



# Children of Vietnam

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

Winter News Update 2010

## From our president, Ben Wilson

*This past September, a new COV board member, Joe Savittiere, joined with several visitors for our Fall Program Tour. Upon his return, Joe wrote a trip report to our Board Chair and agreed to let me share with you a few excerpts. His report is truly humbling and in light of his comments, I want to thank you, all of you, our supporters, for allowing me the privilege of helping so many children in need.*

*Ben*

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to visit Children of Vietnam (COV) operations in Vietnam. After 9 days of observing and interacting with staff, local officials, and those we assist, I returned with many thoughts.

Three things made the greatest impression on me: the “heart” of our founder and President Ben Wilson, and Country Director Luong Thi Huong; the high standards and efficiency of operations; and our Hope System of Care for children with disabilities (HSC) project.

COV has “heart.” It starts with Ben and Huong, and flows down through the staff. Their deep compassion for those in need permeates and drives the organization. There is a labor of love fueled by the desire to enable those they assist to acquire a better quality of life. I believe the resultant atmosphere, together with our high standards, combine to provide the right level of encouragement for local officials to partner



Ben and Joe visiting family in need of stable housing.

with COV in joint efforts to tackle many complex challenges. It seems to me that two broad standards have characterized

COV from the beginning: verifying need to an established norm and, secondly, involving local entities in the solution wherever possible. I saw both being applied in the course of daily operations.

Our assistance is vetted in advance by staff who personally verify need and appropriateness of the aid being requested.



Detailed records are kept of each gift provided through donations

The education scholarship program is a real example of this activity. It was explained to me that in the past up to 50% of the students recommended to our office by local officials didn’t meet COV’s pre-established levels of need. This impressive verification process ensures our charitable funds are used to assist those most deserving. The education scholarship program also speaks to the long-lasting impact of COV’s assistance.

For example, one scholarship recipient now works full time in our Danang office to—in her

*Continued on page 3*

### Vietnam Factoids

- ▶ Population: 86 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

### Leave a Legacy

Make a bequest in your will; it is the final and everlasting expression of your love and values. When you do so, please consider naming COV as a beneficiary referring to us as Children of Vietnam.

**Everyone can leave something good behind in this world**

### Thankful for a Toilet

Ms. Can is a widow supporting 4 school children and an elderly grandmother. She is a farmer with very little income. Until last year, the whole family was forced to relieve themselves in a drainage canal. There was of course no privacy. Thanks to the generosity of Tad Fielder, who fundraised using Citizen Effect web-based tools ([www.citizeneffect.org](http://www.citizeneffect.org)), Ms. Can and five other families are now proud owners of private, indoor toilets that allow them to retain their dignity and break the cycle of water born disease.



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## Interview with Photojournalist Catherine Karnow

This summer COV was honored to assist Catherine Karnow and Ed Kashi, both renowned photojournalists and fellows of the Vietnam Reporting Project of the Renaissance Journalism Center at San Francisco State University, in making a documentary to bring the issues surrounding Agent Orange to the American public, a complex and often ignored legacy of the Vietnam War.



Catherine having fun with COV Hope System of Care client Ms. Ly

Below is an excerpt of an interview with Catherine after returning from Danang.

*What were your first impressions after arriving in Danang?*

**Catherine:** What I found most shocking was to discover just how many people—babies, children—are affected by

Agent Orange. I had originally thought there were just a couple hundred people afflicted in the greater Danang area. I had no idea there were thousands.

*What is the greatest need that you saw?*

**Catherine:** One family we visited told us, “sometimes the government gives us money, but not always every month, maybe 100,000 VND [\$5 USD], that is not enough.” I asked the family what they needed and the mother responded, “We would like to have what we need rather than send over things we don’t need. We need a boat [for the flood season]...we need somebody to come and listen to us.” This is why I was continually, repeatedly impressed by COV. I understand how COV works. COV will

## What It Must Be Like

Yes, HUNGER, what it must be like!! So many of us have never experienced it but we see it so much in Vietnam. As we visit families in the countryside and we are privileged to visit them in the shack they currently call home, we can see the meager remains of their last meal still on the wood fired improvised old brick stand they have for cooking. In a well-worn, blackened aluminum pot, we may find rice, a gruel of veggies and if lucky, remnants of a small fish. Sad!



Kinder Kids Eating Stop Hunger Now Food

As we visit many orphanages and kindergartens, we receive many pleas for additional food as their funding does not provide enough food for a growing child. We see many tiny dark brown eyes that seem to say - Mr. Ben, can you bring us some food?

We are very pleased that we are now receiving 570,000 meals per year donated by Stop Hunger Now in Raleigh, N.C. This nutritious dehydrated mixture of rice and vegetables is fully vitamin fortified. Perfect for these children! Thank you so much Stop Hunger Now!!

send a case manager to see what a family needs first. Also, this gives the family emotional support; everyone everywhere needs to know that someone is listening and cares about them.

*What difference did you find between served and unserved?*

**Catherine:** Our angle was to show a served family and an underserved family. We were looking for extremes. We discovered it is not that simple, you can’t necessarily show these things. The families that we met were both pretty burdened. Luckily, Ly’s personality is such that she is a happy child. She can become a successful woman, if given the opportunities. I think her happiness is due partially because her family is served by COV. The family with the boys, an underserved family, obviously has fewer resources. No one is taking care of their nutrition, for example. No one is suggesting surgery for the boys.



Tri and Hau outside their rural home.

Picture credit: Catherine Karnow

*What are the goals for your project now that you have returned? Have they changed?*

**Catherine:** What I discovered as an American is that we have a real responsibility to do something about this. I cannot walk away from the fact that there are all these malformed children and struggling families. I want to continue working on this project in some way. But I am not sure how or in what way at this point. I will find a way or I will make one.

## 2nd Annual Golf Tournament- Changing Kids Lives!

There are days when we feel truly blessed and Oct 7th was one of those days. 45 golfers came out to support Children of Vietnam while having fun too. Our sincere thanks to each golfer, generous sponsors, and the volunteers who helped make this day such a success. Truly hundreds of children’s lives will be improved because of your participation and generosity!



### 19th Hole Event Sponsor

- ◆ NETcom Cabling

### Par Sponsors

- ◆ Cookie Billings & 1 Team
- ◆ Replacements Ltd. & 1 team
- ◆ ITG
- ◆ Reynolds Orthopedics
- ◆ Sports Orthpedics

### Hole Sponsors

- ◆ Woodard and Co. & 1 golfer
- ◆ Bill and Dawn Kraul
- ◆ Hanesbrands, Inc.
- ◆ Hoffman & Hoiffman
- ◆ W. Joe Savittiere

### Golf Teams

- ◆ Gate City Rotary - 1 team
- ◆ HR405 - 2 teams
- ◆ Airport Rotary - 1 team

### Donors

- ◆ Joe Ball
- ◆ Chuck Downey

### Volunteers

- ◆ Olivia Boyce
- ◆ Trang Huong
- ◆ Judy Quinn
- ◆ Katie Quinn
- ◆ Susan Wilson

## From our President, continued,

own words—“give back to those who helped her” through her dedication and devotion to assisting other needy children of Vietnam. What a testimony!

Every effort is made by our in-country team to encourage local government and community personnel to collaborate in terms of funds, supplies, and skills, thus further leveraging COV's assistance. To cite one inspiring example: a desperate young wife, whose husband was completely paralyzed in an accident, came to COV in tears asking for family assistance. Our team not only responded with material support, but after a short time the staff also invited her to become a COV “community volunteer” helping others in equally desperate situations. It was truly inspiring to hear her explain how that involvement has changed her life, enabling her to help others and also to place her own situation in perspective and face



Ben Wilson, Ms. Huong, Joe Savittiere and young girl receiving bicycle

the future with greater strength, courage and determination. It's easy to see how COV's contributions last well beyond the material assistance provided on any one day.

I was particularly impressed with HSC, a holistic approach providing broad based but tailored assistance for children with disabilities. To me the essence of the HSC is the quality, appropriateness, and totality of the individualized care provided each child and his or her family so that each can develop to his or her highest potential.

After several days of watching COV in action, it became obvious that the desire to help has to be tempered by reality. The number of requests for assistance is far greater than available resources. In this regard, the challenges facing Ben and Huong are formidable. It was heart rendering to hear Huong explain her difficulty in choosing one worthy appeal over another simply because there aren't enough resources.

During this visit I saw how COV practices the highest principles of charitable assistance – enabling the downtrodden to help themselves improve their quality of life. I left Vietnam with the positive feeling that COV is exercising truly good stewardship over the precious resources of our donors in the way it carries out our charitable objectives. We are indeed bringing new hope to the hopeless.

## Join Summer Hand-In-Hand Service Tour

Next June a group of Children of Vietnam volunteer delegates will travel to Danang for a service trip. The group of mostly young people will learn about the COV operations and then spend 4-5 days doing a hands on service project at one of the kindergartens or orphanages Children of Vietnam serves. Delegates will get to see first hand the positive effects of COV's work in Vietnam while also doing their part to help out. There will also be optional group travel excursions after the service portion of the trip. Please contact Olivia Boyce at : [oliviaboyce@gmail.com](mailto:oliviaboyce@gmail.com) to apply.

## Purchase Holiday Gifts- Change a Child's Life

- ▶ **Cool jewels for charity.** Charming necklaces for young girls. 100% of the proceeds will help build a needed kindergarten. [www.besaltandlight.com](http://www.besaltandlight.com)
- ▶ **Alternative Gifts International Gift Cards.** The proceeds support school costs for poor children. [www.alternativegifts.org/projects/project8](http://www.alternativegifts.org/projects/project8)
- ▶ **Beautiful custom Holiday Photo Cards and Adoption Memory Books.** 5% of all orders support the children. [www.ladybugsandredthreadscrapshoppe.com](http://www.ladybugsandredthreadscrapshoppe.com)
- ▶ **Design your own t-shirts.** One t-shirt is donated for every piece of apparel sold. [www.wikiwiseman.com/index.php](http://www.wikiwiseman.com/index.php)
- ▶ **Stunning artisan yarn.** 50% of yarn or roving sales in this colorway are donated to COV. [www.theuniqueshoop.com/Colors/vietnam.htm](http://www.theuniqueshoop.com/Colors/vietnam.htm)
- ▶ **A Future Full of Promise Coffee Table Book.** A collection of photos of the wonderful children we serve. 100% of the proceeds go to COV. [www.blurb.com/user/COV](http://www.blurb.com/user/COV)



Approximately 50% of the 86,000,000 Vietnamese live on less than \$2 USD a day. Poverty coincides with lack of access to services and often includes social exclusion. When a child is disabled, the myriad of challenges only increases. In Vietnam, Agent Orange/dioxin, a legacy of the Vietnam War, is a suspected cause of many disabilities. According to the Red Cross, three million Vietnamese have been affected by dioxin, including 150,000 of today's children who were born with serious birth defects from generational impacts as well as the persistence of toxic and hazardous “hot spots” where the herbicides were stored, leaked, or spilled during the war. Regardless of the cause, a humanitarian response can change the future for these children whose developmental potential is shackled by poverty. You can help by:

- ▶ Visit [www.makeagentorangehistory.org/](http://www.makeagentorangehistory.org/)
- ▶ Invite us to speak at your church, civic club, or school
- ▶ Donate to our **Hope System of Care** for children with disabilities.

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www.childrenofvietnam.org

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## What YOU can do to help!

### Make a Donation

#### Your gift transforms the life of a child.

Children of Vietnam works to change for the better poor, orphan, homeless, disabled, and vulnerable children in Vietnam. The children we serve are located in Danang City, Quangnam Province, and the eight surrounding provinces. The aid provided is the result of donations given by you—our friends and partners. **THANK YOU!**

"A little goes a long way in Vietnam" is a reality. With your gift these children will have a future full of promise. Please contribute via mail or

[www.childrenofvietnam.org](http://www.childrenofvietnam.org)

### "A Little Goes A Long Way in Vietnam"

- Give a child a nutritious holiday meal .....\$25
- Give opportunity for a woman & her children.....\$50
- Educate a child with a school scholarship .....\$55/year
- Give a child a bike to get to school .....\$70
- Keep 350 children free from parasites .....\$52/year
- Give opportunity for a woman & her children.....\$50
- Keep 350 children free from parasites .....\$52/year
- Feed a family of four.....\$60/year
- Expand the horizons of a child with disabilities.....\$100
- Provide a family with livestock for sustainable income. ..\$300
- Build a house for a family.....\$1,500



Scholarships of books, uniforms and school fees to poor children keep them in school for another year.

# Children of Vietnam

## Tré Em ViêTNam

November 10, 2010

Dear Children of Vietnam Friend,

You have given a future full of promise to hundreds of children in Vietnam this year. I send a heartfelt thank you. Will you join me and look ahead to the coming year? There are so many children still in need who, with your help, will have a safe home, nutritious food, or life saving surgery. Please make a donation and you will make the difference to a child.

Children's lives have been changed and in some cases saved! They are all thriving thanks to your support.



An is one of 17 Street Children who have passed entrance exams and are attending college thanks to the Tutoring Program.

Ms. Le can now pay the school fees for her fifth-grade son, thanks to the Empowering Foundations for Woman & Children program that helped her start a profitable printing business.



Young Van is happily living with her parents and brother thanks to the success of a critically needed heart surgery and the Mending Hearts Program.



To make brighter futures for so many more children another \$30,000 is needed to reach our budget for next year. This is our challenge, but it is within reach. This holiday season, please give generously. No investment is too great to ensure the future of a child.

With sincere appreciation,



Benjamin C. Wilson  
Founder & President

PS. Children grow everyday. Their bodies and minds do not wait. Please help them develop to their fullest potential with a tax deductible gift.

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