

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

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July 2015 Newsletter - Volume 12 Issue 5

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On June 11, 2015, a vote was taken by the Board and Patrick Leary was unanimously approved to become the new President of FVSO, only the 2nd person to hold this position.

"At times, change is good". This is what I had in mind during our mid-year Board Meeting when announcing that I was stepping down from the President's position.

It has been very rewarding and a great adventure these past 10 years. We have a great Board, strong partnerships and wonderful donors to keep us focused and concerned about the welfare and futures of the children at Vinh Son and Sao Mai Orphanages.

We are also very fortunate to have a candidate on our Board who is seasoned and ready to assume the leadership of FVSO.

Patrick Leary has been a Board Member for many years and has visited the orphanages 3 times recently, gaining knowledge and experience. He is well known and trusted by the Sisters, our partners and the children.

The Board is very supportive of Patrick and we look forward to helping him for many years to come. Patrick's biography can be viewed at our website <http://www.friendsofvso.org/sitepages/BIO-PatLeary.html>

I will continue as a Board Member of FVSO, also supporting Patrick through the transition period.

I am honored and humble by the opportunity to work with so many great people in the support of these wonderful children.

Sincerely, **Dave Chaix**

Dave's legacy, 800+ smiles



Pat is more than ready to take on his new responsibility

I am privileged to be part of FVSO and most honored that I am considered to follow Dave. The most difficult and important task in founding a new organization is to establish a firm mission and a solid foundation to keep focused on that mission. Dave has blazed a remarkable path to bring FVSO to 2015. We have a clear mission and focus. Because of Dave we are trusted by a number of other organizations to provide advice and guidance. We have a lot to thank him for but most importantly I know there are hundreds if not thousands of kids in Vietnam who know of "Dave" and have as much if not more appreciation for what Dave has done.

When Dave and I discussed this transition, Dave promised to continue to be in the forefront. He has sworn scouts honor that "he is not going anywhere". It will be a mentoring process and I will be dependent on Dave for his experience and guidance for a long time.

One of the most significant achievements is that Dave has molded a large group of A personalities into a cohesive group all focused on our mission. I truly look forward to this new opportunity to continue to work with you from a new role.

So the first order of business:

Please say a prayer tonight in thanks for Dave and a prayer for me that I can continue to serve the kids as Dave has.

Thanks for all you do. **Patrick Leary**

Pat Leary's sense of humor, dedication & sincerity, are well known by the children and caregivers of the Vinh Son and Sao Mai orphanages. Whether it's taking kids on bike rides or blowing up balloons, Pat draws a crowd wherever he goes. He will be a perfect ambassador for FVSO in the Kontum & Pleiku areas.

Please join the FVSO Board in wishing Pat much success as the head of this wonderful humanitarian organization.



The children of Vinh Son make good use of their school break

The school break is really a special time for the Vinh Son children. For some, it's a time to strengthen their educational skills, but for many, it's a chance to re-connect to the villages they originally came from. They will spend much of their break visiting relatives and helping out with everyday chores. In a sense, they will experience what life might have been like had they not been placed in the orphanage. Safe travels!!

The older kids are doing their farming to help their family now. They are cleaning the weeds for the cassava (manioc) in the fields on the hills and they are cleaning the weeds in the rice paddy fields. Some of the older kids try to work for someone in their villages to earn a little money to help their families. Most of them are back in their villages now, but there are some who are still in the orphanages to wait for their Confirmation Sacrament and after that, they will go back to their villages later.

For the boys, they try to help their family to do the farming in the field as the adults, or they keep and watch cows and oxen for their families. They make the traps to catch rats and mice, squirrels, snakes, birds in the forest or in the jungle. Some go fishing or catch crabs, frogs, toads for their daily food because their families are very poor, so they don't have enough money to buy food at market as Vietnamese people do. They gather in the groups with their teens neighbors to swim in the river or in the small springs. On Sundays, they play gongs or practice to learn some of their traditional musical instruments etc...and they go to church to pray for their family and their orphanage.

For the girls, they come in the forest and in the jungles to collect the bamboo shoots, mushrooms or wild vegetables, leaves of cassava. They use a bamboo basket to scoop fish, little frogs, shrimps and larva of dragonflies or they try to catch the crickets in the holes by digging with the small hand hoes. Some help to put cooked rice or manioc or millet in the jars to make jar wine to prepare their family members' birthday, wedding or for funerals.

The kids don't go to the government school during their summer vacation, but they review their lessons and do their exercises of math, physics and learn English or French after coming back to the orphanage from the villages.

They don't have any trips to the beach during this summer vacation.

Thanks to Sister Marie and Mr. Ho for this report



Although the children are out of school now, they find plenty to do to keep themselves busy

**Coming in August
Annual Fundraising Appeal**

**Look for details in the August
newsletter**



Virtual Road Trip!!

Some of us are privileged to be able to visit the children. We can see what we do, hear their laughter, see the nuns at work, see the farms, get an idea for the environment in which they must survive. Pictures are worth a thousand words so let's take a virtual tour of our orphanages.

All you need is Google Maps. Open up the EARTH view, lower left corner. In the address box, next to the magnifying glass, type in the numbers exactly as shown below (ok guys, grid coordinates). The location will be identified with a red teardrop. Make sure to keep the teardrop centered on your screen as you increase the magnification. On the bottom of the map, you should also see some pictures of the local community.

VS-1 14.344568 108.013173

This is right behind the Wooden Church. It is also right across the street from the convent where Mother Superior, older nuns and some novices live and work.

VS-2 14.340746 108.009038

This is down the road from VS1. The view does not show it clearly but it is a dirt road leading to the front gate and the road is usually populated by cows, chickens and awesome pot holes.

Sao Mai 13.973316 107.997023

This is an urban setting and houses about 55 children. It is right across the street from Duc An Church. This is where Sister Khiet is in charge. She was there in 1968 when it was called it Tu Tam. Tu Tam was taken over by the government in 1975 and the orphanage was moved here.

VS-3 14.369561 108.051266

Just out side of Kontum. You will note two roads as you leave Kontum. The original road AH132 was an asphalt (mostly, but sometimes dirt) road, two lanes, no center line!

The new road being built is QL24. We were not able to drive on any finished portions but it is a major improvement of concrete, asphalt and sturdy bridges. It will make access to VS3, 4 and 6 much better.

VS-4 14.371323 108.094704

Further down the road AH132/QL24. This is where Sister Gabrielle, is in charge. She trained as a nurse under Doctor Pat Smith in the early 1960's.

VS-6 14.378004 108.107965

This is out of numerical sequence because VS5 was established on the other side of Kontum. Go figure. Also note the access road is unimproved dirt road. Many cows & chickens to navigate as well as the occasional parts from busted transmissions, radiators & suspension systems. It is about 16K, only 10 miles but rides like 30!

VS-5 14.340659 108.041365

Again, the dirt road with the same features as VS6. Although closer to Kontum it's really more remote because the only way to reach it is over the bridge crossing the Dak Bla. We call it The Golden Gate.

Long-term supporting organizations

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada County, CA
- Counterparts Association
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

— **Winston Churchill**

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have.

— **Margaret Mead**

Vinh Son & Sao Mai Orphanage Facts

- Population – approximately 830 Montagnard children in seven orphanage facilities
- Administered by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal & St. Paul Chartres
- Location – Kontum/Pleiku, Vietnam
- \$12 feeds, shelters, and educates one child for one month

Officers

President – Pat Leary
Secretary - Dennis Coyne
Treasurer - Colleen Sands
Senior VP - Pat McKee
1st VP - Sr. Marie Dominique
2nd VP - Michael Little

Board

Hank Gonzales
 Rich Lahey
 Clyde Lewandowski
 Bart Ruud
 Dave Chaix
 Steve Fisher

Donation Information

Please make checks payable to FVSO or Friends of Vinh Son
 Donations are gratefully accepted year round
 100% of administrative costs are paid by the Board and Officers