



Viet Nam Friendship Village

Newsletter of the United States Committee for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project

Spring 2007

Friendship Village Initiates Consulting Service for Families of Young Children with Disabilities

by Rosemarie Höhn-Mizo, Edith Heinlein, and Becky Luening

On January 12, 2007 an inauguration ceremony was held for an exciting new outpatient service offered by the Friendship Village to families of young children with suspected disabilities. The early intervention consulting service offers diagnosis, physiotherapy, training for parents, and some material support.

The service was initiated by German physiotherapist Edith Heinlein who provided rehabilitation and physiotherapy services at the Friendship Village for the past two years, as well as training of Friendship Village physiotherapy staff. Edith's contribution was made possible by a grant from the German Development Service, which extended its generous support to make it possible for her to provide special training concerning the early development of children and early detection of physical disabilities to the new children's doctor, Dr. Pham Van Dem, who is now responsible for the consulting service.

With this new service the Friendship Village reaches out to parents with babies and very young children with

disabilities. It also networks with the different health organizations and institutions in the surrounding area, sharing knowledge and building cooperative links. Knowing that there is a third generation of children affected by the toxic legacy of Agent Orange, this consulting service is a model of early intervention and assistance to families.

The well-attended inauguration ceremony helped broadcast the possibilities of the consulting service and the help that is being offered. Visitors from different clinics and health centers in Hanoi and several districts around the Friendship Village had a chance to ask questions and take informational leaflets back home to their own institutions.

After initial consultation and diagnosis, parents may receive free physiotherapy for their children with instructions about how to do the therapy themselves. Parents from the surrounding area can attend weekly sessions until they have sufficient knowledge and skills. After that, the doctor and physiotherapist will see children on a regular basis to oversee their progress and dispense instructions on

additional therapies.

The Friendship Village is able to provide more than 20 different types of aids to families, including wheelchairs, standing frames, walkers, crutches, bicycles for children with spastic problems, sitting-position aids, and special tools to help with eating. Those who can afford it will pay, with fees helping to offset costs and to buy more equipment. The German Development Service and several private donors provided much of the equipment at

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Le Hong Hoa and Edith Heinlein stand in the doorway of the consulting service office in the new clinic building on the day of the inauguration ceremony. Fluent in German and English, Hoa served as Edith's translator. She also worked with Edith to translate films about children's development, rehabilitation and physiotherapy from German into Vietnamese, and together they invented a Vietnamese rehabilitation vocabulary of standard expressions used in children's therapy.



DON BLACKBURN

Friendship Village Doctor Pham Van Dem (left) and Ms. Ngoc Ha, Friendship Village Administrative Manager. Dr. Dem is in charge of the new consulting service.

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VFVP-USA Financial Summary

Oct. 1, 2005 – Sept. 30, 2006

TOTAL ASSETS beginning of year \$ 21,036.11

INCOME

Individual Donations \$ 20,487.85
Interest from Savings 67.47
Total Income \$ 20,555.32

EXPENSES

Bank Charges \$ 118.00
Nonprofit Registration Fees 25.00
Photocopies 46.27
Postage 1,214.05
Printing 1,140.93
Telephone 884.16
Mailing Supplies 180.42
Website 131.40
Returned Check 50.00
Total Expenses \$ 3,790.23

VFVP FUND TRANSFERS

To VN Friendship Village \$ 23,268.00

TOTAL ASSETS end of year

Savings Balance as of 9/30/05 \$ 13,341.56
Checking Balance as of 9/30/05 1,191.64
Total Assets \$ 14,533.20

VFVP-USA Fund Transfer Records

• FY 2004-2005

To Friendship Village:

12/30/04	\$ 5,000
3/11/05	7,000
7/13/05	20,000
TOTAL	\$ 32,000

To Vietnam Children's Fund for the School Building:

7/19/05	\$ 7,500
9/23/05	4,138
TOTAL	\$ 11,638

• FY 2005-2006

To Friendship Village:

6/12/06	\$ 5,000
7/18/06	15,000
9/1/06	3,268
TOTAL	\$ 23,268

• FY 2006-2007—so far

To Friendship Village:

10/10/06	\$ 10,000
3/1/07	25,000
TOTAL	\$ 35,000

Consulting Service ...continued from page 1

startup. Most of the wheelchairs were donated from foreign countries; the rest of the aids are produced by companies around Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Some of the aids now being supplied by the consulting service count not previously be found in Vietnam.

In mid-March, VFVP International Committee President Rosemarie Mizo reported that consulting office hours were being fully booked well in advance. Parents are coming from as far away as Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) to have their children examined and get advice and help.

Edith Heinlein added that since opening, the consulting service invited a therapist for speech/logopedic problems for a week of consulting. An additional session was held and more are planned, as there is a large need for this type of therapy in Vietnam.

The consulting service also has started to provide trainings in the health centers of the province of Ha Tay. With the help and support of the German Development Service, the goal is to create three additional consulting service offices in different locations. This will take place in cooperation with Vietnam's Ministry of Health.

We are very grateful to Edith Heinlein for her committed efforts to make the consulting service a reality. We are grateful to Dr. Dem for his willingness to put so much time and effort into learning more about the special field of early diagnosis and intervention. We are also grateful to the Veterans Association and the leadership in the Friendship Village for supporting these efforts and helping to complete all the necessary administrative work necessary to open the doors of this service. May many children and parents receive help and support through this special place!

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Vietnam Friendship Village Financial Summary November 1, 2004–September 30, 2006

INCOME

International Committee contribution		\$ 236,663.30
Germany (58.6%)	138,605.49	
USA (23.27%)	55,189.71	
France (11.31%)	26,738.40	
Japan (4.22%)	9,989.00	
Canada (2.6%)	6,140.70	
Contributions to organic garden project		15,678.35
Canadian Fund	8,860.76	
French organization	273.31	
Linda Johnson & Friends (Suel Jones' sister)	3,500.00	
Intl. Women's Club	1,925.00	
American Students	80.00	
Sale of produce to VFV	1,039.28	
Direct donations from individuals and organizations		55,282.56
2005	32,230.35	
2006 (to Sept. 30)	23,052.21	
Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN)		606,465.19
Food for veterans & wages for 15 staff	68,490.51	
Capital costs:	537,974.68	
• Administration building		
• Health center		
• Infrastructure		
Fund surplus from FY 2002-04 plus special donations made Nov.–Dec. 2004		114,254.28
Funds for food	5,755.27	
Japanese Committee funds for computer class	5,000.00	
German Committee funds for children's house T6	58,411.27	
US Committee and VCF ¹ funds for school building	36,087.74	
Vitarus Company ² funds for medical equipment	9,000.00	
TOTAL INCOME		\$ 1,028,343.68

¹Vietnam Children's Fund is a US NGO that builds schools in Vietnam.

²Vitarus is an overseas Vietnamese company based in Russia.

EXPENSES

General operating costs		\$ 284,283.71
Food expenses	85,963.85	
Healthcare	10,721.65	
Assurance of life activities	21,769.04	
Professional services (fencing wall, kitchen, roof of vocational & rehab building)	88,862.30	
Wages & salaries for 45 cadres & workers	72,754.26	
Other	4,212.61	
Medical equipment		2,636.98
Equipment for computer class		9,190.77
15,000 Euro project ³		18,022.99
Capital construction		636,684.11
Primary School Bldg.	36,087.74	
Children's House T6	62,621.69	
Admin. Bldg., Clinic & Infrastructure	537,974.68	
Doors for vocational training classrooms and rehabilitation room		1,004.08
Assistance for embroidery and sewing classes		714.08
Organic garden project & peace garden		14,616.24
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 967,152.96
FUND SURPLUS 2005-2006 transferred to 2007		\$ 61,190.72

³"15,000 Euro project" refers to a special fund created with donations that came to the German Committee after the publication of a newspaper article by Henrik Bork in the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*. In addition to providing good care and education for the sisters Huong and Giang (see our Spring 2006 newsletter), there was an agreement to also help other children in the village. To do that on a long-term basis without privileging certain children, the German Committee arranged with our Vietnamese partners to begin with a budget of 15,000 Euro to help improve the overall quality of care for the children. This money was used to hire three new teachers who had just earned university degrees in special education; to hire more physiotherapists and more housemothers; and to create a special fund for expenses of the school, the residential houses, and the rehabilitation program. More detail is available about this or any other financial data, upon request.



The two most prominent of the four new buildings added to the Friendship Village within the last two years are the Medical Clinic (far left) and the Administration Building (left), both funded by the Vietnamese government.

PHOTOS BY BECKY LUENING

FRIENDSHIP VILLAGE

Report on Operations: Oct. 1, 2004–Sept. 30, 2006

General Care of Residents

The village regularly provides care for 40 veterans and between 110–120 children at any one time. Within the two years of this reporting period, a total of 412 veterans and 109 children were admitted for services; 372 veterans and 100 children were released after being served.

In 2006, food expenses were adjusted up to a level of 15,000 VND (approx. \$1 USD) per person/per day. An additional snack is now being provided for children in the evenings. Improvements have been made in the processing of food in accordance to standards of health and nutrition, and in general the health of the veterans and children is stable and most of them put on weight while at the village. Improvements have also been made in food hygiene and safety, and a change was made from a coal- to gas-powered stove to ensure a healthier environment for service workers.

Children's spirits are nourished with special events including holiday celebrations, performances and monthly film nights; annual field trips to the circus, water puppets, and the mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh; as well as daily sports and arts activities. All of these activities contribute to an upbeat community atmosphere, which helps ease children's reintegration to their home communities upon leaving the village.

Medical Treatment and Rehabilitation

Veterans admitted to the Friendship Village tend to have poor overall health due to chemical exposure, with 82% suffering from malnutrition. Afflictions of the elderly veterans, (aged 50–70) include: restricted mobility; digestive & nervous system disorders; skin diseases; otitis, rhinitis & pharyngitis; cardiovascular, respiratory, genital & urinary problems.

The medical challenges seen in the children admitted to the Friendship Village include: developmental delays; malformation of rib cage, spinal column and limbs; teeth and gum

problems; eye disorders; lips, muteness and deafness; digestive problems; otorhinolaryngologic disease (tumors and cancers of the head and neck area, base of skull and other problems of the ear, nose and throat); and epilepsy.

Friendship Village doctors, assistant doctors and physiotherapists implement regular monthly inpatient medical exams and treatment for their patients, applying combined methods of Eastern and Western diagnosis, and timely and thorough treatment for acute diseases. Those cases requiring clinical tests or surgery are sent to nearby city hospitals for treatment. For those conditions that are treatable with traditional medicines, the village herb garden provides much of the raw material used in these remedies.

A special physical rehabilitation room is equipped with 26 kinds of rehab tools. German physiotherapy consultant Edith Heinlein worked closely with the Vietnamese staff during these past two years to determine the treatment and rehabilitation needed for each individual child and veteran, keeping medical records and constructing a practical daily plan for each. Ms. Heinlein also held weekly professional skill training sessions to increase the level of proficiency for the physiotherapists working at the village.

It is reported that a high degree of success was achieved in treatment of acute diseases such as otitis, rhinitis, pharyngitis, tonsillitis, bronchitis, pneumonia, cornea disease, conjunctivitis and others. Effective gains were also made in checking and subsiding chronic diseases such as gastritis and duodenitis, in treating muscle and joint diseases with a combination of medicine and rehabilitation, and in treating mental depression.

Case Studies

Two individual children's cases from the last two years illustrate some of the services provided at the village and the results.

- Toan, born in 1994 in Bac Ninh Province, was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Upon entering the village he had an extremely stiff body and was unable to feed himself. Limited mental functioning made communication difficult. Toan was provided with a wheelchair and other orthopedic devices. He was taken to the hospital for hand surgery, and helped



PHOTOS BY DAVE ROCOVITS

When VFVP supporter Dave Rocovits spent time at the village last year, he made a point of eating with the children and vets rather than the staff.

Ms. Hieu (above) came along as translator and Dave reports she did a wonderful, compassionate job. It was her first visit to the village. She now plans to go more often to visit with the children.



Three nutritious meals a day have a medicinal effect on children and veterans, who are often malnourished when they first come to the Friendship Village. The food budget has increased with inflation, and healthy nighttime snacks have been added for the children. Some items, such as organic veggies, fish and pork, are raised on-site. Mealtimes are communal and fun.

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with rehabilitation practice. After two years, Toan has made obvious progress and can now feed himself and draw pictures.

• Yen, born in 1988 in Thai Binh Province, entered the village with two malformed feet that made it impossible for her to stand or walk. After undergoing surgery on both feet and post-surgery rehabilitation, she can now walk independently and also rides a three-wheeled bicycle.

Special Education & Vocational Training

With the interest and efforts of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN) and the International Committee, education facilities and teaching staff were both improved during this time period. Special education consultant Vivien Heller, from Germany, helped make improvements in the organization and effectiveness of the existing system, and provided several training courses for teachers. The original three special education classes were transformed into five classes with the placement of a total of 60 children based on the cognitive ability of each child. Desks, chairs and classroom tools were purchased thanks to the assistance of the German Committee and Suel Jones of the US Committee.

A few children were sent to schools outside the village for their continuing education. In addition, computer classes were organized at the village in August 2005, after donation of ten computers by the Japanese Committee. So far, seven children have completed the office skills computing class and three (Huong, Giang and Hung) have learned enough to support the teacher in instructing other children. They receive an allowance of 200,000 VND (about \$12.50) per month for their assistance.

Craft classes continued in embroidery, silk flowers, and sewing, with a handful of children becoming highly skilled at their craft. The sewing class made 200 items of clothing for veterans and 100 for children who stay at the village.

In addition to the income reported in the 2004-2006 Financial Report (page 3), a net amount of \$5,577.01 was generated by the sale of products made by vocational education students. Approximately 23% of the profit (a total of \$1,255.06 for the two years) was divided up and awarded to students as a bonus when they returned home for Tet New Year celebrations. In addition to the bonus paid to the children, in 2005 a total of 50 million VND (\$3,164.56 USD) was placed into savings for the Friendship Village. The remaining \$1,157.39 will be re-invested in the vocational program.

Visitors and In-kind Donations

With information about the project being disseminated via the VAVN, the International Committee, and the staff of the Friendship Village, more and more individuals and groups are visiting the village. During these two years, a total 550 delegations visited, with a total of 4,808 people. Of these, 231 groups (2,699 individuals) were from Vietnam and 319 (2,109) were from other countries. Many visitors brought gifts with them, including medical equipment, furniture, TVs, computers, washing machines, and bikes as well as toys,



JUDY MOSS / BILL BARTEE

A Friendship Village staff physiotherapist demonstrates one of the many special kinds of equipment used in the rehab room.

clothing, books and other small gifts. In addition, hundreds of college students came to the village to participate in music, sports, gardening, art activities and holiday festivals with the children. Their presence is a great addition.

Capital Construction

Fiscal years 2004-2006 saw the construction of four new buildings at the Friendship Village:

- A school building with four classrooms and one staff room (over 400 square meters—funded by the US Committee in collaboration with Vietnam Children's Fund)
- A two-story house for severely disabled children (200 square meters—funded by the German Committee and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation)
- A three-story administration building (over 300 square meters—funded by the Veterans Association of Vietnam)
- A two-story medical center (600 square meters—funded by the Veterans Association of Vietnam)

In addition, the food services area was enlarged, and the vocational training building was enhanced with a fencing wall and a covered walkway in front of the building.

On-site Food Production

Besides preparing quality meals for the children and veterans, the cook staff also raised vegetables as well as pork and fish to add to the meals. The physical environment of the Friendship Village has been significantly enhanced by the organic garden, brought to the Friendship Village through the work of American John Berlow. (The Financial Report on page 3 lists some of the project's donors.) Improvements to the garden in 2006 include a 500-square-meter net house for vegetables needing shade, and enrichment of the soil in preparation for planting a variety of fruit trees (over 200 total), including mango, guava, dracontomelum, apple, logan, orange and grapefruit. Work was also begun on a special peace garden, with initial funding coming from a group of supporters in Arcata, California. [Another donation was recently received from the Olympia, WA Veterans For Peace.]

Village Plans for 2007-2008

At the conclusion of the 11th International Committee Meeting held in Hanoi last November, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by representatives from Germany, France, USA, Canada, and Vietnam. (Our Japanese partner was unable to attend due to illness.) The MOU spells out final agreements on the plans and budget for the next two fiscal years (2006-07 and 2007-08).

- **Charter Agreement:** International Committee members indicated their willingness to continue refining the Charter document that was drafted as a result of agreements made at our November 2005 meeting in Paris, France. The goal of this document is to spell out the objectives of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project and to provide a solid structure and guidance for a smooth cooperative working relationship in the same spirit of peace, friendship and reconciliation that created the Village. A "Pre-charter Agreement" was signed at the meeting with the understanding that a finalized Charter Agreement will be translated and signed as soon as possible.

- **Number of Residents:** For the time being, the number of children and veterans being cared for at the Village will remain at present levels (150-160 total).

- **Nourishment:** The expenditure for food will be adjusted for inflation and an additional evening snack will continue to be provided for the children. On-site raising of pork, fish and organic vegetables will also continue.

- **Health Care:** The new health care center will be equipped with diagnostic, physiotherapy and rehabilitation equipment as soon as funds become available. According to post-conference reports, some equipment is coming from Belgium and the rest will be purchased through the Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment. The medical and technical staff will continue to receive training to ensure a high level of professional service.

- **Education:** The Friendship Village will continue to maintain the five special education classes that have been organized, with ongoing teacher training deemed to be important for maintaining a high level of professional service.

The vocational training in the four existing occupational areas of computer technology, embroidery, sewing/tailoring,

and flowermaking will be maintained and improved. With outside assistance, additional occupations suitable for young people will eventually be added, for example haircutting, mechanics, and repair work.

A gift shop and information center will be set up to sell products and distribute information to visitors. The shop will provide additional opportunities for vocational training in shopkeeping, marketing and public relations.

Starting in the communities surrounding the Friendship Village—Hanoi City and Ha Tay Province—a pilot project will be initiated, in close cooperation with families, to (a) assess vocational opportunities for children in their local villages, (b) assist children and prepare them for returning to their community, and (c) follow up with children who have returned home to ensure their successful reintegration.

- **Organic Garden Project:** The organic garden has become an important part of the image of the Friendship Village as a place where good health is a priority. Friendship Village staff will work with John Berlow to establish the necessary structure and train qualified staff to continue the organic garden, maintaining and possibly increasing production of organic food for the consumption of residents as well as for sale in local markets.

- **Wastewater Treatment & Other Improvements:** Many maintenance projects were identified for the next two years. A high priority is developing an ecological solution for dealing with Village wastewater. Basic repairs and upgrades to many buildings will be undertaken, including floodproofing and termite prevention. The drinking water wells also are in need of upgrading. A professional electrician will be hired to establish electrical grounding and ensure safe wiring in all of the buildings.

- **Tenth Anniversary:** Preparations are being made for the tenth anniversary celebration of the opening of the village planned for March 18, 2008. The next International meeting will coincide with this date. An historical account of the Village founding and development will be published with input from many of those who have been involved over the years.

Visiting the Vietnam Friendship Village

If you're planning a trip to Vietnam, it's not difficult to arrange a visit to the Friendship Village. Here are some guidelines.

The Vietnam Friendship Village is located approximately 11 kilometers southwest of central Hanoi. To arrange a visit, contact Ngoc Ha ("Ms. Ha"), the village office manager, via email at friendshipvillage18398@hn.vnn.vn or by phone at (04) 8374527; (03) 4861329; or mobile phone 0915-154484. (The country code is 84.)

You should inform Ms. Ha of your intention to visit at least one week prior to your visit. If you want to make arrangements before arriving in Vietnam, give yourself plenty of time. Usually it will take at least a couple of business days for Ms. Ha to respond to emails.

The best times to visit the Friendship Village on weekdays are 9:30–11:00am and 3:00–5:00pm. These times work well because the children's break times are 10:00-10:30am and 3:30–4:00pm. You may also visit the Friendship Village on Saturday and Sunday—just call Ms. Ha ahead of time to make arrangements. Allow one or two hours for your visit.

You will need to hire a taxicab or hotel car to take you to the Friendship Village. Have your driver or your hotel receptionist call the Friendship Village (04) 8374527 to ask for directions. One Hanoi taxi driver who already knows his way to the Village is Mr. Dinh—mobile phone 0904-123194.

The only time of year the Village is closed about two weeks on either side of Tet, Vietnamese Lunar New Year.

BIENNIAL REPORT

INTERNATIONAL MEETING REPORT

First Impressions

Before resigning, Michael Cull had the wisdom of recruiting another Alaskan for the US Committee, so that the large state (with possibly the highest per capita number of Vietnam veterans) would still have a VFVP representative. Judy Moss is recently retired from the Anchorage School District where she was a Special Education Teacher Assistant in a specialized community transition program. She has been with her husband Bill Bartee, a Vietnam veteran, for 30 years, and the two of them have lived in Alaska for the past 25. At the early age of 23, after returning home from Vietnam, Bill suffered a stroke, presumably caused by exposure to Agent Orange. Judy and Bill have three children: Nathaniel 32, Rebecca 23 and Shala 32, who has been in a nursing home since 2001 after suffering a traumatic brain injury in an car accident while teaching English in Japan.

As the newcomer to VFVP-USA, I would like to say how excited I am to be a part of this wonderful organization. I first learned about the village three years ago when a peace group here in Anchorage, Alaska showed a movie about it. Then in 2005 I attended the Peace & Reconciliation Celebration in Anchorage and Homer, and was introduced to Michael Cull and Suel Jones. With help from Michael, my husband Bill and I were able to make a trip to Vietnam in March of 2006. We spent a short period of time at the Village, and when we returned home I was invited to become a board member.

Bill and I were fortunate to be able to return to Hanoi in November 2006 to attend the International Meeting, which was a great opportunity to meet everyone and learn more about the organization. It was a very rewarding experience. The schedule of both formal and informal meetings was intense as there were many issues to review in a very short time. Decisions made by the International Committee at the biennial meeting govern all activities in the Village for the next two years.

We enjoyed a customary official

2007-2008 Projected Budget

This is the financial agreement from the MOU, in which the International Committee guarantees funding for the operation of the village for the next two years. The International Committee's fundraising goals are based on this budget. Rather than being assigned a specific amount, each country simply works to raise as much as possible, with the goal of raising the total by our combined efforts. The Vietnamese Committee, under the umbrella of the Veterans Association of Vietnam (VAVN), is responsible for a significant portion of the budget as well.

CONTRIBUTIONS	VAVN	Intl Committee
A. Feeding & Operating Expenses		
1. Salaries for 45 workers, cadres	\$ 129,063.00	—
2. Food & medicine for 40 veterans	46,456.00	—
3. Food & medicine for 120 children	—	118,481.00
4. Professional services	—	36,380.00
Subtotal A.	<u>\$ 175,519.00</u>	<u>\$ 154,861.00</u>
B. Other Expenses		
1. Floodproofing of buildings G6, G7, T1, T2, T3, T4	18,987.00	18,987.00
2. Termite prevention for 10 villas, dining rooms & old guesthouse	3,797.00	3,797.05
3. Repairing of 8 villas & upgrading building G1 for guesthouse	15,823.00	15,823.00
4. Upgrading & maintenance of water wells	15,823.00	15,823.00
5. Equipment for health center	114,873.00	164,557.00
6. Bus (15 seats)	37,975.00	—
7. Garage construction & lighting system	12,658.00	—
Subtotal B.	<u>\$ 219,936.00</u>	<u>\$ 218,987.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 395,455.00	\$ 373,848.00

reception along with a tour of the Village. We were shown the new hospital building and met the new medical staff, then toured the new education building and vocational training center and met some of the teachers. We were able to observe many of the 120 children in class and in treatment at the new facilities. There were about 35 veterans receiving improved care at the new facilities.

It was great to meet Rosi Mizo and other International Committee members along with Director Dang Vu Dung and members of the Veterans Association of Vietnam. Four different interpreters worked very hard to translate Vietnamese to French, to German and to English, then back to Vietnamese. We also had the honor of

meeting with Mrs. Truong My Hoa, Vice President of Vietnam, at the Presidential Palace.

My biggest thrill of course was being with the children. On a special night of entertainment, the staff and all of the children gave a very "modern" and unique rendition of Cinderella. It was followed by a concert by the Cultural Committee of VAVN who sang traditional and popular songs to honor the International Committee and the veterans on both sides of the war. It touched all our hearts.

All in all it was a very rewarding experience and we are very excited about returning in March 2008 for the next International Committee meeting and the 10th Anniversary Celebration.

—Judy Moss

The End of an Era

VFVP-USA Bids Farewell to Suel Jones and Michael Cull



JUDY MOSS / BILL BARTEE

Suel Jones and one of his good friends at the Vietnam Friendship Village

In 1998, Chuck Searcy (then Country Representative for Vietnam Veterans of American Foundation) and Ho Xuan Dich (then Foreign Relations expert for the Veterans Association of Vietnam) took Vietnam veterans and fellow Alaskans Suel Jones and Michael Cull on their first visit to the Vietnam Friendship Village. Mr. Dich told them that Friendship Village Co-founder George Mizo, with wife Rosi and son Michael, had attended the Grand Opening of the Village just two weeks prior. For Suel and Michael, this was the beginning of many magical reconections to old friends (Michael and George were next-door neighbors in Trenton, New Jersey in the 1970s) and to the people of Vietnam. After discovering the village, both Suel and Michael became board members for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project's US Committee, and both contributed significantly to the project during their tenure.

The Vietnam Friendship Village Project experienced a big loss this winter when Suel Jones and Michael Cull

both resigned from the US Committee, and Suel Jones resigned as VFVP-USA's volunteer representative in Vietnam. The two plan to remain minimally involved in Alaska fundraising, and Cull has promised to serve as an Advisor to the US Committee, but Suel is now concentrating his efforts on writing his memoirs and will no longer be available to escort visitors to the village.

Our "Man in Hanoi" Suel Jones

In 2000 Suel took up residency in Hanoi and began serving as our "Man in Hanoi," paving the way for visitors to find the village and take photos and stories back home. For over six years he escorted any and all persons looking for Friendship Village as well as many who had never heard of it. He was always easy to reach by email or in person at his "office," the Moca Cafe. Suel's accessibility and outreach brought unimagined exposure and immeasurable donations to our cause. He inspired writers, students, teachers, backpackers, Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese professionals, and many veterans to contribute to the Friendship Village. Here is a partial list of Suel's accomplishments:

- Collaborated on Alaskan fundraisers.
- Inspired the Bill Bacon film, *Friendship Village: A Place of Healing*, which continues to play on Library/ Public Access television channels all over Alaska.
- Appeared in print, radio, and TV interviews in Vietnam, Alaska, Australia, China, Europe and the US, bringing attention to the project and its mission of finding peace and reconciliation through serving victims of war.
- Developed and maintained a vital network of like-minded NGOs, media contacts, and veteran advocates.
- Made the connection with John Berlow who initiated the

Friendship Village's organic garden project.

- Developed a collaboration with Vietnam Children's Fund to build the one totally US-funded building at the village—a school building dedicated to the memory of George Mizo.
- Organized special projects to directly benefit the residents of the Friendship Village.
- Arranged for funds to enable a few of the children at the village to attend computer school and/or college.
- Helped establish the university student volunteer program which continues to this day.

Michael Cull, Alaskan Extraordinaire

Michael Cull made extraordinary and far-reaching connections for the Friendship Village throughout Alaska, centered in Anchorage. A retired VA counselor, he understands the value of "going back" for healing psychic wounds of Vietnam veterans, and he organized several tours for that purpose. A tour of northern and central Vietnam in January 2005, dubbed a "learning tour," combined students from Alaska Pacific University and Alaskan vets, who learned from each other in a big way as they explored the country and met the


continued on page 9...




BECKY LUENING


Mr. Dich, one of our original partners, reconnected with Michael Cull at a special dinner held in Hanoi last November. Mike gifted Mr. Dich with a VFP hat.

Fundraising & Outreach Highlights


 **Tamarine**, a fine Vietnamese restaurant in **Palo Alto, California**, hosted an art auction in September 2006 for the benefit of Friendship Village. Thanks to **Anne Le**, the restaurateur, in excess of \$4,000 was raised. **Dave Rocovits**, long-time VFV supporter from Reno, Nevada, attended the event on our behalf.

 In the summer of 2006, US Committee member **Bill Dean** made a presentation about Friendship Village to the **Kiwanis Sunrisers**, a community service club based in **Corvallis, Oregon** that specializes in services for children. The club subsequently made a donation of \$300 to the Friendship Village.


 At the invitation of the **Canadian Committee**, US Committee members Becky Luening and Carl Stancil attended the World Peace Forum held June 23-28, 2006 in Vancouver, BC and participated in a panel discussion after the screening of The Friendship Village, along with **Canadian Committee member Jeff Schutts**, **German Committee member Brigitte Mueller**, and **Vietnamese delegate Nguyen Van Huynh**, who was involved in the early stages of the Friendship Village development. A fundraiser for VFV was held later that evening at **Chai Restaurant** in **Vancouver, BC**.

 A benefit dinner and auction for the Friendship Village was held September 22, 2006 in **Anchorage, Alaska**. US Committee member **Judy Moss** played a major role in organizing the benefit, which netted over \$3,500 for the Friendship Village. **Michael Cull** was also involved.

 In October, **Doctors Janet and Ken Bates** of **Bandon, Oregon** hosted a house party featuring live music by the couple and by Vietnam vet and **VFP member John Gretzinger**. US Committee member **Don Blackburn** read poetry written by himself and by Giang, the young woman whose story was the featured article in our Spring 2006 newsletter. People were deeply moved by Giang's poem, "Em Toi" (My Sister), which told of her sister Huong's slow physical deterioration from the effects of Agent Orange dioxin poisoning. Don's poem, "Spirit Sisters" was dedicated to **Giang and Huong** and Janet and Ken's "She Sings Her Song" was also dedicated to the sisters. **Michelle Mason's** film **The Friendship Village** was screened at the event, which brought in over \$4,200 for the Friendship Village. Don notes that **Veterans For Peace Chapter 141, Southwest Oregon**, has adopted the village as a special project and there is great interest in having another fundraiser in the near future.

 On February 10, 2007 US Committee member **Liliane Fløge** and her husband, **Steve Crawford**, a member of the Advisory Board, staffed a Vietnam Friendship Village table at

the annual **Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association's Tet Festival**. The day-long event was held at the new Alumni Center of the University of Maryland College Park. Several thousand very happy people—mostly but not exclusively Vietnamese-American—celebrated the beginning of the year of the pig with an ao dai fashion show, dance performances, children's activities, and lots of special Tet foods. Liliane and Steve's table was one of many, but only one of a few that were concerned with work being done in Vietnam. Photographs of the Village and the beautiful bookmarks made by the children at the Village drew many of the attendees to the table. Lots of people stopped to ask about the activities of the Friendship Village and to carefully examine the photos. Many VFVP newsletters and brochures were distributed and many contributions made for the bookmarks, which were admired by young and old alike.

 **Dave Rocovits**, long-time supporter of the Friendship Village from Reno, Nevada reported that the **Grand Sierra Resort** sponsored its first New Year celebration this year by setting up booths around a stage like an Asian night market scene. They had extra space, so Dave's wife, **Amy**, arranged to have a booth donated to the Friendship Village. They set up a booth of Dave's photographs, ran **The Friendship Village** film, and displayed the book, **Viet Nam: Collateral Damage**. Dave was surprised to find the majority of the people were totally ignorant of the effects of Agent Orange. Although the booth didn't raise much money, it definitely raised people's awareness.

The End of an Era

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people of Vietnam. Anchorage Channel 2 Anchor Maria Downey, along with cameraman Rich Jordan, accompanied the group and produced a five-part series about the trip for Alaska television.

In collaboration with Suel and others, Michael organized many fundraisers for the Friendship Village in Alaska, aimed at veterans and peace activists all over the state. His sense of humor led him to fun-filled gigs including several benefits at the outrageous Fly By Night Club and an annual "Hogg of the Year Award" brunch at the Hogg Brothers Restaurant in Anchorage. He also helped orchestrate the May 2005 Celebration of Peace and Reconciliation in Alaska, an event for American veterans commemorating 30 years of peace with Vietnam. Ever inclusive, he was sensitive about politicizing the project in any way and kept focused on the healing aspects of involvement for Vietnam veterans.

Like Suel, Michael found inspiration for his mission of reconciliation in George Mizo. He saw that one vet really could make a difference by serving the victims of war.

DEDICATIONS *received since our last mailing*



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 Marlene Warneke
 Niki Wells

Dedication

In honor of all the guys that had to fight in Vietnam
 In honor of Suel Jones
 In honor of Bill Dean, a great man
 In honor of Le Ly Hayslip
 In honor of Stephen & Jody Bare, VFW Bill Motto Post 5888
 In celebration of peacemaking
 In celebration of PAX & New Beginnings!
 In honor of the International Committee
 In memory of Kathy Clark & George Mizo
 In celebration of helping one another
 In memory of Arthur Scruggs
 In celebration of Pascal Crawford
 In memory of Myron Fossum
 In memory of Paco Huch
 In memory of Joe Murphy
 In honor of Coastside Vipassana Center
 In memory of Ruth & Paul Crawford
 Dedicated to Amber Frederiksen
 In honor of Becky Luening
 In memory of Kim Cottom

 In celebration of my freedom from want and the
 opportunity to live in the best state (Alaska) in the
 best country in the world

 In celebration of Don & Carole Flaxman
 In memory of Betty L. Heineman
 In gratitude to all who helped make Friendship Village
 a success (visited VFV in January 2005)
 In celebration of all the volunteers of the "Village" —
 Thank you everyone!

 In celebration of my 90th birthday!
 In memory of all of our fallen comrades on both sides
 In memory of my son, Ross L. Koen
 In memory of Mr. Le Sau and Mr. S. Ton-Nu Thi Dien
 In celebration of healing
 In memory and in honor of Joan Duffy
 In memory of Jean Bunim
 In honor of Deb Milbrath; In honor of Leslie & Jim Hogan
 In celebration of children
 In honor/memory/celebration of George Mizo
 In memory of Nguyen Thi Minh Khai
 In honor of Carl Stancil
 In memory of S/Sgt. Wilbur Schneider
 In memory of George Mizo
 In celebration of Jeff Schutts, Michelle Mason and Nicholas
 In honor of all who served; In celebration of "Gus"
 In honor of Veterans For Peace
 In memory of Jim & Abbie Sugrue
 To honor Becky Luening for many years of selfless service
 In honor of all Vietnam vets (US and Vietnamese)
 In memory of Mary Jo Tracy
 In memory of Mrs. Danh Huynh
 In memory of Trinh Ngien
 In memory of Wayman Kenneth Law, US Army casualty
 (1935-1965)
 In memory of CWO Ronald J. Fulton
 In honor of James Mulherin

December 2006

To the People of the Vietnam Friendship Village Project,

One of the most horrible atrocities of any war is the suffering of the children affected. As the mother of two small children and the wife of a Marine Reservist, who has been to Iraq twice, my heart is with you and everyone involved in helping children. I am so grateful for your work, your dedication and perseverance and caring and compassion. The Vietnam Friendship Village is important in so many ways. VFV represents hope, vitality, rebirth, determination and love. Knowing of the VFV gives us hope for a better world—a peaceful world. The VFV reminds us of the goodness of people and exemplifies it at its best.

Thank you for all you do.

*Best regards,
 Niki Wells
 San Diego, CA*

Dedications sans Donors

For the following, the donor's name was not written on the dedication slip. Our apologies to donors for not being able to include your name herewith. If you recognize your dedication below, please let us know and we will re-run it in our next newsletter.

- In honor of Mike Cull
- In honor of my brother Phil
- In celebration of Peace
- In honor of Earl Huch, father of Paco
- In honor of all people exposed to Agent Orange



In celebration!

A warm welcome to Nicholas Hollister Schutts, born to Canadian Committee members Michelle Mason & Jeff Schutts on November 21, 2006

Vietnam Friendship Village Project Donors

We thank you for your support!

A list of all who made donations between May 1, 2006 & April 17, 2007. VFVP-USA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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Peace, Friendship & Reconciliation

One of many American supporters of the Vietnam Friendship Village, David Rocovits raises money in Reno, Nevada to help support the village. Dang Vu Dung is the new Director.



BECKY LUENING



DAVID ROCOVITS



JUDY MOSS / BILL BARTEE



DAVID ROCOVITS

The Friendship Village runs four vocational training programs (clockwise from top left): Embroidery, Sewing/Tailoring, Computers, and Flowermaking. A handful of students become highly skilled in their craft. In the computer class, those who excel receive an allowance for helping teach other students. Everyone benefits from the sewing class, which produces clothing for some of the village residents. Students get to share the profits when craft items are sold to visitors. US Committee member Don Blackburn reported that he was greatly impressed with the work of Vu Thi Ngoc Loan, who helps run the vocational education program. He was present this year when she handed out the first "paychecks" to children who crafted and helped sell the various embroidery and silk flower products. "Her efficient attitude were encouraging to witness. It was obvious the children were very proud to receive these small, but well-deserved payments," said Don.