



# Children of Vietnam

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

Spring News Update 2008

## From our president, Ben Wilson

Ten Years Already? Yes! This year we celebrate our TENTH YEAR serving destitute children in Danang and Quang Nam Province who are orphaned, disadvantaged, poor, disabled or in street children programs. At times when standing daily so close to our work we may not see the long-term results of our efforts with these special children. Then we take a deep breath, step back, and evaluate the fantastic work each one of you as a donor is supporting. I visit Vietnam twice a year

and each time it is so very evident the difference you, our generous supporters, are making in these children's lives. Heart and limb operations, scholarships to university and grammar school, new houses, nutritious food, new kindergartens in rural regions, medical supplies all are giving a new life to hundreds, even thousands of children. Thank you so much for your continued support for their lives. Sincerely,  
Ben Wilson

### Vietnam Factoids:

- ◆ Population: 80 million
- ◆ Size: about twice the size of North Carolina
- ◆ Half of the population is under age 25
- ◆ Literacy rate: 89%
- ◆ 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
- ◆ Children with intestinal parasites are common

## Vietnam Economy in Crisis

Inflation has recently accelerated in Vietnam in 2007, from approximately 8% to over 12%. So far in 2008, it is 25% on an annualized basis ! Vietnam stock market grew amazingly in 2007 but has tumbled in 2008. Real estate prices are also setting records and this may not be so good for the general population of Vietnam. Inflation is also a major headache. This is a problem FOR COV as the cost of building

materials is up 20-30% in the past 12 months. We have funds to complete projects but the facts are we will complete fewer houses and kindergartens with the same dollars. The cost of auto fuel has increased also as it has in our USA. However, we will continue to make our donors aware of these challenges and continue to shop carefully for materials, equipment and labor. We are fortunate to have a keen and dedicated staff.

## Volunteers and Events Around the Country

Ten years ago a core of local individuals in Winston-Salem, NC were our primary supporters. Ten years hence, we are blessed with supporters hailing from all parts of the United States in deed some from all parts of the world. The impact each of you has made by spreading the word about the children we serve has allowed us to touch so many young lives. We would like to share information about the activities of Jean Janicke and Stuart Mackintosh of Washington, DC.

Jean Janicke and husband Stuart Mackintosh

visited COV activities in February 2008 with eight other lively and dedicated supporters from around the USA. They especially came to visit a kindergarten for 35 lively children which they funded in 2007. Jean was so impressed with the work being accomplished for the children, she has planned a fund raiser in Washington, DC on June 14 to celebrate her 40th birthday. Not only this fantastic event is planned but Jean and Stuart are constantly supporting our work by seeking shipping assistance, medical supplies shipping, computers and assistance in other elements of our work. Thank you so much, Jean and Stuart !

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# ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR YEAR 2007— 21,188 children served!

This is a partial list

## 1. Health Care –

- Facial tumor removal for two children
- Funded 14 eye surgeries
- Funded 5 open heart surgeries
- Funded 15 special self propelled wheelchairs
- Funded Hepatitis B Prevention Program for 633 children
- Received and distributed medical supplies as a gift from USS PELELIU with a value of \$30,000
- Distributed medical equipment worth \$98,000

## 2. Nutrition –

- Monthly rice delivered to 171 families - Total 58,124 Pounds
- Monthly milk/food for 120 children at Tam Ky, Hoa Mai Orphanages

Oatmeal mix distributed to 17,000 children in 4 institutions

Flood assistance for families with 685 children

## 3. Education –

- Bicycle scholarships for 113 poor children
- Public School Scholarships for 337 poor children
- University and Vocational school scholarships for 74 youth
- Tutoring classes for 170 Hai Chau Orphanage and Danang Street Children with after class snacks
- Constructed Danang Street Children Voc School Dormitory for 9 youth
- Constructed 1 kindergarten in poor district serving 40 children

## 4. Housing –

Built and donated 56 new houses for families

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## Saving the Children of Vietnam

(by Connie Bickman - Visitor to our Programs in Danang - February 2008)

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I watched as a two-year-old boy reached his tiny hand up to his mother's face to trace the tears flowing from her eyes. He cupped his hand and gently patted her cheek. She could no longer hold back her emotions. "Please save my little boy," she pleaded, as she told her story to the Children of Vietnam (COV) staff. The boy needed heart surgery, a \$1400 operation in Danang. They had traveled 60 miles by bus for a doctor's appointment and the young mother was anxiously awaiting to see if COV was going to pay for the surgery.

Three more mothers told their stories. A nine year old boy who also needed heart surgery, cradled his head in his arms and sobbed while he listened to his weeping mother.

Even though I couldn't understand Vietnamese, I cried with them. The cases of these two boys and two other girls, 8 and 14, were true matters of life and death.

But the news was good. COV told them they were going to pay for medical expenses and surgery for all four children. Arrangements were also made for transportation, lodging and food for those who had to travel far. Some of this money was donated by two of our volunteers. It was part of a process of decisions made every day at COV offices in Danang, saving lives, one by



Dina Fesler, founder of Children's Culture Connection, and I were part of a team of volunteers from Minnesota, North Carolina, Washington D.C. and Massachusetts, observing the work of Children of Vietnam.

In less than a week, we visited orphanages and kindergartens where COV provides everything from new buildings and structural renovations to food and milk programs. We visited sick and disabled children who suffer from blindness, missing limbs, deformities, and the effects of Agent Orange used in the Vietnam War, and saw how COV is providing them with medical assistance and limb prostheses. We visited schools funded by COV, witnessed COV's street children and tutoring programs that help high school kids get into college. We gave new bicycles to 20 kids in a village school so they won't

have to drop out, because now they can get to and from school faster and spend more time helping support their family farms. And we visited children living with their families in tin-roofed shacks, wrapped in plastic bag siding, that COV will replace with permanent cement block houses.

We watched as the incredible COV staff generously handed out random acts of kindness every day to the poor and needy of Vietnam. Saving the children of Vietnam is hard work. Thank God for Ben Wilson and The Children of Vietnam.

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## Meet our staff

Children of Vietnam currently has five staff members managing our DaNang office. We would like to introduce you to one of them as each are the key to making our operation run smoothly, efficiently and economically.

### Ms. Binh – Financial Manager

Ms. Binh is 32 and comes from a large family of nine. She was born in DaNang, where her father was a barber and her mother sold vegetables.

Ms. Binh attended Ho Chi Minh University where she majored in English. She then went on to the School of Economics to study Accounting and Office Management. After graduating, Ms. Binh worked for a military company in HCMC. In addition, she tutored less fortunate children.

Ms. Binh told me that the turning point in her life was coming back to DaNang for a



TET Festival to visit her family. She realized her heart was in DaNang and she wanted to come back to her roots. She would go each day to the pagoda to study. One day a monk asked her to manage the donations.

On the weekends she would visit with orphaned children and take them candy and ice cream. She knew this was where she belonged.

By this time Ms. Binh was working as a translator in English and Chinese for the company, which manufactures toys for McDonald's Happy Meals. In the evenings she was volunteering with the Street Children Program where she met Ms. Huong. When Ms. Huong asked Ms. Binh to work for COV, it was like a dream come true.

What does Ms. Binh like most about COV? "The children and her co-workers".

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## New Hope System Of Care for Handicapped Children

We have wonderful news! We are honored to be the recipient of a grant from the Ford Foundation to implement a pilot program providing needed services to the poorest of children with disabling

conditions, including those who have congenital impairments or may have been negatively impacted by exposure to Agent Orange/dioxin.

The pilot program uses a case management model, which we call *The Hope System of Care*, whereby 100 poor and handicapped children receive a medical, educational, and vocational care plan developed by a team of experts from multiple disciplines. Case managers then ensure the care plan is carried out and the child is developing as anticipated. The pilot, a collaboration between COV and the Hai Chau People's Committee (HCPC) in Hai

Chau (one of seven Districts of Danang City), has the ultimate goal of training the staff of HCPC and other involved partners so that they can continue the program after the grant ends.

With the generous support of the Ford Foundation, COV has set up a Community Care Fund to provide much needed surgery, tutoring, physical therapy, and physical aids so that child has the opportunity to grow to his or her fullest potential.

Help us build upon this new effort with a donation to the COV Community Care Fund. Your generosity enables us to bring this program to even more deserving children.



This young girl is being evaluated for inclusion in the Hope System of Care Pilot Program. She would very much like to go to school and could learn a trade but her family is too poor to afford the tuition. She stays home all day.



This 5-year old boy is being evaluated for inclusion in the Hope System of Care Pilot Program. He was born missing a leg and needs new prosthesis each year as he grows. His family is not able to afford a new leg for him.

June 2008

# Children of Vietnam

www.childrenofvietnam.com

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## 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.

The aid provided is 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 5% administrative charge.**

### **“A Little Goes A Long Way in Vietnam”**

<b>Build a house .....</b>	<b>\$1,100</b>
<b>Provide rice for a family .....</b>	<b>\$60/year</b>
<b>Scholarship for child .....</b>	<b>\$60/year</b>
<b>“Piggy” project (includes some food) .....</b>	<b>\$50 each</b>
<b>Fund a medicine pack .....</b>	<b>\$250/pkg.</b>
<b>Buy a bicycle .....</b>	<b>\$60 each</b>



COV supplemental rice distribution program assists over 145 families a month..



Adoptable child at Murphy Orphanage in Danang funded by Carolina Adoption Services and constructed by Children of Vietnam