

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Membership Newsletter Reporting on US - Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
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Haiphong Trade Mission Visits Seattle

A delegation of Haiphong City, Vietnam officials, led by Chairman Tran Huy Nang visited Seattle in June to showcase the Dinh Vu Economic Development Zone project to interested Washington State industry representatives. The DVEZ project is a large port infrastructure and economic zone development on a peninsula near Haiphong which is being developed by a consortium including the American International Group, International Port Engineering and Management NV from Belgium, Asian Infrastructure Development, Ltd. of Thailand, and the City of Haiphong.

The nine member delegation spent the week of June 7th in Seattle and were kept busy with a combination of business-related and sightseeing activities. The Port of Seattle briefed the delegation on port facilities and hosted a harbor tour and luncheon on Monday. Seattle City Council President Sue Donaldson welcomed the group on Tuesday at a meeting hosted by the Trade

Development Alliance of Greater Seattle at which the delegation presented their project to a group of local businesses. Tuesday afternoon was spent in Tacoma with briefings at both the World Trade Center affiliate and the Port of Tacoma.

Wednesday featured a formal sister city signing ceremony between Chairman Nang and Seattle Mayor Paul Schell. Chairman Nang presented the City of Seattle with a large, four panel lacquer screen featuring Vietnamese scenes. Seattle's gift to Haiphong was a stunning carved mask donated by local renowned Haida artist Ralph Bennett. Mr. Bennett also performed an original song to commemorate the ceremony of friendship. GSVa greatly appreciates Mr. Bennett's generous donation and performance. It made the event truly unforgettable. Wednesday evening featured GSVa's "A Child's Dream" fund-raiser to benefit the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Haiphong. Mayor Schell hosted Chairman Nang and the delegation at the event and led the audience in a toast to friendship between our two cities. (See related article)

Thursday the group took the Victoria Clipper to Friday Harbor to visit a state of the art "off-grid" business park which generates its own power and treats its own waste water. Friday involved additional business meetings. GSVa hosted a farewell reception

at the airport Friday evening and the delegation departed for an east coast swing prior to returning to Vietnam.

GSVA gratefully acknowledges support from the United States Trade and Development Agency for making the visit possible.

Fund-Raiser a Great Success!

June 10th marked a Child's Dream Evening, our 2nd annual fund-raising dinner and auction. This year's event, held at Bell Harbor International Conference Center, was quite a success, raising over \$5,000 and benefiting the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Haiphong. In the coming year, we will put in motion the steps necessary to build a new playground for the orphanage children.

Numerous speakers highlighted the evening's theme. Rebecca Levison, who worked in and around Haiphong teaching English for GSVa, gave a short slide presentation and talked about her experiences in Vietnam and with the children of the Hoa Phuong Orphanage. Her slides depicted the rusty state of the orphanage's current playground.

Betty Tisdale, a Seattle resident, is known as the Angel of Saigon. She shared the podium and was able to convey the broader context of how desperate these children's lives are. She (Continued on page 2)

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What is Tet-Trung-Thu?

Tet-Trung-Thu (tet-troong-thoo), or Mid-Autumn Festival, marks the fifteenth day of the eighth month of the Oriental calendar. It is one of the two most popular Vietnamese festivals: Tet-*Nguyen-tan* (New Year's Festival) and Tet-Trung-Thu (Mid-Autumn Festival). Tet-Trung-Thu, known as the Children's Festival or Mid-Autumn Festival in Viet-Nam,

Fund-Raiser Cont'd

should know. In the 1970's she was responsible for the airlift of hundreds of orphans from an orphanage in the south. She adopted five of these orphans. Her perspective reinforced the notion that while relations between Vietnam and the US have changed dramatically since the 1970's, the orphans face many of the same problems, including lack of medical care and other basic necessities.

Another highlight of the evening was the toast between Mayor Paul Schell and Chairman Tran Huy Nang. Earlier in the day, a small gathering met in the Mayor's chambers for the official signing of the sister cityhood agreement. This toast solidified the agreement as did Mayor Schell's lighthearted offer of now being called Chairman Schell.

A special thank you to King TV's Mimi Gan, our master of ceremonies for the evening. We would also like to thank our very special guest speakers and our corporate sponsors, Key Bank, The Boeing Company, Asian Airlines, PIP Printing and Prolab. In addition a warm thank you to all who donated their products for our auction and those who volunteered their time for the evening. We couldn't have done it without you! We look forward to bringing joy into the lives of these children with the construction of a new playground and will be sure to keep you all updated on its progress.

is also celebrated in other parts of Asia in slightly different styles. There are several attractions during Tet-Trung-Thu; one of the famous activities is the "Cá hóa Rồng" lantern procession. The lantern procession in which many youth groups participate while walking with lit-up lantern masterpieces in hand is a splendid sight. "Cá hóa Rồng" — a mythical symbol which literally means "a carp that transformed itself into a dragon" refers to the hard work and accomplishments of young students.

Like other Vietnamese traditional festivals, Tet-Trung-Thu closely reflects the seasonal spirit through its unique purpose, scenery, flavors, and sounds.

PURPOSE: Tet-Trung-Thu promotes education, innovative ideas, arts and crafts, poetry, and especially affection for the young.

SCENERY: Tet-Trung-Thu presents a captivating panorama of children's lantern processions, colorful lantern shows, songs, and dances. Delightful scenes of family and friends gathering at the festival, drinking fragrant teas, reciting poetry, and talking about the arts and education abound.

FLAVORS: Tet-Trung-Thu offers the unique flavors of mid-autumn delicacies such as moon cake, lotus seed paste cake, mung bean

cake, and assorted choices of fragrant teas guaranteed to satisfy any taste.

SOUNDS: Tet-Trung-Thu provides the pleasant sounds of children's laughter, upbeat music from the "LÂN" dance drum, and distinctive children's songs that can bring a smile to anyone's face.

How did Tet-Trung-Thu start?

Tet-Trung-Thu started at the dawn of agricultural civilization in Southeast Asia, which dates back some fifteen to twenty thousand years. It has always been an important event to Vietnamese families. Over many centuries, Tet-Trung-Thu has been a special time for everyone to rejoice in the spirit of autumn. To prepare for the festival, parents usually help the children learn to make the lanterns on their own. On the night of Tet-Trung-Thu, parents light up the *Chên-Kéo-Quân* (Winding-Around-Troupe-Lantern) and wish for their children's success in school. Teenage troupes perform "LÂN" dances in local neighborhoods to compete for prizes.

When is Tet Trung Thu for GSA?

All members are invited to celebrate Tet Trung Thu with us at our annual meeting on September 30. Light dinner and drinks provided. See you there!

Vietnam to Build Three National Highway Bridges

Hanoi - Vietnam is to build three bridges on Ha Noi-Lang Son section of National Highway 1 at an estimated cost VND 143.5 billion, US \$11 million. The bridges, to be built later this year, will be financed by Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF). A contract to this effect was signed in Hanoi by the Thang Long Bridge Construction Corporation and Civil Engineering Construction 1, which won the bid to build the bridges. The Dap Cau bridge across the Cau river in Bac

Ninh province will be 296 meters long and seven meters wide, while the Bac Giang bridge across the Thuong river in Bac Giang province will be 290 meters long and seven meters wide. The Tan Thinh bridge connecting Bac Giang and Lang Son provinces will include four 66 meter long flyovers. The construction of the bridges will start in the fourth quarter of this year and expected to be completed within 21 months.

GSA Annual Meeting and Tet Trung Thu (Mid Autumn Festival)

**Wednesday, September 30th
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

Join us for this year's annual meeting as we celebrate the Mid Autumn Festival and highlight Vietnamese arts in Seattle.

- **Literary reading by noted Vietnamese author Ho Anh Thai**
- **Dance performance by the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association Dance Troupe**

Business includes the election of board members and officers for the next year.

**Light dinner and refreshments provided.
Call GSA for further information at 206.322.1178.**

**Location: Homewood Suites Hotel
206 Western Avenue West
(corner of 2nd Ave. W. and W. Thomas in Lower Queen
Anne). 206.281.9393 for directions.**

Washington State Sponsors Vietnam Mission

The Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) is currently recruiting businesses to participate in a trade and investment mission to Korea, China, and Vietnam this fall. The group will travel between October 10-23 and will visit Seoul, Korea, Weihai and Beijing, China and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Business meetings, receptions, and courtesy calls will be arranged in each city. The primary objectives of the mission are to establish business, trade and investment develop-

ment in each of these countries as well as to develop closer governmental relations. Business matchmaking will be conducted in advance to insure that appropriate business meetings are arranged for participating businesses. Approximately 35 business and governmental officials are expected to participate. The cost for the mission is \$2,600. For more information please contact Kevin Johnson of CTED at 206.389.2562 or by e-mail at Kevinj@cted.wa.gov.

GSA Board Openings

The annual meeting in September signals the start of a new year for GSA. We currently have two open seats on the board and will be electing new members at the annual meeting. If you or anyone you know is interested in serving on the board and helping to set the course of action for the organization, please call our voice mail hotline at 206.322.1178.

Haiphong Department of Education Invites GSVa for 2nd Training

The GSVa Teacher Training Program was completed in May 1998 in the Haiphong region and successfully trained 170 Vietnamese English teachers, two thirds of which were from rural areas. These 170 teachers subsequently taught English to over 50,000 students hence the impact was tremendous. The program focused on new training methods, pronunciation, and grammar and was well received by the teachers as well as the administration.

Haiphong City's Departments of Education and Foreign Affairs have invited GSVa to conduct a second training in Haiphong during the summer of 1999. During the closing ceremony of the previous training, Tran Xuan Dinh, the director of the Department of Education, urged GSVa to send

more teachers to conduct a larger program next year.

The Vietnamese value education highly. Practically all children are in school and most are learning English. Even in rural areas as far as 45 kilometers from the city center English is a mandatory subject. The English teachers in these remote areas used to be Russian teachers but recently switched to teaching English so there is a strong need for English training and practice.

The goal of the Teacher Training Program is to develop a Teacher Exchange Project whereby teachers from Haiphong would study in Seattle and Seattle area teachers would teach in Haiphong.

Fundraising for the summer

1999 Teacher Training Program is in progress. If you would like to contribute or know of possible funding sources please contact Rebecca Levison at (206) 860-8288.

Landmark Hotel Reopens In Ho Chi Minh City

Even though hotel occupancy in Ho Chi Minh City has fallen below 40% as tourism has slowed in Vietnam, the Caravelle Hotel has recently reopened after a \$65 million renovation. The facility was completely gutted for the renovation with the 10th floor lounge the only remaining familiar sight in the entire hotel. Rates are expected to be in the \$185 range. For reservations, call 800.344.1212.

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