

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

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January 2016 Newsletter - Volume 13 Issue 1

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- On-site visits – Trips are planned – Everyone’s welcome
- The Christmas Celebration was another huge success

Annual Report – 2015

Submitted by Pat Leary, President FVSO

On Wednesday December 30, the Board held its semi-annual board meeting, via tele-conference. I continue to be impressed and appreciative of our Board, their individual talents and the hard work they put in all year long. We are also thankful to you, our donors, for making this a most successful year.

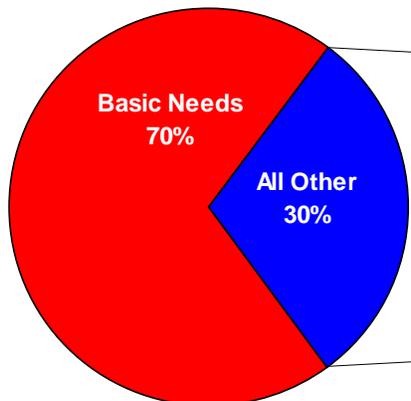
As you review the numbers below, you will note we stayed on budget for the year. Your donations were exceptional and our partnerships with other organizations are paying off for the kids. Looking towards the future, we are making exciting plans.

FVSO has been a reliable benefactor for the children for over 12 years. Our funds have been one of the few stable factors they have. We promise a fixed amount to the Sisters every year and deliver exactly that. It is clear to us that their reliance on our promise has allowed them to “take the risk” of investing in other support sources that take time to produce returns, such as farms and education.

2015 Expenditures by Category

\$103,265 Total

Basic Needs (\$72,550) - All Other (\$30,715)



Categories

- 9% - Discretionary Funds
- 8% - Higher Education
- 5% - Dental Program
- 4% - On-Site Expenses
- 3% - Water Systems
- 1% - Christmas Party



One of many, the number of children supported by FVSO

| | |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| 798 | Vinh Son, 6 locations |
| 55 | Sao Mai, 1 location |
| 853 | Total number of children |

Administrative expenses (\$9,100) were paid for by Board Members, and are not included in the categories above (Internet, newsletters, advertising, etc.)

Our budget for 2016 will be the same, with an additional \$5,000 for education, bringing the total number to \$108,000.

We had a wonderfully surprising year in 2015, with donations of **\$212,000**. FVSO has been a reliable source for the sisters, and we never promise more than we can deliver for a year. We use a conservative estimate. This year, we ended up with large surplus, and much of our discussion was how to best manage it for the children. **Rainy Day Fund** literally covers the topic. Looking back, in 2009, Kontum had very severe storms. The Dak Bla River flooded, causing significant damage to VS1 and VS2. Other locations had severe crop and building damage. Luckily, we had emergency funds available then to help them rebuild. This fund has now been recharged. The idea of a **Legacy Fund** was discussed, and will require further conversation. You will hear more about it in the future. One of our more exciting projects has been higher education and we are working to expand that as well.



Faith



Hope

Over time, primarily because of the stability we give the sisters, they have expanded their own self-sufficiency operations. They have invested in small farming operations, bakeries, livestock (fish, pigs, chickens etc) that were only a dream several years ago. This has long been one of our goals to improve their lives.

Our partnerships with other organizations continue to grow and improve. In cooperation with other groups, we have supported clean water systems, building projects, primary and secondary education funds, additional food and medicine. They have also provided funds for critical medical needs and have helped with our dental mission. Each organization operates independently with their own mission statement and Board of Directors. Working for a common cause, we are most grateful for their co-operation and dedication.

Each year, we have improved the lives of the children in Kontum and Pleiku. However, their well-being is still fragile and in the big picture, we still have a long way to go. There is much work left to do, by improving every aspect of meals/nutrition, medicine, self-sufficiency, housing, and education.

This year, your donations exceeded all expectations. As stated before, we received over \$212,000. The Board had a long discussion about what to do with the difference (money in vs. money out). I mentioned the **Rainy Day Fund**. We believe that it is important to build and maintain a reserve fund for the unexpected.

We would very much like to increase our support of higher education. The current level of educational support is funded from a substantial donation that was given specifically to support advanced education. Currently, we provide partial support for 11 kids in programs for pharmacy, nursing, computer science, and music. This year, there were more kids qualified for higher education than we could support. We want to improve on that. In the past, we have also supported kids in trade school, engine mechanics, bicycle repair, and sewing. We want to continue that as well. Clyde is spearheading an education program for us. We are excited for the kids and the potential payback to their community. You will also hear more about this going forward.



Charity

Annual Report continued, plus “Destination Vietnam”

Finally, we discussed the concept of a **Legacy Fund**. We believe there will be a need for support long after we on the Board are able to work and support the kids. Most of us are into our 70's. Pat McKee is doing a marvelous job in defining and structuring a **Legacy Plan** for us. You will also hear about that in the near future.

We look forward to a 2016, when we will continue to make a difference for these children. Your support provides a future for them. Thank you!

Travel to the Orphanages

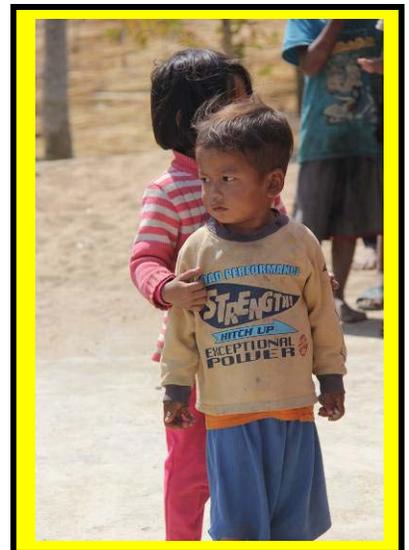
Donors frequently ask about travel to Vietnam and the Orphanages. As Board members, we have often made trips to Pleiku and Kontum, personally funded. The purpose of these trips may vary, based on the intentions of the Board member: education, health, fact finding. You are most welcome to journey with us. Be advised, we are not a tour company and you would be required to make all your own travel arrangements. However, we'd be glad to offer you advice and opinions. You may want to visit other places in Vietnam, as it is a beautiful country with wonderful people and sights. We can also recommend a trusted travel guide. Truthfully, it is not that difficult. Board Member trips planned for the near future include:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| February | Dave |
| March 1st-18 th | Joanne and Steve |
| April 4 th -21st | Clyde |
| July 1st to July 10 th | Mike and family |
| Jan-Feb 2017 | Pat |



There's always room for one more, so if you care to join in, just let us know and we'll be glad to provide advice and recommendations.

Contact us at: info@friendsofvso.org



At left, Sister Josie is handing out gifts, while the children wait so patiently for their turn. It's a great feeling!

Santa comes to Kontum!

The caregivers at Vinh Son made sure everyone had a great time!

The Christmas celebration was another memorable affair, with 700 children from the 6 Vinh Son orphanages participating in this annual event. It all began at 2 o'clock on the afternoon of December 20th on the grounds of the old Wooden Church. To kick off the festivities, the kids were divided into 10 groups and spent the next two hours competing in five organized games, everything from relay races to boat races to tug of war.

At 5 o'clock, dinner was served in the Convent yard. Quite an undertaking...can you imagine the work that went into not only the food preparation, but serving that many "active" children at one time. That takes skill and organization, not to mention dedication.

Around 7 o'clock, the music program began, which also included a number of speeches, thanking the various benefactors who made this party happen. Although FVSO didn't have a representative there at the event, we received recognition for our contribution.

Well, 9 o'clock finally arrived. There had to be some really tired children by then, but they all perked up enough to receive their presents, for which they were greatly appreciative. This was a special celebration, something that lifts their spirits, and ours. **Merry Christmas Vinh Son, Merry Christmas.**

Kids of all ages had a blast



Santa was a friend to everyone and no favorites in the tug-of-war



Long-term supporting organizations

- 189th Assault Helicopter Company
- Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 535, Nevada Cnty, CA
- Counterparts Association
- 14th Combat Engineer Btn. Assoc.
- MilSpec Tours (800-953-5812)
- Fr. Luke Tran (VN-SHEP) Social Health Education Projects
- Fr. Relihan, Sacred Heart Church, Lone, CA
- Rotary Club of San Juan Capistrano, CA

*If you want to touch the past, touch a rock.
If you want to touch the present, touch a flower.
If you want to touch the future,
touch a life.*

— Unknown

It takes each of us to make a difference for all of us.

— Jackie Mutcheson

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 of Directors

Hank Gonzales
 Rich Lahey
 Clyde Lewandowski
 Bart Ruud
 Dave Chaix
 Steve Fisher/J. Glah

Advisory Board

John Scott
 Bruce Herron

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