



Children of Vietnam

Mission: to provide direct aid to poor and handicapped children in Vietnam

Winter News Update 2002

From our president, Ben Wilson...

Dear Friends;

It has been a very exciting year thanks to your support of our work with children. We built our 80th house in December since our beginning 4 1/2 years ago and we had 19 donated this year. The families are overwhelmed when receiving a house. We gave 51 piglets to poor families and 1300 fruit trees (Rambutan and Mango). Fifteen pigs now have 85 babies and 24 more are expecting very soon. Each family must give one piglet to another poor family. The parasite eradication program

was started in September and 20,000 children ages 5 to 12 years have had the first of two doses of Mebendazole. Another 10,000 up to age 13 will be treated this month. With a parasite infection rate of up to 80%, this program is a key element to better health.

Our plans for 2003 include programs to improve the health and living conditions of adoptable children in orphanages in and near Danang. Your ongoing support is a key element in making a major difference in the lives of these children.

Thank you so very much for your heartfelt interest in these beautiful children.

Ben Wilson



Ben Wilson and board member Minhthu Linagh at DaNang Deaf School. Children received new hearing aids and are signing "thank you".

Vietnam Factoids:

- ? Population: 80 million
- ? Size: about twice the size of North Carolina
- ? Half of the population is under age 25
- ? Literacy rate: 93%
- ? Per capita income: \$350
- ? 40% of population lives below the poverty line
- ? 38% of children under 5 are malnourished.
- ? Land mines and unexploded armament are still a threat to children.
- ? Education is not free

First Hand View of Children of Vietnam at Work

Recently, when we told people we were going to Vietnam their first gasping response was "why would you do that?" For many, Vietnam was something seen on the evening news or in the newspapers, an entire nation reduced to a few numbing photographs. We wanted to take this trip to learn more about what my Dad, Ben Wilson, was doing through Children of Vietnam. To be honest, it seemed like a fun opportunity for us to visit a foreign country and to have Dad along as a tour guide. We were not prepared for what we would experience.

The overseas flight was filled with businessmen and this time the Americans aboard were armed with Palm Pilots and briefcases instead of rifles and grenades. We felt like fish out of water when



The Wilson's helping to distribute "mooncakes" which are highly nutritious fruitcake about the size of a muffin. Each box contains four.

we arrived. People wanted to know where we were from and when we whispered, "the United States," a woman shouted, "American!" and our hearts leapt. They hugged us and everyone wanted to practice their English.

Our first glimpse into what Children of Vietnam was about took place at a school where we delivered food to help families celebrate the Vietnamese Mid-Autumn Festival. While one of us fought back tears behind the lens of the camcorder, the other handed out moon cakes that would last each family several weeks.

Our next stop was at a vocational training school where girls received scholarships through Children of Vietnam. They practice sewing clothes using newspaper instead of

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Trip

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fabric. As a result of this new skill,



Vietnamese girl in a vocational school where she is learning to sew.

they get permanent jobs not as an act of charity but purely on merit.

Our most memorable experience was at the Hoa Mai Orphanage in Danang where we visited 50 children who were waiting for us. They, too,

hugged us and shouted "Hello!" They just clung to us. They didn't know our names. They didn't know who we were. They just gave us love. They had so much to give.

We arrived back in Columbia overwhelmed with our home, the things we've accumulated, and the abundance of our American lives. We also arrived with a newfound appreciation for the flush toilet!

As we told our story to friends, one commented, "Don't you think you'd see that type of poverty in any third world country?" Absolutely. There are so many worthy causes to pluck our purse strings but we saw the homes that have been built with \$500. We saw the before and after pictures. We shook hands with the family who now had a real house. We hugged the children who had been given bicycles to get them to and from school. It's amazing. You see where the money has gone and you trust the charity.

We had preconceptions of charitable organizations who descend on the poor from the horizon, kicking up the dust in their fancy jeeps and showering dollars on the poor of whatever village they happen to pass through. What we saw here were funds from Children of Vietnam helping the people of Danang to become a more self-sustaining group long after the foreigners are gone.

This trip impressed upon us what caring human beings can do collectively for others. Thank you to Dad, the board, the grassroots people in Danang and the people who have given to Children of Vietnam; a commitment to a cause greater than self. Hopefully through charities like this we'll leave this world better than we found it.

*Elliott and Beverly Wilson
Columbia, South Carolina*

In their own words. . . "A visit in the countryside"

(This article is offered in the form and language in which it was received so that you can experience the "intangible" content of our director's message. Our director, Ms. Huong updates our president frequently concerning activities in the area and progress on our many projects. This article will give you a feeling of the "value" of a house and other items that are made possible by Children of Vietnam (COV)).

Dear Ben,

I went to Tien Lanh yesterday. It from here 50 km . OH, big headache !!!!! To see a family has five children, the mother died last year and the father died 21 day ago. He died of malaria and the grandmother said if they had had money for hospital her son would have been alive. When her son was in hospital she had only 600,000 VND (\$40) from selling a pig but after five day money gone and she had to bring her son back home until he died. COV give the family 500 000 VND (\$34) for food and other expenses for children.

One house in Hoa Phong Village finished. The family was so happy . The grandfather said thank you COV help his family to build house which was dilapidated .He thought that only light wind the old house could be collapsed and he has no way to repair it only has to look at it.His daughter in law told me that she is thinner

now. I asked her why? She answered too happy can not sleep since beginning to build house ,and I told



Mrs. Huong with a child in the suburbs of Danang

her if I known that I could not give her house, she only smile, very happy smile.

This morning COV give seven

bicycles to seven children .They come from Dieu Phong, Hoa Nhon Village the poorest area of Danang city. It is cold and raining to day but they have no raincoat and sweater but smile all time ,they were soooooo happy to receive bicycle from Children Of Vietnam. It is 12 km (7.2 miles) from their house to school, too far so that is reason why many children left school. There are more than 20 children walking every day to school, What do you think? When I ask them what they need more all of them wished clothing for school also for new year coming .I was moved to shed tears Ben .If you saw the children this morning you would have cried too.

Can you understand my English ?

Can you help me ?

Have a good day.

Huong

Does your group need a speaker?

Children of Vietnam has recently formed a speaker's bureau whose mission is to make presentations to groups and tell the story of our work. We are currently looking for opportunities to speak to adult Sunday Schools, mission committees or men's or women's groups in North Carolina

and southern Virginia.

The presentations are rich in pictures of the people and areas that we serve in the greater Da Nang area. The pictures show the people who receive medical aid, scholarships, supplemental food assistance and the housing we build or help repair.

If you are part of an organization, or know of one, that would benefit from such a opportunity as this, please contact Joe Lorber at 336-869-6715 or by e-mail at joe@childrenofvietnam.com. All inquiries will be promptly answered and scheduled at a mutually convenient

Just What is a Medicine Pack?

We developed the "Medicine Pack" concept in order to provide support to children and their families in areas where doctors and health care workers visit once in awhile. The kits are stocked with pain relievers, some antibiotics, herbs, etc. (most things we would buy at a drug store). The kits are sent out with a nurse/medical team when they work in these remote areas.

Recently, Mrs. Huong and volunteer doctors visited a town south of DaNang. They expected to see 50-75 clients and then return. The word got



Medicine Pack on floor of rural clinic

out that they were there and, by actual count, over 500 people showed

up. Isn't it amazing the impact that an aspirin, cortisone cream or some such common item can have on a person?

Medicine packs can be purchased for \$250. All supplies are either donated by a pharmaceutical company or purchased through a wholesaler locally. Our staff maintains accountability for the goods given to make sure that the most people are given the aid. This is just another example of "a little goes a long way in Vietnam".

Forever in My Heart

My mind and heart are still filled with the images of DaNang and the surrounding area there. I still see toothy grins and deep brown eyes, swirling dragons and earnest children, white dresses and white shirts, young women with hairless mannequins, and children who should be jumping rope instead of toiling over looms.

I can still taste mooncakes and hear the drums in celebration. I can smell the streets and the rivers. I can feel the rain upon my face and see it making brooks out of ruts in the sometimes roads. I see ancient bicycles alongside new motorcycles in chaotic movement. I hear babies crying and children laughing. I hear the "whirr" of sewing machines in 100-degree heat operated by girls learning a trade instead of playing games. I see the bitter tears of today and hear the enthusiastic singing of tomorrow.

My trip to DaNang was a most amazing adventure. I was completely overwhelmed by the horrific needs of the people and inspired by the way that Mr. Ben and his staff at Children

of Vietnam respond to these needs with such generosity and purpose. What they say is true, "A little money goes a long way in Vietnam," especially if it is in hands of Mrs. Huong, their Program Manager! With missionary zeal, they are able to feed and



clothe and make whole, countless numbers of the poorest children of the poor. Children flock around Mrs. Huong wherever she goes, and she, always upbeat and optimistic, gives these children more than rice or school supplies, she gives them hope!

I met families who formerly called the street their home, now living in houses built by Children of Vietnam. How proud they were to show us their

simple, yet satisfying abodes; how grateful they were to finally find shelter. There were children in schools with no books or papers or pencils, still eager to learn. I saw educational and vocational facilities made possible by the foresight of Children of Vietnam.

Whether it was a washing machine for an orphanage or medical supplies for a free clinic; a bicycle so a child could go to school, or formula for infant orphans, Children of Vietnam never wavered in its response. Clearly, this non-profit organization is totally dedicated to making life better and sometimes just possible for the deprived children of Vietnam.

What an honor it was to be in their midst, albeit briefly...

Susan Wycoff, Asian Program Coordinator for Carolina Adoption Services of Greensboro, NC and Dr. Elaine Mello, Executive Director of A Better World adoption agency in Connecticut traveled to Vietnam in September. While there we took time to meet with Ben and the COVN staff in DaNang. COVN graciously devoted time to show us several areas of their work.

What YOU can do to help!

Our mission is to provide direct aid to the poor and handicapped children of Viet Nam. Our work is done primarily in Danang and surrounding area.

Our work is accomplished as the result of donations given by our friends and partners.

You can make a difference in the lives of the children we serve by making a 501-C-3 tax deductible gift to Children of Vietnam. We cannot continue our work without you.

As a guide, please view the table to the right to see that the phrase “*a little goes a long way in Vietnam*” is a reality and an opportunity for you to make a difference with a small contribution.

We are still providing aid with less than a 7% administrative charge.

“A Little Goes A Long Way in Vietnam”

Build a house	\$550
Provide rice for a family.....	\$60/year
Scholarship for child	\$60/year
“Piggy” project (Includes some food)	\$50
Fund a medicine pack.....	\$250/pkg.
Buy a bicycle	\$35 each
Buy a child’s hearing aid.....	\$80 each



Young boys at a school that we support with scholarships.



A young girl in Danang looking at the staff and visitors from Children of Vietnam