

UPDATE

Bi-monthly Membership Newsletter Reporting on US - Vietnamese Current Events and Culture
Issue 1 January/February 1999

This month the Update is dedicated to recognizing the history and accomplishments of GSVVA, and the crucial role you, the membership, play in our ability to function as a viable organization. Your support does more than merely furnish money to an organization: It nourishes our ideas, allows us to bring our projects to fruition, and empowers us to explore new possibilities of promoting positive relationships between the peoples of Greater Seattle and Viet Nam. The Board thanks each and every one of you for contributing to the health and vitality of our organization.

Mission Statement: GSVVA is committed to promoting positive relationships and mutual understanding between the people of Greater Seattle and the people of Viet Nam. We will accomplish this by promoting contact and cooperation in the areas of education, humanitarian work, trade and the arts.

THE GREATER SEATTLE VIET NAM ASSOCIATION

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A YEAR IN RETROSPECT

by Beth Whitman

At the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association, we are very proud of what we've accomplished since the organization's inception. It wasn't long ago that a small group of us sat around the kitchen table of Norma Mohr, (past GSVVA president), drawing up by-laws and goals that would set the stage for what this sister city organization has, and continues to, accomplish. Entering into 1999, I look back at the previous year in awe at our successes.

Board member Rebecca Levison spent nine months in the Hai Phong region teaching Vietnamese teachers how to teach English as a second language. The 170 teachers that she trained then went on to train over 50,000 students, making a huge impact in both rural and urban areas.

In May, we helped host the Sai Gon Water Puppet Troupe, which performed at the Seattle International Children's Festival. Organizers of the festival noted that these performances were the most well attended of all the festivals' offerings!

In June, we hosted a delegation of Hai Phong diplomats, led by Chairman Tran Huy Nang. This distinguished group visited Seattle to showcase the Dinh Vu Economic Development Zone project, a large port infrastructure and economic development zone on a peninsula near Hai Phong. GSVVA secured a significant grant from the US Trade Development Agency which made this visit possible.

Coinciding with this high ranking visit was our annual fund-raiser, in which we raised over \$5,000 to benefit the Hoa Phuong Orphanage. This orphanage, with its run down buildings and rusting playground equipment, managed to tug on the heartstrings of the many GSVVA members who have been privileged enough to visit the site. We are excited to begin building a new playground for this group of needy children.

At September's annual meeting, we were honored with a reading by noted author Ho Anh Thai, and a dance performance by the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association. Quite a treasure for all in attendance!

How could we possibly top such a year, you ask? Well, how about with an official GSVVA visit to Viet Nam?

On March 9th, a small delegation will travel to Hai Phong to begin construction of the childrens' playground at the Hoa Phuong Orphanage. This trip will coincide with the Washington State Trade and Investment Mission to Viet Nam and the Philippines (see related article in this issue of the Update), that will visit Hai Phong on March 13th. We expect members from our Board of Directors, general membership, and members of the community to participate in this trip. We invite all interested to accompany us (we have a great airfare to offer too!) Equally important (but

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ON THE BOARD

In our last issue, you were introduced to three of our sixteen board members. This month, I'd like to introduce you to two more members.

Tyler DuLam, Treasurer

In the summer of 1979, at the age of ten, new GSVa Treasurer, Tyler-Loc DuLam immigrated from Da Lat in southern Viet Nam. Along with his parents and three older brothers, Tyler went to Hong Kong, where his family spent one year. Tyler attended a Catholic school run by nuns in Hong Kong, where he first learned English. In November 1980, the family traveled across the Pacific to the Northwest. They first settled in Beaverton, Oregon. Tyler graduated from the University of Washington in 1993. He joined GSVa in 1995 and served as Vice President from September 1996 to September 1998. Tyler is currently working at the University of Washington School of Law in the area of accounting and budgeting.



Tyler's enthusiasm for GSVa was heightened after spending approximately two weeks in Viet Nam this past August. According to Tyler, "It took about two days for it to sink in - when I realized I was home again. Seeing my old school and the city where I grew up reopened a vault of bittersweet memories. It was truly cathartic."

Al Davignon

Al is a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the oldest engineering school of higher learning in the United States. He holds a Bachelors and Masters Degree in Engineering.



Al has 20 years of experience in operations management, project management and business development in a variety of industries, including the telecommunications industry. His interest in Viet Nam began at an early age, when his father worked for US-AID and was assigned to an office in then-Sai Gon in 1957. At the age of 13, Al lived in Sai Gon for five months, but had to return home as the war escalated. He has spent a considerable amount of time in Viet Nam in the recent years and has gained valuable experience in the Vietnamese culture.

RETRO...from page 1..

not as glamorous as a trip to the Land of the Dragon), we are enthusiastically continuing with our Business Breakfast series. A partial list of upcoming speakers can be found in this issue.

The Departments of Education and Foreign Affairs in Hai Phong have invited us back to continue the teacher training program. We are hoping to send a qualified teacher back to Viet Nam this summer.

Continue to watch for our newly revamped bimonthly Update (yes, you're holding it!). Teri Conti is our new editor, as well as a new board member. Her creativity and high energy show promise that the Update will continue to be an informative, as well as a visually interesting newsletter, for the organization.

And so, having patted our own backs with our successes, we now look to you, our members and honorary members, for continued support. Through volunteer efforts, participation in our many events, and through membership donations, the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association can continue to expand on these, and other, worthwhile programs.

We are a non-profit organization, which means all donations are tax deductible. If you are a current member, thank you for your support! If you are an honorary member (you have been kept on our mailing list as a courtesy), please consider returning the membership form with a payment. Remember, we are a grassroots organization. All monies received

help tremendously in defraying costs, such as those incurred for sponsoring visiting artists and dignitaries, continuing our popular business breakfast series, as well as the more basic postage and printing needs.

**ANGEL OF SAIGON
BIGGER THAN LIFE**

by Beth Whitman

Pick up a copy of the January issue of LIFE Magazine and you'll be able to read about the heartwarming reunion of Betty Tisdale and Vikki Sloviter, one of 400 children rescued by Betty from An Lac Orphanage in Viet Nam.

LIFE brought Vikki to Betty's home in Seattle after she won a contest sponsored by the magazine. She named Betty as the person she most wanted to meet.

You might remember Betty, also known as the Angel of Sai Gon, as a speaker at the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association's June 1998 fund-raiser.

Word is that Betty is also being featured on NBC's *Dateline* and Seattle's *Evening Magazine* at the end of January. No air date was available at the time of this publication.

**WORK PARTIES,
WHO BENEFITS?**

By Daniel Goldsmith

I think that each of us has had the experience of contributing to a charity and wondering how much, if any, of that gift would reach the beneficiary we had in mind. My method of eliminating the question has been to get my hands into a project, whenever possible.

My first experience with work parties was with Habitat for Humanity, in the Dominican Republic, during the summer of 1996. Habitat helps people help themselves to build decent affordable housing. I went knowing a lot about real estate, and little about working with a group to transform a community. During long days, I enjoyed the company of people with a common goal, shared with a new community where I was readily accepted, and experienced

the pleasure of watching someone achieve their dream.

For those of us who love children, we suffer a little when one is hurt. During my visit to the orphanage in Viet Nam last fall, I was pleased to see youngsters that were healthy and loved, and alarmed to see the swing set and other playground equipment installed in asphalt. Only twenty-five years ago, we had a similar plight in the playgrounds of this country. The people at the orphanage recognize the safety concerns, and have few resources to eliminate the problem. GSVa has provided them with the vehicle to change their circumstance. Helping with our own hands has benefit beyond the obvious.

In March, we will begin to transform the playground at the orphanage in Hai Phong from an asphalt jungle to a safe jungle gym. Work parties are one of the most direct forms of giving that anyone can participate in, regardless of their skill level. While I'm not sure what our contribution will look like, it's satisfying to clean something up, plant a tree or flower, or spread shavings to cushion the fall of a playful child. And while we are working, I guarantee we will make some new friends and participate in the lives of others in a way that can give us new perspective of our own.

When hurricane Hugo came through Bahrna, D.R. last fall, I knew that those cement houses with cement roofs, that I helped build, would withstand that kind of weather. Helping with the playground won't provide comfort against the storm, but I know that the children with whom I will play and have meals with will be safe in their lives. Knowing them, and that, will make me richer for the experience, and I'll have the pleasure of giving in a way that allows me to see the benefit first hand.

(If you're interested in joining us on our trip to Hai Phong in March, contact Beth Whitman at 206-547-1016.)

GSVA would like to acknowledge the generous support by the following companies and individuals who made the building of this playground possible.

**Asiana Airlines
The Boeing Company
Seafirst Bank**

**PIP Printing
Homewood Suites Hotel, Seattle
ProLab Digital and Photographic Imaging
Chris' Excavations
Qual's Ag Lab
American President Lines
Ellen Ferguson
Sally Schultz**

BUILDING BRIDGES THROUGH TRADE

By Teri Conti

There are many ways to build bridges between people. Conflict resolution and humanitarian projects that involve participation by the parties involved are two such methods; trade missions are another. What all three methods have in common is people-to-people contact. This March, the Washington State Trade and Investment Mission to Viet Nam and the Philippines (WSTIM '99) will help to create just such a bridge.

WSTIM '99 is the third trade mission from Washington State to travel to Viet Nam. The first was led by then-Governor Mike Lowry in 1995, the first US Governor to go to Viet Nam after normalization. The second delegation visited Viet Nam last year, with additional stops in Korea and China.

This year's delegation will be led by Mr. Lowry and Mayor of Tacoma, Brian Ebersole. WSTIM '99 is being organized by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED), in partnership with the World Trade Center Tacoma, Washington-Pangasinan Sister State Association, and the Tacoma Davao Sister city Association.

The intention of the trade mission is to create working relationships between small businesses. The mission facilitates this process by scheduling meetings between US companies and those abroad that share common interests. Ideally, the end result is increased import and export of goods between the countries involved. For instance, one Washington State business that participated in last year's trade mission signed an agreement to export novelty items to Viet Nam and China for an expected revenue of \$100,000; another, more unique venture signed with Viet Nam

is shipment of geoduck, a large clam indigenous to the Pacific Northwest. Expected revenue for 1998-1999 from this deal, for this local company, is \$200,000.

Small business owners, according to Mr. Lowry, play an important role in trade development. Many small companies welcome opportunities larger businesses might shun, because bigger businesses are looking for larger projects and bigger profit margins. Small business owners also have the potential to develop more personal contact, because conversations are occurring between people, rather than departments. Mr. Lowry sees this as an important contribution to building bridges, because, he states, "when we're talking, we're not fighting."

Mayor Ebersole attended both the 1995 and 1998 trade missions. His long term vision is to have Tacoma become known as an international city. His goals for this particular mission include helping Vietnamese-Americans strengthen their ties with businesses in Viet Nam, and helping Vietnamese, and other ethnic populations living in Tacoma, to become involved in the civic life of the community. The trade mission thus has the potential to build bridges locally, as well as internationally.

One businessman who attended the first two trade missions and who will be participating in this year's trip is Billy Johnson, a Vietnamese-American from Tacoma. Mr. Johnson has an interest in politics, as well as business (he was the first Vietnamese-American to run for the state legislature in last year's elections), and firmly believes trade missions are the key to business development. He finds making contacts with government officials and connecting with business people who share common interests two valuable reasons to attend. While his personal interest is property development, he believes the trade mission provides opportunities to network for other people as well. For instance, he sees himself as a possible link for people with common interests who were unable to attend the trade mission themselves.

Kevin Johnson, program manager for WSTIM '99 expects representatives from

approximately 25 Washington State businesses to participate in this year's mission. The group is scheduled to leave Seattle on March 6. Their first stop will be Ho Chi Minh City, where they will remain until March 18th. An offshoot of this group will spend part of the time in Ha Noi and will then venture on to Hai Phong to join GSA in the ground breaking ceremony for the playground at the Hoa Phoung Orphanage. Mike Lowry will be among those attending the ceremony on March 13th. The delegation will then travel on to the Philippines, where they will remain until March 21.

If you'd like more information about the trade mission, contact Kevin Johnson at 206-956-3135 or email him at: Kevinj@acted.wa.gov

CENTRAL AREA FOOD BANK SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

By Teri Conti

St. Mary's food bank, located in Seattle's central district, is the only one of its kind in King County. What makes it so unique isn't the fact that it serves 600-700 people every week and draws people from outside its local neighborhood, though that certainly contributes to its appeal. What truly distinguishes it from other food banks in King County is that it's the only one to offer services to its clientele on Sundays. For some families, that type of availability can make the difference between whether there is enough food on the table that week or not.

St. Mary's food bank opened its doors in the late 1940's, as part of the church. By the 1960's, however, the food bank had grown to such proportion that the church could no longer afford to fund it. It has continued to expand, and now fills the entire basement of the rectory. It's funded by both the City of Seattle and private donors. St. Mary's serves a diverse population, with a large portion of its clientele being Vietnamese. No one is ever turned away, regardless of need, or where in the city they live.

The food bank is currently in search of volunteers. Hours are flexible, and the

work provides a wonderful opportunity to not only to be of service, but to receive the joy that comes from seeing the faces of the people you serve. If you have time and would like to volunteer, please call Brendon Cummings at 324-7100, Ext. 22.

Food bank hours are Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10a.m.-3p.m., Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., and Sunday from 12p.m.-4p.m. The food bank's office is opened Monday through Friday 9a.m. to 5 p.m. It's located at 611 20th Avenue So., Seattle, WA 98144

Financial contributions and food donations are also most welcomed.



by Matt Mormino

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THEIR FIRST TRIP TO VIET NAM

Thirty years have passed since the United States began its pull-out from the war in Viet Nam. On February 12, a group of approximately fourteen goodwill high school students from Eastlake and Mercer Island High Schools, and seven teacher and parent chaperones, will journey to Viet Nam with nothing but love in their hearts.

Land mines and agent orange are a constant threat to the safety of Vietnamese children. Along with that threat, many of these children come from families who cannot afford to send them to school, and therefore, have little chance of improving their lives. (The average Vietnamese family earns just \$200 a year, putting education out of reach for most families.) The students, parents, and teachers embarking on this journey are seeking the opportunity to aide these suffering children. They are trying to sponsor 100 Vietnamese children who see, everyday, the anguish of a war they have only talked about.

I am personally embarking on this trip for several reasons. For one thing, I feel like my efforts will provide opportunities for these children that they would have

trouble getting otherwise. Two, I simply love kids, any kids. Three, I think that seeing Viet Nam first hand will make everything I have learned a reality. It will not just be some picture in a textbook anymore, it will be a real place. I am extremely excited to go, and look forward to helping these children receive education they might not otherwise get.

A year of schooling costs \$50, so these American students will need to raise \$1000 to reach their goal. If you would like to contribute to their efforts, checks can be made out to: "Washington Cultural Exchange - Education Fund" (a non-profit corporation registered in WA state), and mailed to: Mary Lindquist, Mercer Island High School, 9100 SE 42nd St., Mercer Island, WA 98040.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GSA

By Gary Johnson

It has been more than six years since the Seattle chapter of CARE sponsored an international development seminar series on Viet Nam. Peter Blomquist, then CARE's regional director, invited seminar participants to a series of meetings to gauge interest in forming an ongoing organization for people interested in Viet Nam. Interest was, in fact, keen and in December of 1992 the group adopted the name Puget Sound Viet Nam Association and stated that it's goal was to pursue a variety of programs for seeking friendship, alliances, and reconciliation with the people of Viet Nam. The first objective, agreed upon unanimously, was to seek a sister city alliance in Viet Nam. Founders represented diverse interests, including business, education, health, and human services.

A number of cities were considered as possible sister candidates, and after much consideration, Ho Chi Minh City was identified as the top choice. President Gordon Duncan traveled to HCMC and found city officials there warm to the idea. He brought back word, however, that the Vietnamese found the "Puget Sound" part of the organization's name confusing and the group formally changed the name to the

Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association.

In 1994, members began traveling to Viet Nam under the auspices of the organization to make contacts and begin to develop ideas for projects. Norma Mohr and Dr. Hjordis Foy traveled to HCMC, Ha Noi, and Hai Phong, where they gave presentations on health care related topics. GSVa began its business breakfast series during this period.

In May of 1994, vice president Sinh Nguyen's life was threatened in a local Vietnamese language newspaper. While the group had known that right wing elements in the local Vietnamese-American community opposed the group's philosophy of contact and engagement with Viet Nam, the death threat was a sobering event. Sinh was an early advocate of normalized relations with Viet Nam and became a lightning rod for anti-Communist rhetoric. The board published a statement supporting Sinh and pledged that GSVa would maintain its non-political character and refrain from changing its mission and goals in response to challenges from disruptive individuals or groups who opposed links with Viet Nam.

Later in May, GSVa co-sponsored a three part literary program called "Voices of Reconciliation" with the Seattle Public Library. It was about this time that we learned HCMC had entered into formal sister city relations with San Francisco.

The next year was a period of highs and lows for the organization. A number of key early members moved away from Seattle. The right wing group demonstrated at GSVa sponsored events. But the organization continued to grow and became involved in a number of Viet Nam related activities with the University of Washington, the Seattle Public Library, and other organizations. Social activities were held for the general membership, and the group held public meetings where guests, such as then Seattle City Council President Jim Street, gave presentations on Seattle-Viet Nam connections.

In early 1995, Update was first published. Tyler DuLam, GSVa's current treasurer,

was the first editor. The newsletter proved to be a valuable tool for connecting people in the region with various interests and projects in Viet Nam. About this time, new members helped to spark a renewed effort to formalize a sister city relationship. Discussions were held as to which city in Viet Nam was a likely match, now that HCMC was no longer a possibility. About this time, a local civil engineer returned from Hai Phong, where he had met with city officials in hopes of securing work for his company in port redevelopment work there. He asked them about interest in a sister city relationship with Seattle. In Seattle, at a GSVa general meeting, a number of cities were suggested. Members, Joyce Noonan and Gary Johnson, analyzed these cities relative to criteria provided by the City of Seattle's Office of Intergovernmental Relations, which administers the sister city program. It became apparent that the most important element was the city should be a major port. Da Nang and Hai Phong seemed to fit the bill best. Hai Phong city officials began to express strong support for sister relationship. The organization had no contact with Da Nang at all. A series of faxes back and forth with Hai Phong's city leaders strengthened the relationship.

Meanwhile, members explored the political climate in Seattle. Opposition from Viet Nam veterans groups, and the local Vietnamese-American community, had, to a large extent, dissipated. Many Vietnamese-American families were traveling regularly back to Viet Nam by this time, and most Viet Nam vets groups were gone. In 1995, President Clinton lifted the embargo against Viet Nam, and later restored full diplomatic relations between our two countries. Pete Peterson was subsequently named ambassador.

In September of 1995, GSVa President, Norma Mohr, joined Jim Street in accompanying Governor Mike Lowry, as he became the first US governor to visit Viet Nam in decades. Mr. Street and Ms. Mohr traveled to Hai Phong and negotiated a memorandum of understanding with Hai Phong officials, which became a precursor to a formal sister city relationship.

On September 30, 1995, the Seattle City Council passed a resolution declaring Hai Phong Seattle's 20th sister city. In October, GSVa President Gary Johnson joined Seattle City Council President Sue Donaldson, and GSVa Advisory Committee member and Seafirst Senior Vice President, Bill Glassford, in a trip to Hai Phong, where a sister agreement was signed. In June of this year, Hai Phong People's Committee Chairman, Tran Huy Nang, led a delegation to Seattle and signed a second formal agreement with Mayor Paul Schell.

LIBRARY PRESERVATION PROJECT CONTINUES IN HA NOI

Judith Henchy is project director for a library preservation project being carried out at the National Library of Viet Nam in Ha Noi. She was awarded a grant from the Henry Luce Foundation in the amount of \$180,000 in 1994, which is administered by the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago on behalf of the Southeast Asia Microforms Project, of which Judith is the national chairperson. An additional sum of \$35,000, contributed by the Harvard-Yenching Institute purchased a 35mm microfilming camera for the National Library. The Luce Foundation funds supported the purchase of other filming and processing equipment, library preservation materials, and a series of technical training workshops which took place in 1995. The project, which is the first international effort of its kind since the end of the Viet Nam War, is filming a range of historical materials, including newspapers and serials dating from the early twentieth century, published in the modern romanized Vietnamese script, quoc ngu. To date, some 80 reels of film have been deposited at the Center for Research Libraries, for use by US researchers.

Judith has spent time in Viet Nam working on the project annually since 1995, including a period of three months in the summer of 1997. Last summer, she or-

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ganized a panel at the first International Viet Nam Studies Conference in Ha Noi on the issues of preservation of library and archives resources. This year, Judith is planning a meeting in conjunction with the International Federation of Library Associations, meeting in Bangkok to highlight the urgent issues of cultural preservation in the libraries and archives of many Southeast Asian countries, such as Viet

Nam, where climatic and storage conditions are non-conducive to long term preservation of the important cultural resources of the nations.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Wednesday, February 17th: "The Asia Financial Crisis: What Lessons Have We Learned?" Karma G. Hadjimichalakis, Senior Lecturer, Finance and Business Economics, School of Business.

Location: Walker-Ames Room, Kane Hall, University of Washington Campus.

Cost: \$22, includes dinner. **Deadline for registration is one week prior to lecture.** For more information, call (206) 543-1816 or email ellsefox@u.washington.edu

Membership Benefits

- Receive our bimonthly newsletter, Update, to stay informed about happenings here, and abroad, regarding issues pertaining to Viet Nam.
- Stay informed about our popular Business Breakfast Series, where guest speakers share their experiences of working with, and in, Viet Nam.
- Attend events like video showings and barbecues with people interested in Viet Nam.
- Get involved with opportunities to learn about, and contribute to, projects with our sister city, Hai Phong.
- Your membership contribution helps the organization continue with these, and other projects, AND is tax deductible.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

Individual member: Student/low income...\$10

Friend of the Association....\$25 Philanthropist....\$100

Corporate member: Associate partner....\$100

Senior partner.....\$500 Executive partner.....\$1,000

Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

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Type of Membership _____ Amount Enclosed _____

THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION



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