

The Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association



UPDATE UPDATE

Summer 2004

Winner of
2000
Seattle's Sister Cities
Award

Seattle - Hai Phong Sister City

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Breaking the Poverty Cycle for Orphans in Viet Nam

Dave Dean

The plight of orphans in Vietnam and throughout the developing world is truly heart rending. Abandoned, often diseased, shunned by society, and kept alive through the most meager of government programs, these children grow up with virtually no hope for the future. In Vietnam, when government support ends at age 18, the children typically turn to the street for a livelihood and are often preyed upon by the worst elements of society. A few lucky ones are hired back into the orphanage to work with the endless stream of children coming through the doors. These children have almost no chance to experience the support of family and to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Breaking the cycle of poverty is the paramount goal of the "Teaching English" program in Saigon by the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association. Supported by private donations and grants from the Rotary Club of the University District Seattle and Microsoft Matching Gift Program, this program at Go Vap Orphanage is beginning to show stunning results. The program has been in effect for four years, when I first discovered this special orphanage. Up to 20 students were selected to receive English language training on Sundays and to interact with participants from the Humanitours that have been visiting Go Vap for the past three years. These lucky orphans commit to a great deal of extra work outside of their regular school lessons and orphanage chores. The payoff is that even rudimentary English skills give them an opportunity to get a decent job. Achieving some capability in English and interacting with Humanitour visitors also gives them an important boost in self-

confidence so essential to breaking the poverty cycle.

Two of our Teaching English graduates are on their way to independence and a new life as part of mainstream society in Vietnam. Little Linh was found begging in the street for herself and her two little brothers and a sister in 1995. She was 10 and the youngest brother an infant. All abandoned, they had no food, the youngest brother was naked, Little Linh and her siblings dressed in rags. A Vietnamese newspaper reporter found the kids and took them to Go Vap Orphanage. Little Linh was always a hard worker and was selected to be in the first Teaching English class. Last fall, she was accepted to the Culinary Training School and she is now working at the Que Huong Restaurant in the Liberty Hotel in Saigon where she is doing well working with co-workers, managers, and customers. Her English capability opened the door to that job.

Nam, a young man of 19 spent most of his life at Go Vap Orphanage. Treated shabbily by school system he attended, he was rebellious and frustrated during his early teen years. Another of the students in the first Teaching English class, Nam applied himself to English more assiduously than any of the other students. Again his hard work paid off. He was hired as an apprentice to a hotel chef of the Equatorial Hotel, a luxury five-diamond hotel in Saigon, and has become a fabulous cook. After he completed his training, Nam led the opening team for a new restaurant in Vung Tau, a resort city near Saigon. Without his English language capability, Nam would never

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Breaking the Poverty ...

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have been considered for an apprenticeship in Saigon and would have had no chance to be in management in his field.

By the yardstick of orphans in Vietnam, Linh's and Nam's achievements are enormous. Our modest Teaching English program is breaking the poverty cycle for orphans in Vietnam one child at a time. When one considers the vast number of orphans in Vietnam, the task seems hopeless. But when you see the pride in Linh's and Nam's eyes after years of despair, the effort to build these programs is totally justified.

Through the efforts of board President Son Michael Pham, GSVa plans to expand the Teaching English program to at least two other orphanages in the next couple of years. Equally important, we need to find the resources to begin vocational training for orphans in addition to the English classes. Kids Without Borders began to collaborate with GSVa providing vocational training to the students of the English classes through the 'Teach Me To Fish' program. Through extraordinary effort by a board member of KWB, Mike Shimizu, Kids Without Borders has received generous contributions from Pro Sports Club of Bellevue as well as individuals to support the 'Teach Me To Fish' program. Another program by KWB arrange for volunteers around the world to donate their time at orphanages such as Go Vap, working with all of the children, from the babies with life-threatening illnesses, the disabled orphans, or the kids in the 'Teach Me To Fish' program.

The Teaching English program at Go Vap costs about \$2,000 per year, and vocational training costs approximately \$300 a year per kid. Similar program can be implemented in other orphanages at about the same cost. KWB goal is to expand these kinds of programs to include children in need in other developing countries.

We urge any of you who can to join the upcoming Humanitour, see the programs in action, meet the kids involved, share a bit of your time and knowledge with them, and do what you can to keep the programs healthy. Or you can contribute to the programs and help us continuing our work.

Changing the world one life at a time is a great way to spend a part of your life.

** To learn more about Kids Without Borders, please visit www.kidswithnoborders.org.

Clean Water Project

Dick Hunter

The 102 Bru Van Kieu mountain people of Vay Village, Lang Vei, Huong Hua District, and Quang Tri Province in Central Vietnam today have safe water. This village, which has 35 children in it, is just off of Vietnam route 9, 3 miles from Laos. Route 9 stretches some 45 miles from the coastal plane at Dong Ha to the Laos border. The area is mountainous with banana tree groves and rice fields. It is very near to Khe Sanh and the old DMZ. These very small in stature and very poor mountain people who have lived in this area for thousands of years are friendly, polite, humorous, and gregarious. They live in mostly one room thatched huts built on stilts. Their only source of income is selling bananas along the road.

On June 19th, Richard Hunter, GSVa board member, and his wife Saunie attended the dedication ceremony of the safe water system in the village which was finished in May, along with the villagers, officials of the village, the Tan Long Commune, and the Research and Training Center for Community Development. The dedication was held in the village community hut using the Bru, Vietnamese and English languages. The project had started in September 2003.

In the past the woman of the village would have to walk down a very steep sloping bank to get water from the river. The river is downstream from several villages and very polluted. During the rainy season the slope becomes very slippery and very dangerous. GSVa along with several individuals managed and financed the new safe water project using the Central Vietnam Development Center as local project manager. The villagers organized a management committee, which was trained to manage this project, and future projects as well. This training was important for the villager's future as the benefits go beyond the safe water. "You give a man a fish and he eats for a day, but teach him to fish and he eats for a life time." The villagers provided most of the labor for the project and feel a sense of ownership and pride.

The water system is a continuous gravity flow system coming from a newly installed small dam, 1 kilometer up the mountain up stream past other villages and piped into four tanks

strategically located in the village, a common system in Vietnam. The water is readily available for all uses including bathing and hygiene.

"The benefits of this new safe water system are many fold," said Richard Hunter. "The safe water is obvious but also the villagers learned how to manage projects, have pride and ownership, and will do more bathing and have better hygiene."



Bru Children in the Vay Village



Dam built to bring clean water to the Vay Village



Saunie and Dick Hunter with the Village Official at the dedication ceremony in June 2004

Note: GSVa Board Member will participate in the HumniTour November 2004. HumniTour team members will visit the Vay Village with gifts to the children, and tour the new water system.

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## Can Tho Orphanage

January 2004, my husband, Paul, my 6 year old nephew, Peter, and I took a 3 week trip to Viet Nam and spent our time visiting family as well as many wonderful days with the needy children of the Can Tho Orphanage. 82 children live in this little orphanage with more than half of them mentally and/or physically handicapped. Chances for adoption is very slim for these little ones; what makes it worse is the borders for adoption out of Viet Nam to the United States is currently closed. Paul and I yearn to bring home a Vietnamese child, but we must continue to wait for the agreement to be signed between the two countries. The children in this orphanage get 2 meals a day, mainly a bowl of white rice and few morsels of chicken or some kind of meat. Vegetables and fruits too expensive, so it is never a part of their meals. They are a family unit; the older kids taking care of the younger ones. Feeding, changing, daily needs as well as give each other rides on their rickety bikes to school and back home again.

MannaRelief and GSVa teamed up to provide these fragile children with almost \$16K worth of glyconutrients to feed these children. We also bought 6 new full size beds with rail guards for the older disabled children. In early February, Sister Danielle began to follow the protocol in administering the supplements to each of the children.

On March 4<sup>th</sup> I received an e-mail from Sister Danielle updating me on the children's progress. There are some wonderful improvements in many of the children already. Some of them have increased appetites, gained weight, look and act healthier.

- For example, Hoang, an 18-month-old boy, developed Asthma when we was 8 months old. He had a hard time breathing and was always extremely uncomfortable. Glyconutrients were given to him on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup> and after 2 weeks all asthma symptoms diminished. Sister Danielle says he's healthier, more active and can breathe normally.
- Then there is Dong, born on April 29, 1999. He had an underdeveloped brain and tiny arms and legs when he was admitted. During his time at the center, he developed a major skin rash covering all of his tiny body. In one

month, Dong's rash began subsiding. He is now happier and visibly stronger.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, we received another letter from Sister Danielle. She reported after three months, the children are still taking the supplements daily with the following results.

- General assessment: All the children have good physical and mental improvement. The majority have had growth spurts. They have a better appetite and sleep well.
- Many of the children gained weight. The less than one-year-old children gain weight faster compared with the older children. Sister Danielle provided a spreadsheet with the weight gain report, which can be obtained per request.

The trip was worthwhile and the work long lasting. We will continue to receive quarterly reports from Sister Danielle and watch what our love and the kind support of GSVa members have done for these children.

Thank you for your kindness.

*Khue Dang*



*Khue Dang (second from right) and the children at the Can Tho Orphanage*



*Khue Dang delivered the donation of vitamins to the staff of the Can Tho Orphanage*

## Blind Children in DONG HA

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2004, the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association made a contribution to the Quang Tri School for the Blind in Dong Ha, an organization they made contributions to in the past. This year a US\$200 donation was made to buy a set of 30 books in Braille for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students. Last year a donation was made to buy and install two water tanks for the school for cooking and bathing when the local water source fails which it does regularly.

The school has 25 blind students, 7 to 9 years old, including 7 students from ethnically minority families. The school was started in May of 1999.



*Saunie Hunter presented the donation to the Vice Director of the School for the Blind*

## THANK YOU

## CẢM ƠN

### YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

Your annual membership dues pay for the expenses to produce and get this newsletter to you. Without paid staff, our association relies 100% on financial support from individuals and businesses through membership dues and donations.

If you did not receive your dues invoice, please contact us at (206) 322-1178 or email [info@seattlevietnam.org](mailto:info@seattlevietnam.org).

## Making A Difference

YOU CAN HELP US Making A Difference ... Support our projects in Viet Nam

- ♥ Contribute to our Teaching English program at orphanages in Viet Nam.
- ♥ Contribute to our scholarship program for disadvantage students.
- ♥ Donate school supplies for children in remote rural villages.
- ♥ Donate computer or electronic equipment (in good condition) to our orphanages.
- ♥ Donate airline mileage.
- ♥ Become a member of GSVa.

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**\*\*\* REMEMBER TO SEND IN  
YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES \*\*\***

A Nonprofit Volunteer Organization

**JOIN US !**

Become a member of the Greater Seattle Viet Nam Association. Your membership helps support our events, programs, projects and services of the Association.

**Membership Benefits:**

- ✓ Receive our newsletter to stay informed about happenings pertaining to Viet Nam.
- ✓ Contribute and participate in GSVA projects in the U.S and in Viet Nam.
- ✓ Excellent opportunities to network with community and business leaders in the U.S and Viet Nam through our business events.
- ✓ Opportunity to increase your international business contacts.

- ✓ Viet Nam related resources in the areas of education, the arts, trade, and humanitarian work.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES**

- ( ) \$25 Individual / Friend of the Association
- ( ) \$50 Family Membership
- ( ) \$100 Organizational / Company Membership
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