

Checks payable to: VSO or VinhSon Orphanage

A Humanitarian Non-profit Approved by IRS Code 501(c)(3) & California Section 23701D

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Child-to-Child - a Special Gift

Every time we receive a donation, we are very grateful for the generosity to the Vinh Son children. Thank you letters to the donor(s) are something we really enjoy as part of our board duties. When we received a gift from 2 young girls, it was very special.

We learned through our Treasurer, Pat Keegan, that Lindsay (age 7) and Lauren Anikis (almost 9) had donated money from their allowance. Their parents "teach" life lessons by asking the girls to set aside a portion of their weekly allowance for charities of their choice .

Lindsey and Lauren went to our web site and carefully reviewed the various pages to determine if VSO would be a worthy recipient. They looked at the pictures of the Vinh Son children and decided this was where their donations should go.

Lindsay and Lauren are using their allowances to make a difference at Vinh Son.

To Lindsey and Lauren: "We feel privileged and are humbled

by your generosity and sense of caring. Thank you for helping the VSO children, who, just like you, remind us of what's good in this world. You are special young ladies!"



Mary Waterfield's reflection from the Vinh Son 2007 Journey

"Many would argue that altruism has been supported by evolution because it helps the group survive. But some people sacrificially give of themselves to those who are outside their group and with whom they have absolutely nothing in common. That is the nobility of humankind in its purist form."

I just happened to be reading *National Geographic* in my hotel room in Saigon when I read the statement above from Francis Collins, leader of the Human Genome Project and one of the world's most important scientists.

The statement he made really resonated with me. The efforts and amazing gestures made by the indi-

viduals that I had the privilege of traveling with have made a huge impact on my life.

Pre-conceived Notions

Before embarking on the trip, I had several pre-conceived notions. One was that I would experience culture shock shortly after arriving in Vietnam. This was not the case. Yes, I was overwhelmed by the frenetic pace in the streets of Hanoi, but I thought, "This is no different from Manhattan in terms of the intensity and sheer determination on the part of the city dwellers to get to their destination and get there fast!"

Vinh Son 1 and 2

I don't think anything or anyone,

however, could have prepared me for what I experienced at Vinh Son 1 and 2.

I was very excited to meet and play with the children - to give them as much love and attention as I could in the time allotted.

I don't know how to put into words what I felt when I was bombarded with smiles and laughter. I thought, "Why are they so happy, so trusting and so loving?" (cont. next page)

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VinhSon Facts

- Population - more than 450 Montagnard children in two facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal
- Location - Kontum, Vietnam in the Central Highlands
- About \$12 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for a month

Mary's Reflection (cont.)

At one point, I watched a little girl show Pat Keegan her personal belongings placed neatly on a small section of a shelf. Moments later, Pat and I talked about how important it is for children to have something to call their own, as it helps them form their identity and develop a sense of self. At first I felt sad that she didn't have anything more than what was on that shelf to call her own, but then I thought, "Does it really matter?"

The following day at Vinh Son 2, I bonded with a little girl named Lui. We played ball and laughed. While we were sitting together, she took off a decorative hair band that she had around her wrist and put it around mine. As we were about to leave, I handed it back to her and she gestured that she wanted me to keep it. I was amazed....a girl who seemingly has

"nothing" was giving me something that was hers without hesitation.

Positive Changes

After witnessing all of the wonderful improvements and changes that have taken place due to the generosity of the supporters of Vinh Son, and knowing that conditions would only get better, I did not feel sorry for the children, as I thought I would. I felt that they were blessed.

Back Home

"As we were about to leave, ... she gestured that she wanted me to keep it.a girl who seemingly has "nothing" was giving me something that was hers without hesitation".

After I arrived home, I downloaded my pictures and realized how happy I looked. After sending them out to friends and family, I received a great deal of positive feedback, but what

struck me the most, is they too commented on how happy I looked. It suddenly hit me - I had *never* been that happy in all my life.

After my experiences in Vietnam, I have a renewed sense of purpose. I plan on going back to Vietnam soon to visit the children and I encourage anyone reading this to also consider visiting. It was a life-changing experience for me, as I believe it will be for anyone who decides to make the journey.

I'm also considering joining the Peace Corp or going back to school and studying Early Childhood Education...or both!

I want to thank my fellow travelers and Tano for making the trip that much more memorable. It's amazing what you learn when you open yourself up to new experiences and give without any expectation of getting anything back.

Thank You VVA Chapter 535 & AngelTech.US LLC for the Donor Challenges

VSO is very grateful to the Nevada County, CA Chapter of the Vietnam Veterans (VVA) and to AngelTech.US LLC for providing the two Donor Challenges this year. This has been a unique opportunity for VSO that has sparked much interest with our supporters.

The \$1,500 VVA Chapter 535 Challenge raised a total of \$4,284 for the

Vinh Son Orphanage. The AngelTech.US LLC Challenge is still underway and continues until May 23 unless the \$2000 challenge is met before then. As of May 4, the challenge has raised \$1,445. Our donors have responded very generously to both challenges this year. No matter how you give or when, every dollar that is donated makes a powerful difference in

life at Vinh Son. The children "thank-you!"

Harold Graves (VVA) giving check to Dave Chaix ->



New Additions to the www.FriendsofVSO.org Site

We welcome new Board Member Clyde Lewandowski to the VSO team. Clyde is from St. Cloud MN and accompanied us on our February 2007 trip to the orphanage. Please check out his bio and experience at our web site <http://www.FriendsofVSO.org>

.Clyde is replacing Paul Davis, who will be leaving the VSO board, but will con-

tinue to help us with special projects. For the past 2 years, Paul's contributions to VSO have been many. His design of the October 2006 fund drive is just one of the projects that Paul successfully completed. Everyone on the Board, along with our "family" in Kontum, offer Paul our gratitude for a job well done.

A new video from our 2007 trip is ac-

cessible on the Home Page. If you have a slow server, it is also available by clicking on the part for YouTube.

We added about 100 plus photos to the "Photo Album" section of the web page. Many interesting pictures from our trip and Vinh Son are posted there. Click <http://www.FriendsofVSO.org>