



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

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## In this newsletter

Welcome to our mid-year newsletter! We hope you find it informative and inspiring. Our intent is to provide you with a little more insight into the Vinh Son family in Kontum, Vietnam. **A Day in the Life** invites you to walk beside the children through their typical day. In **The Many Faces of Vinh Son** section, you'll be introduced to some of children whose lives are touched every day by your generosity. These photographs were taken by Board member, Dennis Coyne, during his visit in February. As they say, the picture tells the story. The third story is an update for the newly established program known as the **Medical Discretionary Fund**, and how it's already having a positive impact at the orphanages. Finally, this newsletter will provide a brief **Progress Report** that details how your donations have been spent so far this year and what's planned for the next six months.

## A day in the life

Weekdays come early at Vinh Son 1. Sister Imelda rings the bell at 4:15 in the morning. The children wipe the sleep from their eyes, wash faces, and get ready for Mass. After church, breakfast is served at 6 o'clock. Next, it's off to school. All the school-age kids gather their books and backpacks, and head off together, walking about 15 minutes to reach their school. One can imagine what it's like during the monsoon season. Classes begin sharply at 7 o'clock.

Tired yet? School is over at 11 o'clock and the students take the stroll back to their Vinh Son home, and have lunch. Homework is the first priority in the afternoon. That completed, the older girls will help the smaller children to take a bath and wash clothes. It's also a time of play, boys and girls of all ages, running around, making up games with each other like kids everywhere. However, you'll always see the bigger children watching over and caring for the smaller ones.

Dinner is served precisely at 6 o'clock in the large dining room. The children have been divided into groups, so each week a new group is rotated in to help prepare the meal (cooking, setting tables and serving the food). They also handle the clean-up chores. After dinner, the older kids will continue to work on homework, while the smaller ones play games around the yard. Unlike households in America, the children do not watch television; however, word has it there is a big TV in the office, still in the box, and maybe one day it will become part of life at Vinh Son.

There is usually an evening prayer, when words of thanks are offered for all those people they never see, but who support them anyway. Lights are out at 8:30, sharp. It's been a long and full day for the Vinh Son community. After almost eight hours sleep, the bell will ring yet again, announcing the arrival of a new day. The daily routine will churn into motion, but the children of Vinh Son are never alone. With them always is the loving reliance they have for one another and for those who look after them.

Weekends are also busy times. High school students must attend classes on Saturday, while the others have the day off. Allowed to sleep in, it's still 5 o'clock when the children rise, say a prayer, have breakfast, and find something fun to keep them amused during the day. Of course, depending on their age, there are always chores (wash clothes, clean rooms, cook, attend the gardens, and even babysit).

Sunday is another early start. Up early, since Mass begins at 5:15am, breakfast follows at 6:30. Older children will then go to the farm, especially during harvest season, while others work in the garden behind the orphanage. There is the never-ending house work and cooking. Occasionally, the kids are given a day off, and perhaps even a special dinner if it's a holiday.

## June 2009

### Volume 5, Issue 1

### Board Officers

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### Vinh Son Facts

- Population – more than 500 Montagnard children in four 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

## The many faces of Vinh Son

Every month, we highlight some of the Vinh Son children on our web site <http://friendsofvso.org/> In case you haven't clicked on the **Meet A Child** tab, we invite you do so. Each child has a story to tell and they'd like to share it with you. Here are some of the faces of your "extended family." Enjoy!



A Truk is a 10 year old boy living at Vinh Son 1. He comes from the village Thon 1, in Dak Hring Community and his tribe is Sedang. A Truk is a twin. His mother did not have enough milk for both children so she sent A Truk to the orphanage. His mother comes often to visit, especially at Christmas and Easter. A Truk is in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, likes to study and is a good student.



Roga Ly Wai is an 18 years old young man from the Rongao tribe. His family village is Plei Jodrop, in the Ya Chim Community. As a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student, Roga Ly Wai was in secondary high school. After he finished the summer holiday, he intended to stay home because he did not have money for education. Fortunately, he came to Vinh Son 1 and told the Sisters about his situation. They invited him to live at Vinh Son 1 Orphanage, where he helps in many ways to assist the other children.



Y Wa is an 18-year old student in the sewing class. She is a Rongao and comes from Kon Trang village in the Dak Kola Community. She has no father. There are 6 people in her family (including her mother). Y Wa has 4 younger sisters. She really wanted to help her mother, but after she failed the final exams in 10th grade, she began to choose a different way for her life. She attends the sewing class, and hopefully in December 2009, she will finish this course. She likes to sew and play electric organ



A Binh is an active 8-year old boy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade from the Jolong tribe. His village is Kon Donang in the Dak Tore Community. A Binh's mother died after giving birth to twins, so A Binh was sent to Vinh Son 1 Orphanage by his relatives. His father is still alive, but he moved away after A Binh was born. Sometimes, his relatives come to visit A Binh. He does well at school, and likes football and music.



Y Hang is 12 years old and in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. She comes from the village Brap Ju in the Tan Lap Community. Y Hang's mother died after giving birth. Because her father did not have milk for the baby, he decided to bring her to Vinh Son 1 Orphanage. Y Hang does well at school. She loves her friends and is polite with the Sisters. During the summer holiday, Y Hang always goes back to the village to visit her father. She likes music.



A Tom is an 8-year old boy from the Jolong tribe. He's in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at school and lives at Vinh Son 2. His parents are still alive, but they are very poor, so A Tom was brought to Vinh Son 2 Orphanage. He does well at school, and should go up to the higher grade this year. He likes football.



Y Thoai is a 12-year old girl from the Xodang tribe. She's in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Her parents are still alive, but they could not care for her, so they decided to send Y Thoai to Vinh Son 2 Orphanage. Now, she has what she needs to study and looks very happy. Y Thoai is a very good student, and likes to sing.



Y Xam is an 8-year old girl from the Xodang tribe and is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Her parents are still alive, but they are miserable, so Y Xam was sent to Vinh Son 2 Orphanage. Y Xam does okay in school, but she really likes to dance, sing and draw pictures.



Y Khuyet is 8-years old and is only in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. She comes from Dak To, the Dak Tram Community, and is Sedang. Her parents are still alive. When Sister Lieng came back to the village, she met Y Khuyet's family. They are very poor, and Y Khuyet's father has a bad disease, so that Sister Lieng brought Y Khuyet to Kon Toneh Community (Vinh Son 4). She is very sweet and likes to dance and sing.



Y Thoa is Jolong, and comes from Kon Xomluh, Dak Tore Community. She is 8 years old and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Her parents are still alive. Y Thoa's family is very poor and did not have not enough for food and school fees, so Y Thoa was sent to Kon Toneh Community (Vinh Son 4). Y Thoa does well at school, she always receives the awards. She likes to learn Vietnamese and sing.



A Huuk is a 14-year old boy in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. He comes from Kon Jodreh village, Dak Bla Community, and belongs to the Jolong tribe. His parents are still alive. There are 11 people in his family. His parents did not have enough food and could not afford money for their school-fees, so Sister Gabriel brought A Huuk to Kon Jodreh Community (Vinh Son 3). A Huuk does well at school, and he will go up to a higher grade this school year. A Huuk likes music and plays guitar.

### Special Thanks

This newsletter would not be possible without the efforts of Mr. Stephan Nanh, who is our "eyes and ears" on the ground in Kontum. He helps coordinate everything from electronic payments to project verification, email communications to newsletter contributions. Nanh is an essential part of our efforts to support the children of Vinh Son. When language is a barrier, his ability to converse in English, Vietnamese and Bahnar helps us do more, and do it more efficiently. From all of us at FVSO, **Thanks Nanh!**



Here's where we begin our day

## Medical Discretionary Fund – update

**From the FVSO February on-site visit report:** ...“we established a discretionary fund for each site that would ensure cash-on-hand for medical emergencies. As funds are depleted, receipts will be forwarded to FVSO so that the fund can be replenished. As with any new concept, we’ll monitor this program closely.”

In the last few months, each of the Vinh Son sites has utilized this discretionary fund. Sister Gabriel at VS 3 spent \$75 to purchase much needed medicines. At VS 4, Sister Lieng also bought medicines for her children valued at \$90. The two largest orphanages also used discretionary monies (VS 1 \$160, VS 2 \$210). So far, this method of responding to immediate needs is working quite well. By eliminating response time, kids are getting better...faster. FVSO has received photo's and payment receipts, and will continue this program.

Sometimes, the emergency isn't medical. The March monsoon severely damaged the dormitory roof at Vinh Son 1, and flooding became a serious issue. Without hesitation, Sister Imelda took action and spent \$300 to have the roof repaired. At Vinh Son 3, the submersible water pump failed in April, and the orphanage was

without potable water. Sister Gabriel had no choice but to immediately take steps to have the pump restored, at a cost of \$165. In each of these situations, the Sisters knew they could rely on FVSO for support. The Board voted to fund both expenditures.



Sister Gabriel at Vinh Son 3 with medical supplies

## FVSO Progress Report

Through May, 2009, distributions to the orphanages total \$24,948. This money has been spread across each of the four sites, and reflects the projects they have requested, and the Board has approved. Your contributions have made possible this partial list of accomplishments: 1) supply basic food, including powdered milk, rice, flour, and breakfast noodles, 2) continue supplemental fish and meat for added protein, 3) construct new dormitory, kitchen, dining room, filter system, 4) provide dental care, 5) install new doors for the girl's dormitory, 6) parasite removal, and 7) paid educational fees, purchased clothes and books. Your support is even bringing chickens to Vinh Son 3 and 4!

Donations to date through May are \$25,954. For the balance of 2009, we anticipate expenses of at least \$30,160, based on the list of approved projects (basic needs, education, supplemental protein, medical & dental). Of course, this number could increase based on unforeseen needs. As you see, **your help is still needed**. Our donation goal for 2009 is \$65,000, which, if achieved, would guarantee a very successful year, as well as prepare FVSO for 2010.

We hope you enjoyed meeting some of the family in Kontum, and following them on their day-to-day rituals. When Dennis was taking these portraits, he asked the kids if they understood why it was so important to “record” their faces for their friends in America. Unanimously, they responded, “Yes, they give us everything for our life, but we have nothing to give them back.” Please accept their smiles and prayers as gratitude for all you do for them.

### In Memoriam

Sister Theresa Maria Raphael HUUT passed away on May 31<sup>st</sup>, from cancer. She was 51 years old. Sister Theresa was born in Kon Robang, which is a Bahnar village just west of Kontum. She became a nun in 1983. One of her many duties was to receive the sick and injured, from remote villages, who had traveled great distances to obtain medical care in Kontum. Sister made sure they were treated in the local hospital.

**Donations are gratefully accepted year round; checks payable to FVSO or Vinh Son Orphanage**

**100% of FVSO administrative costs are paid by the Board Members and Officers**