

February Newsletter 2020

Volume 17 Issue 2

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That was then: 2012

There is a premature baby at VS1 that has been of serious concern. This is the baby that was "cut from the mother" and the mother died. The concern was that the baby needed more care than the sisters were able to provide. The baby is now 7 weeks old. I was told it weighed 1 kg when it arrived and now weighs 2.2 kg. The professional nurse said it would be ok to leave the baby at Vinh Son 1.

There is still some concern but the weight gain is encouraging.

Like everything with babies I was told to go slow. Sr Imelda and staff have done a great job managing this situation. I am now the godfather of A Ga Nay, Christian name Patrick

This is now: 2020

An update on A Gan Ney from the Australian family who adopted him (see Jan. 2013 Newsletter)

On January 31st, Ney turned 8 years old and is a beautiful and healthy child. He is in year 2 at school and is a very clever little boy. He has lived with us (Carmel Excel and her family) for 6 years now and has permanent residency in Australia. Ney's areas of interest are animals and in particular marine creatures and his hero is Sir David Attenborough. He started karate last year and is good at it. He currently has his yellow belt - second level.

We have a close relationship with his father and siblings who still live in Kontum and have supported them in a variety of ways including replacing a roof, adding a bathroom and digging a well. We also make sure the youngest children have what they need for school.

Our daughter, Dominique, has visited the family on 2 occasions and is Godmother to one of Ney's nieces. We skype with his family whenever we can.

8 years ago, Patrick Leary and Clyde Lewandowski of FVSO were in Kontum shortly after Ney's mother passed away. It was about the same time that the baby's family brought him to the Vinh Son orphanage. Ney is loved by both of his families, here in Australia and in his native homeland, Vietnam. He gives much love and joy in return, and is grateful for all his blessings.



Bananas....Bananas....Bananas

Back in 2018, Sister Marie Kham at VS-1 submitted a request for assistance with the purchase of a 0.2 hectare parcel close in to Kontum where a banana farm could be developed. It would supply bananas for the children and caregivers at VS-1 and if productivity warrants, for distribution to other Vinh Son locations. As one can see from the recent photos, the trees are well cared for and some are already bearing fruit. The \$2,300 purchase price was well worth it. Another successful FVSO project!



The 2020 FVSO Vietnam Tour Presented by Dave Chaix, Tour Leader

We began our 2020 adventure leaving SFO in the early hours of January 13, 2020, arriving in Saigon on the morning of January 14. Accompanying our group (7 men, 5 women) were FVSO Board Members Ken Tokutomi and Gene Mapa. Upon arrival, we were met by our trusty guide Tano and bussed to our first night's lodging in Ben Tre, Can Tho – Mekong Delta. The next day we boarded the Bassac II for a 4-day river cruise in the Delta, a first for each of us.

Upon completion of the river cruise we were bussed to Saigon for a 1-night stay. We met Derek Smith, his son Michael and a friend at our hotel for a short visit. We had worked with Derek's Australian charity ASK for many years, but this was our first meeting. ASK has done wonderful work over many years and have been great partners.

The following morning, we departed Saigon for Pleiku and Kontum where we would visit the 6 Vinh Son Orphanages and the Sewing Class. Before departing from our hotel, we were joined by Alan Action from England and his friend Yang. They traveled with us during the days in Kontum, identifying ways to help the children in the future.

Martha Phanh, who helps us year-round with many tasks, also traveled with us to visit all the Vinh Son orphanages. Thank you, Martha, for all you do to help us.

This year, we began our tour at VS 2 (182 children) meeting with the in-charge Sister Theresa Y Klanh (who has been at VS 2 for only 3 months). After a walk-through, we asked the Sisters for any needed projects (we do this at all the orphanages). They asked for upgrades to: 3 classrooms, to the boy's showers and to their sewer and drainage systems. Also, the clearing of title for their 17.3 acres of farmland which we funded last year, and is a project in progress. With the funds provided by FVSO in 2019, they were able to upgrade the lights in all the buildings and improve what they farm (coffee, bananas, chickens and pigs).

Next stop was the Sewing Class. We met with the Sister in charge, Sister Sabine Y Quan. There are 4 teachers and 48 students, from the orphanages and nearby villages. What a wonderful program! We were entertained by the students in traditional dress they had made themselves.

Our last stop for the day was VS 1 (200 children) where we were met by the Sister in charge, Pier Marie Y Mar. She asked to have us upgrade their house on stilts where some of the boy's sleep. They are also requesting a multi-purpose field for soccer and volleyball.

The following morning, we began at VS 6 (70 children), the furthest orphanage on Highway 24. We were met by the Sister in charge, Sister Nhun and Sister Dung. We were led on a tour by the children and then met with the Sisters. They requested more showers and toilets and an upgrade to their office with filing cabinets, desk and chairs.

Our next stop was at VS 4 (122 children) and Sisters Phep and Lien. We were able to see the spring water holding area and filter system installed by our partners Viet Dreams, San Jose, CA. This system is now functional, but there is still a water shortage and the Sisters would like a new drilled well – estimated cost \$2,800. It was noticed by the travelers that there were many leaks in the plumbing that need attention and the Sisters will have them repaired with part of the funds we left. They also asked us to repair and upgrade the boy's dorm and provide 1 year of fertilizer – estimated cost \$2,200.

Just down the road we came to VS 3 (80 children) and Sisters Lok, Khat and Gabriel, what a wonderful person. Sister Gabriel was the head nurse at Doctor Smith's Montagnard hospital in Kontum during the '60's and '70's. Her knowledge and experience do wonders for the children and villagers. They need to upgrade bathrooms (toilets and showers) and repair the roof where the Sisters live. We had previously sent funds to upgrade the classrooms and they are waiting for permits.

Our last stop was at VS 5 (85 children), across the "Golden Gate Bridge". We were met by our good friend and longtime helper Sister Marie Kham and Sister Hoa, who does medical and life skills training. Also, at VS 5 is Sister Michelle, the previous Mother Superior, now retired. Sister Marie has now been at V5 for just about 1 year and the improvements were evident everywhere we looked. VS 5 asked for funding for a bio-storage system (this will be an interesting one to watch develop) and first aid supplies. We were able to leave funds to cover these requests. They would also like to upgrade their meeting room and add a chicken coop for 1,000 chickens – estimated cost \$7,000.

We asked the Sisters at all 6 orphanages if they were satisfied with the current dental program using the Kontum dentist. They were very animate that they were very satisfied with the program as all the children, Sisters and caregivers were seen annually and if needed could return for dental work and emergencies during the year.

The following day we visited the Sao Mai Orphanage in Pleiku. We were greeted by Sister Kheit, now in her 80's. The children showed us around and we met with our good friend Thien Nguyen, who handles our dental program for Sao Mai with the Pleiku dentist. Funds were given to Thien that will cover Sao Mai's dental program for 2020.

Another very productive visit at each orphanage, reviewing projects and concerns... those completed, in progress or on the drawing board. The highlight of any visit is time spent with the children. The portraits you see below are just a sample of the beautiful images the team captured for our enjoyment. More to follow in our newsletters. **The travelers paid their own expenses and transportation costs.**



During his annual visit to the orphanages, Dave Chaix delivers supplemental funding, pre-approved by the Board. Below is a recap of that spending:

VS 1 Basic Needs - \$1,000 – Delivered
VS 2 Basic Needs - \$1,000 – Delivered
VS 3 Basic Needs - \$500 – Delivered
VS 4 Basic Needs - \$750 – Delivered
VS 5 Basic Needs - \$500 – Delivered
VS 6 Basic Needs - \$500 – Delivered
Sao Mai Basic Needs - \$500 – Delivered
Sao Mai Dental (Thien) \$400 Delivered (From Discretionary Funds)
Convent Sewing Class Expenses – \$500 – Delivered
Convent Field Expenses Novices – \$200 Not Visited – Not Delivered – Moved to Discretionary Funds
Discretionary Funds \$2,000 - \$400 (Sao May Dental) = \$1,600 + \$200 Not Delivered to the Novices = \$1,800
Martha for helping all days \$100
VS 5 Bio Gas \$700 (Maybe Great Potential)
VS 5 First Aid Supplies for 1 Year \$260
VS 5 Flip Flops \$100
Returned to FVSO \$640 for Redeposit to Checking

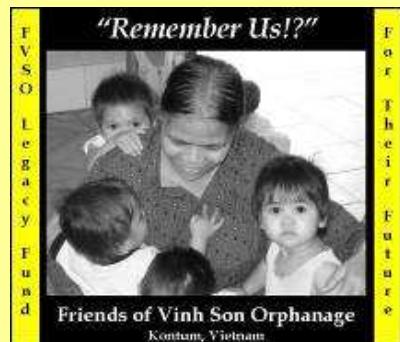
Total \$7,450



You shop. Amazon gives.

We can help you enlist new benefactors

- Board Members are available to speak at military reunions or to local civilian groups.
- Distribute copies of the monthly FVSO newsletter to your friends and interested groups. Forward the on-line versions and website information via e-mail.
- A Power Point presentation, detailing the FVSO story, is available for your use.
- Tell your personal story. Why are you a member of this team? What would you tell a potential supporter about FVSO? Your history might prompt others to reach out to the children of FVSO.



Legacy Fund Update

The goals are:

**\$1.0m by Dec 2020
\$2.0m by Dec 2025**

Total Contributions

\$649,294



Orphanage Facts

About 830 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 and St. Paul Chartres.

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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.