



Viet Nam Friendship Village

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Nineteen-ninety-nine brought many visitors to the Vietnam Friendship Village, including three American parties: VFVP-USA board member Carl Stancil, who visited once before in 1996; Liliane Fløge and Steve Crawford, from Maryland, who discovered the Village through the Pittsburgh Veterans For Peace outreach; and Alaskan Suel Jones, who has so far made two visits to the Village. Carl, Steve and Suel are all Vietnam veterans. Their reports are contained in this newsletter, along with recent photos of village life. It's really great to hear their observations and enthusiasm about the progress of the village and their interactions with the residents. Also included in this newsletter are accounts of various fundraising and networking efforts around the country on behalf of the project. I'm sure you will agree, all this activity—along with the wonderful photos—makes for a very inspiring read. Enjoy!

—Becky Luening



From Hanoi with Love

Suel Jones is a veteran living in Anchorage, Alaska. In May of 1968 he arrived in Vietnam for the first time and was assigned to 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Division (D-1-3-3). Thirty years later, he and friend, Michael Cull, after reading a newspaper article about George Mizo and the VFVP, returned to Vietnam. Moved by what they saw at the village, upon returning home to Alaska they set out to educate veteran groups and the public by giving slide presentations. In November 1999, Suel and friends hosted a large fundraiser at a local restaurant and raised \$2,800 from their generous community. Suel hand-delivered the donations to the Vietnam Friendship Village in December 1999. The following report was written by him while in Hanoi.

—LB Johnson

At present there are 70 children and 30 veterans living and receiving treatment at the Village. The treatment is basic at best. It consists of proper nourishment, which they don't get in their own villages because of the poverty, and lots of massage, acupuncture, and physical therapy, along with doses of vitamins and herbs grown in a beautiful garden on the premises.

I recognized some of the children from last year when I was there, shortly after the village opened. They looked so much more healthy and happy now than before, because of the treatment and tender care they have been receiving.

Children can stay in the village up to two years or until fourteen years of age. A timeframe must be imposed because there are so many children who require treatment. The need is so great that the work at the Friendship Village is like stopping a drought with a small water hose. Still, the service being performed by the staff—half of which are volunteers and half of which receive about 200,000 VND

[Vietnamese Dong] monthly or \$14.00 USD—is invaluable.

The project is about a third completed with the dream being that it will be self-supporting through a fish pond, a farming project the veterans will work, and an educational program where the children can learn while producing products to be sold in a village retail center. A few of the children are so severely handicapped they can't even dress themselves, but most are in school learning the basics of their language and are very bright. They seem so excited to be in those small rooms filled with crude wooden tables and benches, learning to read with cheap paper books, slates, and a piece of chalk, which they carefully put in their

pocket when they go out for recess. It is heart-warming to see the sparkle in their eyes and the big grins on their faces as they repeat the alphabet in unison.

Vietnamese Veterans stay from three to six months, and are required to work in the village cleaning and maintaining the buildings. They too receive therapy, for everything from deformities brought on by Agent Orange to depression. Like many men who go into combat, they suffer in one form or another from the stress and trauma of seeing so many comrades die and facing death themselves.

Being on the winning side doesn't make it any easier, especially when they served ten years or more under some of the most severe bombing any men have ever faced.

For a short while it seems so strange to sit with these men, having tea and talking about where we were, what we did, and to realize I may have had my sights on one of them at one time or another, or they may have fired at me.



Suel Jones and a few of his newfound friends.

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Friendship Village Update

The Vietnam Friendship Village Project is a collaboration of war veterans and caring citizens from the United States, France, Germany, Japan, Great Britain, Belgium, and Vietnam. The project was founded as a gesture of friendship between former enemies who wanted to create a lasting, living symbol of peace, something that would help heal the wounds of war on a practical level.

The village is managed by the Veterans Association of Vietnam, with assistance from the Vietnam branch of Red Cross and other agencies. Our Vietnamese partners pay a portion of staff salaries. Committees from other countries, including VFVP-USA, raise funds for other operational costs as well as construction of additional facilities.

The Friendship Village is now home to nearly 100 Vietnamese children and veterans, many of whom suffer serious health problems attributed to Agent Orange, the toxic defoliant sprayed by U.S. forces in South Vietnam during the war. Young and old live together as extended family, along with caregivers. Facilities include a medical clinic, water purification system, electric generating system, and lush gardens. The community has become nearly self-sustaining, food-wise, with fish ponds, cows, pigs, chickens, vegetable gardens, and hundreds of fruit trees. Houses have solar water heating systems, and a bio-gas system is being planned for heating the buildings.

The Village of Friendship is a dream come true for George Mizo, a highly decorated U.S. Vietnam veteran and early member of Veterans For Peace. Mizo, who co-founded the project together with Vietnamese veterans, feels passionately that this is



George Mizo

a project for *everyone*—those who were for the war, those who opposed it; those who lost loved ones and friends in the war; those on all sides of the war.

To date, \$1,300,000 has been contributed by the various countries' committees. Expansion will be enabled as more funds are raised. Next in line to be built are a physical rehabilitation/vocational training center, a large house to accommodate 30 more children, and common dining room/kitchen and visitor center. An Agent Orange research center is also being pursued, because there is a great need in Vietnam not only to care for victims, but also to scientifically document the long-term effects of the toxic defoliant on humans and the environment.

This update on the village was supplied by George Mizo when I talked to him in early November via telephone from his home in Germany. His spirits are high and you can just feel the love in his voice as he talks about the Friendship Village and all that has been accomplished thus far. He has visited the village at least annually since its inception, often accompanied by his wife, Rosi, and son, Michael. He sends warm greetings and thanks to all in the U.S. who continue to support the Village of Friendship.

P.S. We just received the sad news that Gilbert Jacquemin passed away on November 6, 1999. Gilbert was a representative of the French VFVP Committee, and Secretary of International Affairs for the French veterans group, ARAC (Association Républicaine des Anciens Combattants et Victimes de Guerre). I had the great pleasure of meeting Gilbert at the 1997 Veterans For Peace convention. He was a wonderful man, and we will miss him.

—Becky Luening

From Hanoi with Love ...cont'd from front page

I realize I don't hate them. I don't see them as my enemy. My country was engaged in war against their country. I served my country and they served theirs.

When you are willing to drop the image of them as the enemy and see them as men like yourself, the fear, which supports the anger, can also be dropped. We laughed and talked as best we could, and when I left, we shook hands, bowed, and parted as friends. I'm just happy we're alive. More than three million Vietnamese and more than 58,000 Americans aren't alive today to learn from each other. There's good and bad in every culture, and good and bad in every man. But

when you can sit and have tea with a former enemy, look each other in the eye and forgive them as well as yourself, then many good things happen for everyone.



Vietnamese Veterans being helped at Vietnam Friendship Village

The Friendship Village is run on a shoestring budget and can only touch a very small number of children who are desperate for treatment. The village

director says they spend about 500,000 VND monthly or about \$35 USD for food, clothing and medicine per child. They have an annual budget of about \$1,430 to pay the ongoing maintenance costs of the village such as electricity, water and telephone.

Because veterans are treated at the village, the Vietnamese government covers about half of that budget plus provides another \$7.00 a month per child. The rest must be raised through donations.

This is only one such clinic in a country with a population of about eighty million gripped by the disease of poverty, still trying to recover from the effects of war. Rights and wrongs set aside, I feel that the richest nation on earth cannot destroy a country, then just walk away as if nothing ever happened. What little we collected will have a great effect on this project and the men and children living at the Friendship Village. They are very grateful and don't ask for more. They simply say, "Thank You," then go back to the business of healing.

—Suel Jones



The children enjoy learning.

Carl's Work Notes

In July of 1999 I spent three and a half weeks in Hanoi. My goal was to use this time to gain support for the Friendship Village from American businesses and NGOs for obtaining corporate and governmental assistance. My work during this period fell into four categories:

- Promoting the Friendship Village in the American business and humanitarian community
- Reestablishing and strengthening old relationships
- Establishing professional contacts and relationships with NGOs, businesses and government agencies
- Becoming familiar with the current needs and changes at the Friendship Village

Most importantly, I spread word of the Friendship Village Project. When individuals asked me what I was doing I told them about the Village, gave them my card with email address and the latest copy of the VFVP-USA newsletter, and invited them to schedule a visit.

I began with Dr. Hong, Director of the National Agricultural Genetics Institute (AGI), who I met on the plane from Bangkok. This contact resulted in a personal visit to the Village by her and three of her research staff and a discussion of the Peace Garden. I provided English conversa-



Carl sits with a few of the resident Vietnamese veterans.

Cooperation Committee, I was given an opportunity to make a presentation about the Village Project during AmCham's August 7, 1999 meeting. After a briefly outlining the project, I provided attendees with a copy of our latest VFVP-USA newsletter with my card attached, and invited them on a group tour of the Village.

The Village had changed significantly since 1996. Six new houses and a medical clinic had been built. An herb garden had been planted in addition to many new trees, adding greenery, shade and fruit-producing income for the Village. Sadly, the first director, Mr. Chu Do, had passed away.

“The common element was people, wonderfully friendly and appreciative Vietnamese people.”

New plans are in the works. The decision has been made to build a common multipurpose eating/kitchen building, with the cooking space in each house being converted to much needed living space for the children. Building an administrative space will also free up an additional house. A Center for Special Education and Therapy is planned and has been funded by the French Government.

My month working in Hanoi defies description. Certainly there are accomplishments. I was able to establish a relationship between AGI and the Village Project, which will permit the commercial expansion of the Peace Garden to grow flowers and other produce. I identified potential funding sources (Holt-VN, P.S.Buck Intl., AmCham members) and established a relationship with AmCham (membership pending).

But the common element was people, wonderfully friendly and appreciative Vietnamese people. I found I enjoyed the unhurried “hanging-out” with people, in the streets and in the markets. Most of them really appreciated this sharing of lives, both theirs and mine. They deeply appreciate the work caring Americans are doing.

—Carl Stancil



Huynh Van Trinh, Carl Stancil, Vu Xuan Vinh, Dr. Hong and AGI staff

tion instruction once or twice a week for five of her research staff and also tutored Dr. Hong and her co-director on effective communication techniques in preparation for their meeting with a visiting E.U. liaison.

During my 1996 visit, in addition to visiting the Village, I had established relationships primarily with members of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAV), the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO) and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VAAF). Thanks to Chuck Searcy of VAAF, chair of the American Chamber of Commerce Vietnam (AmCham) Education and Humanitarian

Liliane and Steve

This is the story of Liliane Floge and Steve Crawford, and how they found their way to the Vietnam Friendship Village. It all started in early 1998 when Steve received an appeal in the mail from the Pittsburgh chapter of Veterans For Peace on behalf of the Friendship Village Project. Like many recipients of that appeal, he sent in a donation, and as a result we added Steve and his wife, Liliane, to the VFVP-USA mailing list. One of the newsletters they received in subsequent mailings announced that the U.S. Committee was looking for volunteers, and possibly a new volunteer director. That piqued their interest and they began to think about how they might lend a hand to our effort.

Steve, a veteran of the Vietnam War, had long desired to revisit Vietnam, and finally, in August, 1999, he and Liliane made the trip. They spent a total of two and a half weeks in Vietnam, and one afternoon at the Vietnam Friendship Village. At the Hanoi headquarters of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAV), they met Mr. Huynh Van Trinh, VAV's Director of Foreign Relations Department, who accompanied them to the village and served as their tour guide. Mr. Trinh introduced them to the new director of the Friendship Village, Mr. Nguyen Khai Hung.



Liliane Floge (front) with a group of boys and their house mother.

16 different provinces have been served by the project. Children stay for varying lengths of time, depending on their needs.

The Friendship Village specializes in care for children (and also Vietnamese veterans) who have been affected in some way by Agent Orange (dioxin), the defoliant sprayed by U.S. forces in South Vietnam during the war. Many of the children chosen to live at the Friendship Village are offspring of veterans of the American war who fought in those areas. It is believed that everyone at the Village, in one way or another, suffers the effects of Agent Orange poisoning.

They do not take children who have suffered loss of limbs, as there are many other agencies already providing prosthetics and care for amputees. And they do not accept children with the most severe disabilities; instead the focus is on those who can really be helped there. Most of the children are not orphans, but come from families that lack the resources to



"Everybody say 'PEACE...'" Liliane Floge and Steve Crawford pose with director Nguyen Khai Hung (left) and Huynh Van Trinh (right) in front of the Friendship Village welcome sign.

"I had a very strong, positive reaction to the new director," said Liliane in a recent phone interview. "It was great to see him with the children. I was very impressed. He exuded a lot of affection for them that was just wonderful to see. He gave me a lot of confidence in the project, as did the house mothers we met."

Steve and Liliane sat down with Mr. Trinh and Mr. Hung to discuss various aspects of the Village Project. One question they asked was how the children who came to live there were chosen. They were told that families were recommended by people from local villages. A committee made up of representatives of three agencies—the VAV, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Services—visits these families and interviews them. They make decisions based on who has the most need, the greatest burden, and who can most be helped by the services provided at the Village. So far, 76 children from

"I was ashamed by the fact that the U.S. had given so little money compared to other countries. They have plaques from different countries that have donated this house and that house... but nothing significant from the U.S."

provide the kinds of specialized treatment and attention these children require.

One girl Steve and Liliane met at the Village had come from a family with five children, all of whom had some kind of disability. This child, the youngest of the five and the only girl, obviously had Downs Syndrome. Her features are quite striking. "I was strongly attracted to that girl," Liliane said. "She had the most beautiful smile. She was just incredibly sweet."

A variety of disabilities are represented at the Village. Liliane said that during their afternoon visit, she and Steve observed children with deformed limbs, dwarfed stature,

continued on next page...

deafness, muteness, degenerative musculature, and a few with one leg that was shorter than the other.

One or two of the houses at the Village are dedicated to the care of Vietnamese veterans, who also suffer from a variety of problems apparently brought on by exposure to Agent Orange. Veterans come to the Village for three to six months at a time for rehabilitation and training. They are fed well and usually gain weight during their stay. One veteran they observed was in a separate downstairs room all by himself. He had a horrible skin disease, but it looked like he was starting to heal.

The medical staff at the Village utilize traditional medicine. A beautiful garden keeps them well supplied with medicinal herbs. Modern techniques are also used, but it is believed that herbal medicine works better for many of the conditions



A few of the girls who reside at the Friendship Village.

being treated there. Liliane reported that, so far, the Friendship Village is limited somewhat in the treatment, training and rehabilitation it can offer, due to a lack of funding for equipment and facilities, but they're doing what they can. The modest clinic contains a small assortment of rehabilitation equipment such as treadmills, but, "they could use more."

Mr. Hung expressed that Village management decided not to wait until absolutely everything was set up before opening; they wanted to start serving children as soon as possible. The existing buildings—about a third of the total planned project—were finished in 1997, and the first children were admitted in 1998. Children are schooled on-site through second grade, but older children attend the public schools in the surrounding villages. In the future, additional classroom facilities may be created as more buildings are completed.

In summarizing their visit, Liliane said, "We were very taken by the place. The only negative thing was, I was ashamed by the fact that the U.S. had given so little money compared to other countries. They have plaques from different countries that have donated this house and that house and so on, but nothing significant from the U.S." To help change that, Liliane and Steve have offered their energy and resources to further our fundraising efforts. Liliane has just



A physical therapist works with one of the residents.

accepted an invitation to join the U.S. Committee's Board of Directors, and she and Steve have pledged \$1,000 of their own money as a matching grant for funds received from first-

Steve & Liliane have pledged \$1,000 of their own money as a matching grant for funds received from first-time donors.

time donors. This means we need to raise \$1,000 (or more!) from new donors to match their pledge.

Liliane put it this way: "We feel it's a good project, doing wonderful work, and we want to encourage other people to support it." Please help us spread the word! —Becky Luening

REVIEW

Agent Orange: The Next Generation

Note: Long-time VFVP volunteer Steve Brooks alerted us to this *Mother Jones* article about Agent Orange, in which the Friendship Village is mentioned as "one of approximately a dozen facilities the country has set up to care for veterans and children injured by Agent Orange" (p. 90).



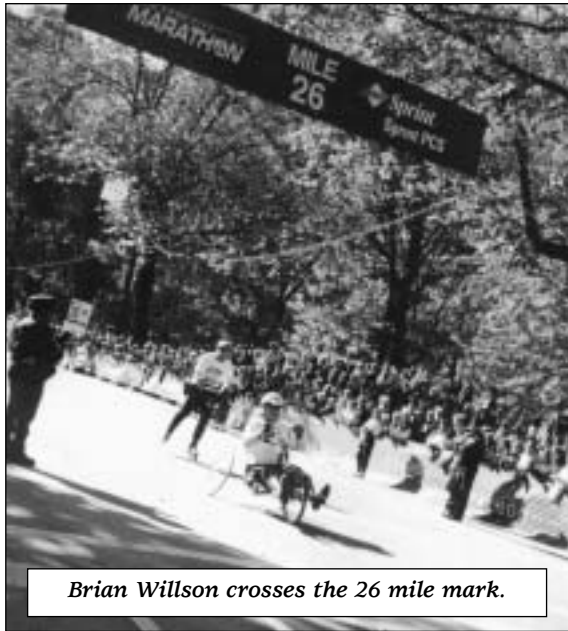
Investigative journalist Robert Dreyfuss, in "Apocalypse Still," cover story of the February 2000 issue of *Mother Jones*, describes the continued suffering of Vietnamese, both old and young, stemming from the U.S. use of the defoliant "Agent Orange" during the Vietnam war nearly 35 years ago. One of the components of Agent Orange, 2,4,5-T, is known to cause birth defects in laboratory animals, and one of its known by-products, 2,3,7,8-TCDD, is an especially dangerous form of dioxin linked to a wide range of diseases including cancers and birth defects.

The in-depth article includes interviews with victims, health workers, researchers and government officials, providing insight into the widespread long-term health effects and environmental damage of the deadly chemical, as well as the consistent U.S. government policy of avoiding the issue. Dreyfuss quotes a U.S. embassy official as having suggested that *Mother Jones* drop the story in favor of one on MIAs or U.S.-Vietnam trade talks.

Photos by Bill Burke and Les Stone (Corbis Sygma) capture the suffering of victims and families while depicting the continued dignity and determination of the Vietnamese people. The article is thorough and disturbing, dealing with a subject totally absent in the mainstream media.

—Carl Stancil

Fundraising and Networking News



Brian Willson crosses the 26 mile mark.

Brian Rides for VFVP in NYC

On Sunday, November 7, 1999, S. Brian Willson, a Vietnam Veteran and member of Veterans For Peace (VFP), rode his arm-powered, three-wheeled crank-chair/hand-cycle in the New York City marathon to raise funds for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. Support was pledged by a number of individuals for each mile of the marathon (a marathon by definition is 26.2 miles or 46.1 kilometers).

It was a beautiful day, though cold and windy, and Brian cranked hard to make it over several bridges during the race which was routed through the five boroughs of New York City. The pledge drive, coordinated by Hari Scordo at the National VFP office, resulted in almost \$3,000 being collected for the Friendship Village.

Way to go, Brian!

Fiscal Year Financial Report

During our last fiscal year, Oct. 1, 1998 to Sept. 30, 1999, the U.S. fundraising committee for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project (VFVP-USA) collected a total of \$7,794 in donations, plus \$2.17 in interest from our small savings account. Of that income, \$5,000, or 64%, went directly to the Friendship Village. Another \$900, or 12%, was spent on U.S. Committee operating costs—mainly printing, copying, postage, and internet service provider fees. Office space, labor, and telephone charges for the year were all donated. With the net income from FY 98-99, along with monies collected since the close of the year, we will be able to wire another \$5,000 (or more!) to our Vietnam partners in the very near future.

At our next meeting, VFVP-USA Board of Directors will be setting priorities and strategies with the goal of boosting our fundraising power over the next few years. As always, your help in meeting our goals is needed and appreciated!

Thanks Again to Pittsburgh Vets

Donations continue to come in thanks to the efforts of Sanford Kelson and Peter Shaw of the Pittsburgh Chapter of Veterans for Peace. Their last push was an August 1999 picnic at which they raised a little over \$2,500. Not bad for a hot afternoon fundraiser! Elias Kazas of Mahoney's Restaurant in Pittsburgh donated food and beer; Louis Countouris of Drew's Restaurant in Pittsburgh donated ice. Sandy mentioned that he and Peter hope to host a fundraising concert for the Friendship Village in the near future with the help of Anne Feeney, a popular Pittsburgh musician. Thank you again to Sandy and Peter and all who continue to support the village financially and otherwise.

Alaska Fundraiser

In November, supporters in Anchorage, Alaska hosted an organic dinner and presentation at The Oasis Restaurant which raised \$2,800 and a lot of awareness. Organizer Suel Jones reflects, "Won't change the world, but it has changed me knowing that with a little caring work something can be done." Thanks to Suel, Michael Cull, Eileen Monaghan and Jim Minton for their successful effort.

Heartfelt thanks also to Paul Vendeventer of Community Partners, who donated \$1,000 to the Friendship Village through a connection with Suel Jones. Paul's donation was made in memory of his brother, James Charles Vendeventer, USMC, Delta Co. First Battalion, Third Marine Regiment, Third Marine Division (D-1-3-3) killed near Cam Lo, May 5, 1969.

A Good Friend in Hanoi

Director of Vietnam Programs for Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA), Chuck Searcy has been in Hanoi nearly 6 years. He knows the Vietnamese people and American veterans well. He is a vet himself.

In 1996 VVAFA was the only American veterans' organization with a full-time representative in Vietnam; Chuck was at the top of the list of "usual suspects" among veterans who came back to Vietnam to resolve the nagging doubts, fears, and guilt that have plagued many of them for years. Since then, the U.S. Embassy has referred veterans to him, American businesses have given them his address and phone number, and his Washington office sent them as well. Chuck welcomes the opportunity to meet veterans, spend some time with them, and introduce them to the energy and warmth of Vietnam today. He shares their tears as they find healing and reconciliation in the forgiveness and generosity of the Vietnamese people, who experienced the devastation and destruction and pain of war in a way that few Americans can ever know.

"The Vietnamese are astonishingly open and hospitable to us," Chuck says, "reminding us over and over again that the war is over. 'Close the past, open the future' is the way the Vietnamese express it."

Chuck has visited the Friendship Village many times and has seen it progress from an idea to a living, growing community. He has been very helpful to me and many others visiting the Vietnam Friendship Village Project. Our heartfelt thanks to him from VFVP-USA.

—Carl Stancil

Chuck Searcy can be reached by e-mail at chuck@netnam.org.vn

Vietnam Friendship Village Project-USA thanks you for your support!

Listed below are all our supporters from the past several years. Please let us know if we have missed anyone.

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Chris Young
Roberta Ziegler

DEDICATIONS received from our 1999 Mailing

Donor

Ruth Baldino
J. "Trampus" Bannister
James "Groucho" Beckenhaupt
Robert F. Burns
Debbie Cahoon
William & Lillian Corrigan
Lawrence H. Geller
John Govsky
Heroes at Heart
Jane Higgins
Terri & James Lilienthal
Peter Rubin
Estelle Salberg
Carl Stancil
Dave & Heather Tracey

Dedication

In honor of Le Ly Hayslip
In honor of Dan W. Bannister III's 50th Birthday
In memory of Nguyen Van Ranv
In memory of Robert Earl & Beatrice E. Burns
To celebrate families & friends of Vietnam Vets
In honor of George Mizo
In honor of Ms. Renée Margaret
In memory of Jeff "Paco" Huch
In honor of Laura Spivak
In memory of Jeff "Paco" Huch
In memory of Jeff Huch
In memory of Dr. William Eisman
In memory of William Eisman, DDS
In memory of Rosemarie Greiner
In memory of Jeff Huch, to commemorate his
life and his father's love for his son



Vietnam Friendship Village Project-USA, Inc.

P.O. Box 3805, Santa Cruz, CA 95063 USA

Return Service Requested



**The Friendship Village means hope
for the future of these boys.**

Visit our Website — <http://www.cruzio.com/~vfvpusa>

Peace with Vietnam: A Day of Remembrance

April 30, 2000 will be the 25th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam. The VFVP-USA Committee is planning to host a Day of Remembrance in Santa Cruz, California on that date. Here are some suggestions for ways to remember in your community:

- Bring together veterans, widows, youth, peace activists, and faith leaders to talk about ways to create an appropriate "Remembrance" in your community.
- Write your own thoughts about the legacy of war, about the 25th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam (April 30, 2000), and send them to the op-ed pages of your local newspaper.
- Seek out women's, veterans, peace organizations or faith-based resources to support you in your efforts.
- Ask your local mayor to dedicate April 30, 2000 as a Day of Remembrance for those affected by the war in Vietnam. Publicize the dedication on local radio, local television news, or in your local papers.
- Volunteer to maintain memorials to those who died in war.
- Create your own memorial to those who survived.
- Send a message about peace to your political representative, or share information with others.
- Teach peace to your children.
- Vote your conscience.
- Find faith in your own heart and home to prevent war.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project USA is to cultivate reconciliation and heal the wounds of the Vietnam War by uniting veterans and caring citizens through international cooperation in the building and support of the Village of Friendship, a living symbol of peace.