

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

February 2016 Newsletter - Volume 13 Issue 2

In this issue

- **Dave's Vietnam delegation, another successful on-site visit**
- **Water update: it's flowing clean at Vinh Son**
- **Our higher education students express their appreciation**

Dave Chaix's Trip Report for January/February 2016

Another great trip – this by 14 travelers from the Auburn/Sacramento, CA areas and Texas. As with many of these excursions, we began in a country other than Vietnam. However, the 7 orphanages in Kontum and Pleiku would be the center pieces of the journey. We met our guide, Tano, in Hanoi and made our way to Laos for a 6 day 2 city tour, before returning to Hanoi and 2 nights on Ha Long Bay.

Then, it was off to Hue and Hoi An, stopping for lunch in Da Nang and a visit with our 2 nursing students from VS-2, Y Hoi and Y LyLy. These girls are supported by the Lewandowski's, the Coyne's, Claire Christensen, Janet Wheatley and Sue Zwinger. What wonderful young ladies! After Hoi An, we traveled by bus to Kontum, 12 long hours on the old Ho Chi Minh Trail arriving in the late evening.



The Tano family



The next morning, we gathered at the old, historic Wooden Church in Kontum before visiting the orphanages, the reason we had traveled so far. Our first stop was VS-1, where we spent time with the Sisters and children. A major highlight there was the upstairs area for the babies and toddlers. It's easy to fall in love with the little ones up there. All six Vinh Son orphanages are well run and maintained by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal.

We then traveled to VS 2, 3, 4 & 6, delivering funds (basic needs) to help them kick off the Year of the Monkey. Some funds were also left to purchase warm clothing and new bedding at VS 3, 4 & 6, plus a badly needed motor bike for Sister Gabriel at VS-3. All orphanages are doing well, but as you get further out to 3, 4 & 6, it's apparent they don't get the support and tourist traffic like VS-1 & 2 receive. Doing well is relative as a comparison to a few years ago, but there's always so much more that needs to be done.

The next day, we visited VS-5, another remote orphanage with similar needs as 3, 4 & 6. Again, we left funds to begin the New Year and also for warm clothes and new bedding. Our guide, Tano, led us in a game with the children that everyone enjoyed, much laughing by all. After VS-5, we visited the Sewing Class which is always a treat. Many of the girls are from the orphanages and some from the villages, each learning a skill that will help them in the future – again we left funds.

The personal “touch” makes all the difference, trip report cont’d

The following day, we visited the Sao Mai orphanage in Pleiku which is run by Sister Khiet, who is 84 years young. We also met with our good friend, Miss Thien, who has guided our dental program over the years. What a wonderful, giving person. This orphanage is aptly looked after by the Sisters of St. Paul De Chartres. As usual, we were entertained by the children and given a tour of the grounds.

A wonderful and productive visit to all seven facilities, we accomplished our objectives...spending time with the children, and handing over funds that will meet their most critical needs...warm clothing and new bedding. Believe it or not, it can get quite cold in the Central Highlands. For the delegation of 14, our hearts were warmed by the reception we got from the 800+ children of Vinh Son/Sao Mai.

Fund Distribution - \$5,250

- VS-1 Basic Needs - \$1,000
- VS-2 Basic Needs - \$1,000
- VS-3 Basic Needs - \$500
- VS-4 Basic Needs - \$750
- VS-5 Basic Needs - \$500
- VS-6 Basic Needs - \$500
- Sao Mai Basic Needs - \$500
- Convent Sewing Class Expenses - \$500

Discretionary Funds - \$2,200 delivered by Dave

- VS 3 \$300 for warm clothes and blankets
- VS 4 \$300 for warm clothes and blankets
- VS 5 \$300 for warm clothes and blankets
- VS 6 \$300 for warm clothes and blankets
- VS 3 \$1,000 to purchase a much needed motorbike

\$7,450 total distribution

Friends of Vinh Son official visit



Y Nuong, Y Vui, Dave, Y Le



Group photo taken at Sao Mai



A happy teenager at Vinh Son 5

Janet La Due cradles a baby during her 1st visit to Vinh Son

A little one from Vinh Son 1

Small Steps – Water for all

Vinh Son Water Inspection		Date –5-2-2016	
Location	Do all Faucets work	Are the Big Tanks full	Do the drains work
VS1 Kitchen	yes	yes	yes
VS1 Boys Dorm	yes	yes	yes
VS 2 Kitchen	yes	yes	yes
VS 3 Dispensary	yes	yes	yes
VS 3 Kitchen	1 faucet doesn't work.	yes	yes
VS 4 Kitchen	yes	yes	yes
VS 5 Kitchen	yes	yes	yes
VS 6 Kitchen	yes	yes	yes
A Boi			A Coi

The report card isn't fancy, but it keeps everyone aware of potential problems with their water supply.

We take so much for granted. We turn on the faucet, we expect it to work and we expect clean water to come out. Just an expectation. We installed clean water systems in the 7 orphanage locations and have a contract for quarterly maintenance from a qualified plumber. However, when we visited last year, we found small maintenance issues that you and I could fix with a quick trip to Home Depot, it was beyond their capabilities. It is still a very 3rd world environment. These systems are used daily by 850 kids, so wear and tear on faucets, washers, floats and clogged drains can be expected. Last November, we hired **A Boi** and **A Coi**, high school students at VS-1, to do a simple monthly operational inspection and report to us. In the three months they have, in fact, found small problems that we have been able to get fixed so the kids have 100% operational systems everyday. This basic program has accomplished so much in terms of developing responsibility, communication skills, mechanical awareness and, not to mention, improving incrementally the lives of the kids. Such a small step has returned huge results.

We will receive periodic reports from “our students”

Although we're still in the beginning stages of our higher education programs, we'd like to share some early feedback from two female students, Y Lyly and Y Hoi. Both are enrolled in nursing school in Da Nang.

Also, below are email excerpts from Board Members Clyde Lewandowski and Bart Ruud, discussing their personal connections to FVSO in general and these students in particular.



Y Hoi & Y Lyly are the “future”

Thanks for sharing!

Clyde's email 1/26

I have included some of the letters from the kids in the body of this message. Feel free to use them if they match what you are looking for. I will work on getting all the kids to provide more information on an ongoing basis when we talk to them face to face in April.

Bart's remarks 1/26

The photos tell a wonderful story of appreciation and success, and the letters are fun. The support you and your wife, Connie, have quietly given has provided a foundation for future successes in the realm of advanced education. And yes, there have been others who have been there to lend a hand too, like Dennis and Pat (Coyné), and several among our cadre of faithful donors.

I am happy for you to be able to see what your support has brought to Y Lyly. She is one lucky child that you found her and believed in her as you have. Where would she be, where would any of the children of Vinh Son be without you, without FVSO?

The advances made since my first return visit to Vietnam, and to the orphanages in 2007, are truly remarkable. We can all share a little pride in how things have evolved. Without our teamwork, we could not be where we are today.

Clyde's response 1/27

The truth is that without Dennis, Dave, Bart, and so many others, I would never have traveled to Kontum and would not have met Lyly or any of the wonderful children there. I am just tagging along on a wonderful ride through life, gathering energy from the smiles I see on the faces of others along the way and trying to share those smiles as we go.

Y Lyly and Y Hoi are leading the way for future aspirants

Y Lyly letter

Wishes for good day to you. I am sorry we were not allowed texting during the week with you on Facebook is because the busy plan and practice cultural performances to prepare with excitement for the school. Last night we had done a theater performance and our class was won second prize.

I have completed the first semester of year 2. And we will learn one more week then will be the Lunar New Year holiday. The school will stay on until the end of the day January 27. Time to go to school again from February 2. This New Year I will go home to visit my mother and friends at orphanage, sir.

Did you have a happy Christmas? We here welcomed the Christmas holiday fun. The weather was very cold there, correct? Now you prepare for New Years how are you doing?

Before I told you that this week we will go home and now I changed my mind because on 1/1/2016 in Da Nang they will organize a fireworks display, I'll stay here watching.

Yesterday Y Hoi completed graduate internship and came back to the school, now she is here with me. Today we went to school and ask about our tuition. The payment of the fee period is 5.7 million VND (\$255 usd) for us learning all 18 credits. The final tuition Y Hoi must pay is 6,900,000 VND (\$310 usd).

The Tet New Year wish everyone happy and prosperous always healthy. I thank you so much,

Y Hoi letter

Mr. Clyde and greet everyone,
First of let me be sent word to everyone there. I thank him and everybody 2016 peace, good health and happiness always. How are you doing sir?

I'm sorry for the long answer to your letter. I have received the tuition sent for me, my tuition last semester is 6.9 million VND. Because I have not done all reported practice graduation exam on January 5, 2016 I only paid 2,700,000 (for the subjects studied). And January 6, 2016 I was back to complete next Kontum graduation exam and I finished it on January 8.

Today I have submitted to the money was 3,200,000 VND with graduation report and now tuition is paid in full. I thank you and everyone was always interested in helping me, I'm trying very hard not to betray the people.

Mr. Clyde and people, according to the school's plan is due in late March 2016 I will graduate, and now I'm reviewing all subjects and preparing for graduation.

Once again I would like to wish you and everyone always healthy and successful in life. I thank him and everyone very much.
I ask everyone for the prayers.

Long-term supporting organizations

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada Cnty, CA
- Counterparts Association
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours (800-953-5812)
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects
- Fr. Relihan, Sacred Heart Church, Lone, CA
- Rotary Club of San Juan Capistrano, CA

If the world seems cold to you, kindle fires to warm it.

— Lucy Larcom

I wondered why somebody didn't do something. Then I realized, I am somebody.

— Unknown

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