisory Board

- John Scott
- Bruce Herron

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