

# HUMANITOURS®

A Project In Partnership With



Greater Seattle  
Viet Nam Association



ROTARY CLUB  
of the  
University District of Seattle

Kids Without  
Borders



KIDS WITHOUT BORDERS

## HUMANITOURS VIET NAM 2003

My first thought when we landed at Seatac ... *whew!* I got everyone home safe from our journey.

Our trip started out with an unexpected stop in Hong Kong. We were late getting in to Taipei due to our delayed departure from Seattle, due to a power outage at Seatac in the middle of the night, and we missed our flight in Taipei to Hanoi.

Our group of 15 travelers spent a total of twelve days in Viet Nam. We arrived in Viet Nam with 30 pieces of checked luggage, each weighting almost 70 pounds. Prior to our trip, we collected toys, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap and shampoo, and first aid supplies. We carried computers donated by Digital Partners and Microsoft, new children's clothes from Kids Without Borders, school supplies and letters from elementary students from our state of Washington. We used a 35-passenger bus to move our group around because of our luggage, and on several occasions we barely had enough room for ourselves.



Children with new safety helmets provided by KWB

In Hanoi, we provided over one hundred children's safety helmets to kindergarten students at the Hoa Mi School. Rotary clubs from the Seattle area and Kids Without Borders have supported the 'Helmets for Kids' program of the Asia Injury Prevention Foundation and

this is the third school at which we provided helmet scholarships for the students. We were greeted with songs from the kids, lessons about the danger of head injury, and how they could prevent serious injury by wearing their new helmets.

Next we joined the Wheelchair Foundation and VNHelp (both are nonprofit organizations based in California) at a wheelchair distribution in a small commune just outside of Hanoi. A total of 1,500 new wheelchairs were distributed during this trip, a collaborated effort by the Wheelchair Foundation, VNHelp, Pro Sports Club and the hardwork of Mike Shimizu, board member of Kids Without Borders.



Dick and Karen Knight helped a disabled elderly woman into her new wheelchair

People of all ages and with different types of disabilities came to claim their wheelchairs at the community center. If one could see the expression on some of the faces of these wheelchair recipients, when they replaced their wooden homemade crutches or crawling boards with their own wheelchairs. Mixed with tears were big smiles when they experienced for the first time the ability to move around on their own and to be at the same level as others instead of looking up from the ground.

The next morning we went to pick up 16 wheelchairs, and it took a little teamwork to fit all of them on our bus. We arrived at the Thanh Xuan Peace Village, a rehabilitation center where over 100 disabled children from 3 to 18 years old lived. After we unpacked and assembled the wheelchairs, the children got on them and without any training they showed us how they maneuvered themselves around the

playground. In addition to the wheelchairs, we left our donation of new clothes, and dental care supplies.



Leo Johnson of Everett and his new friend with her new wheelchair at the Thanh Xuan Peace Village for disabled children victimized by Agent Orange

Our next working day was at the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Hai Phong, Seattle's Sister City. We brought along 9 wheelchairs, a computer, new clothes, backpacks full of school supplies, toys, sports equipment, dental care and hygiene supplies, and school scholarships. The morning before we arrived, the children went to the market to buy food and they prepared a sumptuous lunch reception for our group. We spent the afternoon visiting their living quarters, and some of us engaged in soccer and basketball games with the kids. As always saying goodbye was not easy, since the kids made such a great impression on us in such a short amount of time.



Team KWB Robin Gantous and Mo, one of the children who lived in the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Hai Phong

After spending some R&R time in Ha Long Bay, one of the World Heritage designated

sites, we headed to the central region of Viet Nam. After we arrived in Hue, we visited the landmine programs located in the city of Dong Ha by a Seattle-based non-governmental organization (NGO) named Clear Path International. As we traveled to visit the former DMZ (de-militarized zone) and the battle fields in Khe Sanh, we made quick stops and gave out gifts to hundreds of children along the side of the road. These children are from the hilltribe



*Christina Shimizu and Carleigh McPherson (bottom row) with the children of the Hoa Phuong Orphanage in Hai Phong*

villages in this remote area of Viet Nam, one of the poorest and most impoverished area of the country. Before we departed Hue, we visited a small school built by VNHelp in a remote village, and a kindergarten school run by a group of Buddhist nuns. It was monsoon season in the central area of Viet Nam and many of the areas we traveled through already started to flood with the heavy rains and the overflowing rivers and canals. The next morning when we arrived in Saigon, we learned that the flooding water claimed up to 10 lives and approximately 45 people were missing. It was only the beginning of the floods, with a major tropical storm just off the coast of Hue.



*Ellen Ferguson of the Rotary Club of the University District of Seattle, with a disabled child in his new wheelchair*

Our very first event in Saigon was an early morning wheelchair distribution event at the City's Exhibition Center. As our vans pulled up to the gate of the Center, we watched a middle-aged woman without legs making her way through the entrance of the Center by moving her body with two homemade wooden stools. Remarkably she moved swiftly and quickly by shifting her body from one stool to the other to move forward. This woman was one of hundreds of physically disabled people lucky enough to be selected as recipients of the new wheelchairs. After a lengthy program organized

by various donors and government officials, each of us helped carry selected recipients and placed them on their new wheelchairs. It was quite emotional for all of us as well as for the recipients, as we could not hold back our tears and neither could these people. Most likely, for the very first time, these disabled individuals were touched and hugged by strangers instead



*Team KWB Mike and Alex Shimizu with the children from the Go Vap Orphanage*  
of being avoided. Then we surprised everyone when each of us handed to each of the recipients the beautiful flower bouquets presented to us during the earlier ceremony. It was a fitting gesture as we wanted to share with them their joy for getting their own mobility.



*(From Left) Dick Duffy of the Rotary Club of Mt. Vernon, Son Michael Pham, Dick Knight of Pro Sports Club Bellevue, and Mike Shimizu: presenting new stainless steel cribs donated by KWB to the Go Vap Orphanage*

The final mission of our trip was our visit to the Go Vap Orphanage in Saigon. The children anticipated our arrival with great anxiety as they knew we would never come empty handed. We unloaded our bus with bags of toys, candies, new clothes, dental care and hygiene supplies, medical supplies, and a computer. We presented our donations to the orphanage staff and children. And we made a special presentation of a framed plaque to the Director of the Orphanage and to one of the orphans. Thanh Thanh is a ten years old girl, whose photo was featured on the front cover of the September Rotarian magazine. She used to be a shy girl, but now she is much more outgoing after she learned that millions of people around the world saw her picture. Thanh Thanh is no longer just an orphan in an orphanage located in one of the poorest areas in Saigon, she is WORLD FAMOUS.

The hardest part of this entire trip was when we visited the babies in the sick ward in this orphanage. Near 90 babies from newborn up to 3 years old are kept in this area. Most are suffering from life-threatening illnesses such as hydrocephalus to heart problems. With some advanced knowledge, our group arranged to purchase a small number of stainless steel cribs to replace some of the rusted and paint chipped smaller cribs.

Then came the highlight of our visit, a trip to the city with a group of the orphans. Our group and a group of 20 kids changed into our group uniforms, logo blue t-shirts from the Pro Sports Club of Bellevue. We jammed everyone in our bus and headed to downtown for a lunch buffet. Then the kids were taken to our hotel for an afternoon nap. Most spent time exploring everything they saw, such as the television remote control, the in-room bar, hairdryer, elevator, ... Next we went shopping at one of the most luxurious shopping centers in the city. We started with spending an hour in the game room playing electronic games and rides. After ice cream, each kid was allowed to pick out one set of new clothes and a toy. Finally, time to bid farewell and then came the hugs, kisses and tears.

What a great team we had on this trip. One came from as far away as Florida, and our ages ranged from 17 years old to over 80 years young. We worked for months collecting school supplies, toys, and sports equipment. We begged our dentists for donations of toothpaste and toothbrushes. We met at late hours to pack clothes and medical supplies. Without the funds raised by the Rotary Clubs of the Mt. Vernon, Camano Island, and Sedro Wolley area, the Rotary Club of the University District Seattle, Pro Sports Club of Bellevue, the Wheelchair Foundation, and VNHelp, 1,500 disabled persons in Viet Nam would still be crawling today.



*Rotarians Tom Allen and Dave Behring loading new wheelchairs*

There are many other wonderful touching memories during the trip, many stories to tell. We all came to Viet Nam with different expectations, and somewhat similar goals and purposes. We wanted to experience the country, the culture, the people, and the children. We wanted to experience the reward of making differences to lives of strangers. In the process, we learned about forgiveness, endurance, and persevere.

*By Son Michael Pham*

## HUMANITOURISM

By Dave Dean

### Some of our new friends:

~ Nhan Khan: Nhan was born in 1995 in Ben Tre Province, in the Mekong area. He was paralyzed at birth and had no use for both of her legs. Her parents sell food at the market, and earn an average of 20,000 Viet Nam dong a day (equal to US\$1.35). Nhan has three brothers and they take turn carrying him on their back to school daily. His brothers also help the parents selling food at the market. Nhan wanted to be able to move around on his own and not a burden any longer to his parents and brothers. Nhan received a new wheelchair in Saigon on November 13, 2003.

~ Vo Thanh Tong: 16 years old from Cho Gao in Tien Giang Province. Trong's father sells lottery tickets, and his mother is a housemaid. He dreamed of getting a wheelchair so that he can use it to sell lottery tickets and help his parents with additional income. Trong received a new wheelchair in Saigon on November 13, 2003.

~ Phan Kim Thuy: 23 years old from Uy No Commune. Thuy is paralyzed and a down-syndrome survivor. Her mother has traveled on bicycle more than 17 miles every Sunday to the Cathedral in Hanoi to pray for a miracle, that her daughter would gain some mobility. Her mother felt that her prayers were answered when Thuy was given a new wheelchair on November 6, 2003.

~ Nguyen Tran Phuong Thanh: one of the twin sisters at the Go Vap Orphanage in Saigon. She was born in 1994, and survived polio but lost the use of both of her legs. She and her twin sister would travel to school by cyclo (rickshaw). Both of these girls came to the orphanage when they were four years old. Thanh received her own wheelchair on November 15, 2003 and now her sister can take her out for walk to the nearby market. At school, the two girls can join other kids out on the playground during recess.



Son Michael Pham with the twin orphans from the Go Vap Orphanage, and the new wheelchair for Phuong Thanh, a polio victim.

An idea that could both raise funds for GSVA and greatly expand awareness of humanitarian needs in Viet Nam: What if people had the chance to not only see Viet Nam as tourists, but also to participate in humanitarian projects? What if we called this concept "Humanitourism?"

A few of us tested the idea last November. We called the trip HumaniTour 2001. It began with delivering 40 shunts to a doctor in Hanoi. These shunts are metal tubes used to relieve cranial swelling in babies afflicted by hydrocephalus, a disease that seems fairly widespread in Viet Nam. Shunts are expensive, and getting 40 of them donated to GSVA was quite a coup.



Dave Dean speaking at the Helmets For Kids scholarship ceremony in Hanoi during the HumaniTour November 2002

We visited a center for disabled children and the aged in the Ba Vi District of Ha Tay Province southwest of Hanoi, giving the children much-needed blankets and sleeping mats, as well as treats.

In Ho Chi Minh City we spent a good deal of time with the children of Go Vap orphanage, where GSVA provides funding for teaching English to the older children one day a week. We had a ball taking the 11 children of the English class on a field trip and helping them develop their English skills. And, in return, the kids taught me how to count to 10 in Vietnamese.

Then we went far south to the Bac Lieu Province to meet with Father Peter Chanh, a parish priest in a small village near Bac Lieu town. The soccer balls, volleyballs, clothes, candy and toys we brought were great hits.

The HumaniTour Concept work will succeed because people like to help, there is great interest in Viet Nam, and the tour enables a person to be a tourist while contributing to the welfare of people in need. It gives the traveler the opportunity to interact with Vietnamese children,

teachers, caretakers and others on a personal level.

With the HumaniTour concept, tourist will get to know people of all ages in Viet Nam in a much more personal way. And, if they wish, they can make small contribution in time, money or effort that will make a big difference in many people's lives.

*This article was printed in TRANSPORT, a publication by the Port of Seattle, written by Dave Dean, General Manager of Economic & Trade Development for the Port and Board Member of the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association..*



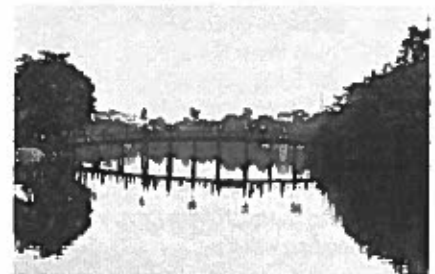
Rotarian Marty Lindemann and some of the street children in Saigon - HumaniTour 2002



Rotarian Ed Sider and the orphans from Go Vap on a field trip - HumaniTour 2002



Rotarian Kay Rodriguez and her new friend at the Go Vap Orphanage - HumaniTour 2002



Lake Hoan Kiem in Hanoi

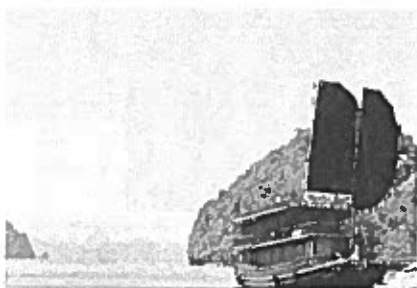
# HUMANITOUR 2004

Scheduled from November 4 through November 17, 2004.



**ABOUT HUMANITOURS:** A once a lifetime opportunity to go on a vacation, and at the same time make small differences in many people's lives. The HumaniTour will offer unique time to experience the glorious sense of peace, the magnificence of a culture, the simplicity and natural flow of daily life, and the irresistible cuisine of Viet Nam. It will also bring you the opportunity to witness humanitarian projects throughout the country by many international service organizations and agencies including Rotary International, the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association (GSVA), and Kids Without Borders (KWB). Started in 2001, the HumaniTours is an unique concept combining *tourism* and *humanitarianism*.

**TOURISM:** Walk through the outdoor market where ginger and lemongrass fill the air ... among street vendors hawking snacks ... sail a dragon boat on the Perfume River ... wave at women in conical hats on the golden rice paddy or a child on the back of a water buffalo ... cruise among the 3,000 islets of Ha Long Bay, one of the World's Wonders ... ride on a cyclo (rickshaw) through Hanoi's charming Old Quarter or the bustling streets of Saigon ...



*Boating in Ha Long Bay*

Some of our main stops: Hanoi, once known as the "Paris of the East"; the wonders of Ha Long Bay, the World Heritage Site famous for its natural beauty, its bio-diversity, and its cultural and historic significance; the ancient city of Hue, also a World Heritage Site; and Saigon (officially named as Ho Chi Minh City), a vibrant metropolis teeming with life.

**HUMANITARIANISM:** You will have several opportunities to participate in delivery donations of gifts or goods to people along our stops. Some of our stops:

- ↓ Thanh Xuan Peace Village in Hanoi: home of hundreds of disabled children, victimized by 'Agent Orange' left from the war.
- ↓ The Hoa Sua School for Disadvantaged Youth in Hanoi, where street children receive vocational training funded by UNICEF in partnership with many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foreign-owned private corporations.
- ↓ The 'Helmets for Kids' program in Hanoi by U.S.-based Asia Injury Prevention Foundation.
- ↓ Hoa Phuong Orphanage located in Hai Phong, Seattle's Sister City.
- ↓ Landmine programs operated by several Seattle-based NGOs in the DMZ/Quang Tri Province.
- ↓ The clean water project by GSVA in the Vay Village in Dong Ha.
- ↓ The 'Teaching English Program' for orphans.
- ↓ The Go Vap Orphanage in Saigon.



*10 year-old Thanh Thanh from the Go Vap Orphanage became WORLD FAMOUS when her photo was featured on the cover of the September 2003 issue of the Rotarian magazine.*

## ITINERARY SUMMARY:

- ↓ Depart Seattle for Hanoi on November 4, 2004.
- ↓ Visit Hanoi, Hai Phong, Ha Long City, Ha Long Bay, Hue, the DMZ, and Saigon. Optional: the Mekong Delta.
- ↓ Depart Saigon on November 17, 2004 and arrive in Seattle on the same day.

For additional information and reservation, contact Son Michael Pham at 425-868-5284 or write to [info@humanitours.org](mailto:info@humanitours.org).

## Travel + Leisure September 2003 Issue

### SO, HAVE YOU BEEN YET?

You have no idea what you are missing. After years of false starts, Vietnam is finally having its moment, thanks to a new generation of entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, designers, club owners, and artists – many born after the war. This is no longer the hermetic nation of a generation ago: two-thirds of the population is under 30 and eager to engage the world at large. The country is still nominally Communist, and its leaders remain socially conservative. But young Vietnamese are enthusiastically absorbing and remixing global culture.

Foreign arrivals in 2002 shattered all previous records, while bookings on Vietnam Airlines rose by 80 percent – even as terrorism concerns cut into travel elsewhere. Indeed, post-9/11 anxiety played a part in the country's surging popularity. "Vietnam, poor, but orderly, is now tourists' safe haven," declared the New York Times in January. Almost 30 years after the war, Viet Nam was being touted as the safest place in Asia, owing to its stable population, effective security, and negligible crime rate. Luxury hotels were booked solid, and developers were seizing the day: Sheraton opened its first property in HCMC this spring, while the much delayed Park Hyatt resumed construction up the street. Restaurants and boutiques sprang up in newly trendy neighborhoods. A gleaming airport terminal opened in Hanoi, with passenger Jetways (no more trudging across the 98-degree tarmac) and actual air-conditioning. After a fitful decade, Vietnam was last enjoying a legitimate boom.

Why such intense interest? Because Vietnam teeters giddily between fast (Saigon nightclubs) and slow (bicycle rickshaws); traditional (silk ao dai tunics) and cutting-edge (fur and vinyl ao dai tunics); exotic (barbecued goat nipples?) and familiar ("You from L.A.? My cousin's from L.A.!").

Add to the mix one of the world's great cuisines, stylish boutiques, inviting resorts, and a buzzing nightlife. Moreover, Vietnam is surprisingly accessible now: English is spoken everywhere, prices are low, and there's more to see and do than you can possibly imagine.

SO, WHEN ARE YOU GOING?

*Reported by Peter Jon Lindberg*

