

VSO

Friends of
VinhSon Montagnard
Orphanage

January 2008 Newsletter (2nd edition)

After our January newsletter was already published, we received some wonderful images from Vinh Son that beautifully captured their Christmas celebration. We thought you'd like to see them too. The image below, taken by a VSO supporter Gerard Kamberg, is a great example of the pageantry and tradition carried on each year at the "Old Wooden Church" in Kontum. The children practice for weeks in advance of this widely attended Christmas Eve service. Thousands of highlanders, many traveling great distances, gather on the church grounds, braving the elements, to enjoy and experience the blessings of the season.



While focusing on the children remains our number one objective, we at VSO would also like to pass along pertinent information about the local customs to give everyone a better understanding and "feel" for life at the orphanages in particular and Vietnam in general. If you saw last year's news bit, you learned that TET is the celebration of the Lunar New Year. For the Vietnamese, and other Eastern cultures, the observance of TET is as big as many Western holidays combined. It's huge!

TET means "the first morning of the first day" of the Vietnamese New Year, and it lasts for about 7 days. That's a lot of celebrating. This year, TET begins on February 7th, and holiday decorations will be everywhere. Shops will close, families will gather, and the entire country will unite to welcome another year of prosperity and hope. Yellow-flowered trees (similar to our customary

Christmas trees) will adorn hotel lobbies and homes. You'll find streets and sidewalks lined with rows and rows of colorful potted plants, trees strung with sparkling lights, and banners exalting "Chuc Mung Nam Moi!"simply put, HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Figure 1 - left, balloons for TET; - center, building decorated; - right, TET tree on the way home



Figure 2 - left, TET offerings in a tree; - center, TET offerings on a street; - right, TET offerings on a wall



Figure 3 - Sister helping brother who is dressed for TET - two Buddhist sisters selecting flowers for TET