

February Newsletter 2021 Volume 18 Issue 2



In This Issue

- Patrick reflects back on 2020
- Making the best of the 2021 TET
- Updates: how's it going?
- Potential capital projects

FVSO President's Message

"My, did you ever come through!"

Despite a very challenging year due to the Coronavirus and record breaking storms, FVSO blew away its 2020 forecasted budget of \$290,000. Our donors broke records of their own, contributing \$336,134 in support of the Sao Mai and Vinh Son Orphanages. **My, did you ever come through!** Yes, 2020 was a difficult year, especially for the kids, but FVSO saw donations up 15% vs. last year, while 87% of that total was spent directly on the children and their caregivers. This includes a "bonus" we sent to VinhSon and Sao Mai in early January that recognizes your generosity. We've come a long way since 2001, done a lot of great work, but none of it would have been possible without your support. That was especially true in 2020.

Capital Projects typically require strict scrutiny before going forward. Because we budget for Basic Needs first, before anything else, we make plans based on a very conservative estimate. Things like Capital Improvements, Legacy and Emergency Funds all receive funding when the budget permits. When the Nuns asked for help with a number of major projects that would improve the comfort and safety of the children, FVSO was in a position to respond. "YES!" With a budget of \$103,000 that was much more than we usually spend. However, the communication between the Board and Nuns was honest and straightforward, and it was decided that these projects were the right ones to tackle. Once again, your generosity made all this happen. The results can be found in our monthly newsletters.

Generosity is an often used word, and the results of it are easily recognizable. If you are one of the lucky ones who have actually visited Vinh Son in person, you have witnessed "generosity." Nearly every child has been touched by it...every meal, every bathroom visit, every glass of water, every Christmas party, every scholarship, every bed, every dental checkup, every chicken coop...on and on, all of this "generosity" is managed by a group of loving Nuns and other caregivers, who often dedicate their lives to the Vinh Son and Sao Mai children.

What about 2021? Each year has its challenges. Relying on your continued "generosity," we will once again operate under a donation budget of \$290,000. This will allow us to 1) maintain the "guaranteed" amount of spending on Basic Needs, and 2) increase the Capital Projects budget to \$97,000. This increase recognizes that these efforts are vital to the well being of everyone. The project list is on page 4, with an overall goal to create a safe living environment and encourage self-sustaining projects.

The road will always be challenging, but we thank you for joining us on this journey. If the children could, they would line the road with gratitude.

Patrick R. Leary, on behalf of the FVSO Board

A TET Like No Other, 2021

Welcome to Lunar New Year of the Buffalo 2021

The recent spread of Covid 19 in Vietnam upset the rhythm of life at the 6 Vinh Son orphanages, and all the plans for TET (musical performance programs, making sticky rice cakes, confectionary etc.) were changed. The children were supposed to bring their TET gifts back to their extended families in the villages, but all that was canceled because of Corona virus. A new outbreak hit eleven cities and provinces with more and more cases infected. Also, the virus has spread to Gia Lai (Pleiku) province near Kontum. Fearful, this forced the six Nuns in charge not to allow the children to return home for their family reunions. Because of safety concerns, the children had to celebrate TET at their own orphanages.

Despite the letdown, the Nuns in charge held small parties before TET, so that good times could be had and memories made. The children were eager to celebrate by cooking a special dinner. Each orphanage chose a convenient time to have their party but Vinh Son 1, 2 and 3 held their parties right away (6pm on February 1st). All the preparations were made by the children themselves, and if these pictures could tell the story, it appears a good time was had by all.



All photo's and stories from Kontum are courtesy of Martha Y Phanh, Assistant Editor of the newsletter



There is so much to be thankful for

The menu was "mouth watering!" **Main dish** pork and chicken drumsticks, **Sides** spring rolls, fried meat rolls, steamed rolled rice pancake, bread and dumplings, soup and home-grown lettuce. **Desserts** included soft drinks and tangerines.

After dinner, they were given small lucky money of Lunar new year and a small gift. Everyone had a joyful smile on their lips because they could enjoy the party atmosphere of the TET holiday among themselves in their orphanage home. Although the Corona virus obstructed them, they felt secure and safe from the pandemic with a holiday of human love.

Following Up on Three Ongoing Stories



The Coronavirus has won't stay out of Vietnam

Because of the reappearance of Corona virus, there are 11 cities and provinces that have been affected, including Gia Lai Province (Pleiku), which is close to Kontum. In order to assure the safety from the virus, the Ministry of Education has issued notices to all the students to have their temporary days off to prevent Covid 19 begin one week before the TET holidays. Although they didn't go to school, they had to continue to study at home with lessons online of week 22. The young girls of the six VSO, helped with cooking, working in vegetable garden, or helped the younger children take their bath. The young men do the farming in the fields. Although the children had to prevent the Covid 19 pandemic, they are always calm and innocent and carefree, happiness on their faces.

The damaged vegetable gardens will make a come back

The children have to work very hard in their vegetable garden to have good beds of vegetables and cassavas, corns in the fields that grow very quickly. When vegetables grow well, Vinh Son 2 has shared them with other VS orphanages in order to return for the damages caused by the typhoons last year. They continue to pick coffee beans, harvest the bark of tallow laurel (a kind of tree whose bark is sticky to make incense sticks for worshipping) and they sell this kind of bark to earn money to pay the damages caused by the typhoons.



A bright shining soul embraces an unsure world

We can call Y Nuong the most lovely baby princess of Vinh Son. She is an angel who made more joy and more happiness for 180 kids of Vinh Son 2. She is two months old now and she weighs 6 kilos and has much developed and healthy and the young girls in turn look after her. Nuong has a 15 minute sunbath every morning so her skin is very healthy and firm.

She has her daily activities: sleeping, sucking milk and having a bath. She knows how to express her emotions on her face like being satisfied then smiling and crying when dissatisfied and more especially, she feels it with lullabies. She likes to be held in the caregivers' arms and takes long walks with loving care by a babysitter. She knows to smile and she knows to put her fingers in her mouth. Thanks to Y Men and the young girls' care, Y Nuong's face is more and more chubby and lovely and especially she makes strange sounds that only her own world can understand. We hope that baby Y Nuong is always fine and she will grow up well.

Capital Projects will again be a focus of the 2021 plan since the Vinh Son aging infrastructure needs repair or replacement

List and Cost of the 2021 Capital Projects Submitted to FVSO by the six Vinh Son Montagnard Orphanages, Kontum, Vietnam

January, 2021

VS-1

- Boy's Dining Room (\$15,250)
- Girl's Bathroom (\$4,650)

VS-2

- Repair Chicken Coop and Pig Pen and Playground Fence (\$8,400)

VS-3

- Construct Activity Hall (\$23,250)

VS-4

- Rebuild Boy's Bedrooms (\$45,200)

VS-5

- Already completed

VS-6

- Chicken Coop and Pig Pen repair (\$5,300)

TOTAL ESTIMATED USD DOLLARS = \$102,690 usd

TOTAL ESTIMATED VN Dong = 2,361,780,000 dong

Funds committed to the annual Basic Needs budget at each site will remain unchanged.

FVSO Contact Information

**FVSO: P.O. Box 9322
Auburn, CA 95604-9322**

Email: FriendsofVSO@gmail.com

Web: www.FriendsofVSO.org



Legacy Fund Update

The goal is:

**\$2 million dollars
by March 2027**

Legacy Fund Balance

\$906,671



Orphanage Facts

About 775 Montagnard children live in 7 orphanage facilities in the Kontum/Pleiku areas of Vietnam.

\$12 per month provides each child one nutritious meal every day.

Orphanages are run by the Sisters of Miraculous Medal (Vinh Son) and St. Paul Chartres (Sao Mai).

Officers & Board Members

Patrick Leary
Nga Wynne
Gene Mapa
Bart Ruud
Clyde Lewandowski
Michael Little
Pat McKee
Dave Chaix
Hank Gonzales
Ken Tokutomi

President
Secretary
Treasurer
Senior VP
1st VP
2nd VP
3rd VP
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member

Donation Information

Checks should be payable to FVSO or Friends of Vinh Son.

FVSO is a humanitarian, non-profit organization approved by IRS code 501©(3). Donations are tax deductible.

Donations are accepted year round and are also available on-line.