

NEWSLETTER 05/06

Welcome to the new members on the mailing list. It has been a while since the last newsletter and a lot has happened in the last 6 months.

1. Recent Trip and Documentary

In January I spent 2 weeks in Hoi An and was accompanied by Jess Solomon, Jim Nall and Chris Otwell. We were able to spend time with Jackie Wrafter, Nick Keegan, Colin and Roe Schroeder, Jane Reichel and many volunteers (Emma, Rosie, Gerard, Jeanette and Miriam). I was able to see the accomplishments at the orphanage and help plan upcoming projects.



Chris Otwell is a director from Los Angeles, California who is filming a documentary on the children at the orphanage. Jim Nall is also helping with filming and production. Unfortunately we met with some resistance from the officials of the orphanage and we were unable to get any real footage of the children. The motorbike trip and the town of Hoi An provided some good filming opportunities and they hope to return in the near future to finish the documentary.

2. Goodbye to Friends

We have unfortunately lost some of our children and friends in the last year.

Nguyen Luu Mai

Luu Mai passed away in December. His severe scoliosis made him more prone to acquire lung infections and less capable of fighting them. He got pneumonia and passed away. His death was a shock to all of us. Everyone who met Luu Mai loved him. His quick wit, charm and sense of humor made him a favorite. His death has left a hole in the orphanage and he will be greatly missed.



Nguyen Thi Hoa

Hoa is Luu Mai's mother. She was unable to take care of Luu Mai at home due to poverty and her heart condition. Her condition had worsened in the last year and a congregation in Ireland was working to raise money for much needed heart surgery. Unfortunately, she died before the money arrived. She was buried behind her house next to her son Luu Mai.



Bong

Another one of our children passed away this year. Bong was one of the more severely disabled kids at the orphanage. She had severe cerebral palsy and was bed-bound most of her life. Her health had deteriorated over the last year and she spent a lot of time in the hospital.



3. Adoption



The orphanage sweetheart, Ngoc Lien, was finally adopted to the United States. The family had been working for years to finish the adoption process. Due to the recent change in Vietnamese adoption laws, the process was completed and Ngoc Lien went home with her new family.

4. Dien Ban Orphanage

We were able to spend the afternoon at the Dien Ban orphanage during our recent trip. Co Hoa runs this orphanage with monetary support from a group in France. There were originally 15 children at the orphanage. Since our first visit, some of the children have moved out to work or to attend college. Co Hoa still cares for a number of the children, including Hien who has cerebral palsy and Ben who has a rare blood disorder. She does a wonderful job and it is always a pleasure to visit them.



5. Thuy

Thuy is a young lady who has a severe hearing deficit and mild cerebral palsy. We have been supporting her education at a school for the disabled in Da Nang. She is doing great. We visited her in January at her school where she showed us some of the work she is doing and we met some of her friends.





She looked very happy and her teachers say she is doing exceptionally well. We drove into the countryside and had a wonderful dinner with her parents, aunts, uncles and grandfather. We have promised support for her for the next few years in Da Nang and will do our best to support her advanced education in Sai Gon or Ha Noi when she turns 16.

6. Nam

We visited Nam out in the countryside. He is living with his grandmother and great-grandmother. Even though we have visited him many times, it is quite difficult to get a smile out of him! Due to his HIV status and the community's perception of this disease, he is kept inside a lot of the time and can't attend school. We have been working to get him out more and to visit a clinic in Da Nang but have met many obstacles – the most significant being Nam's fear of traveling. We are still getting him a combination drug for HIV from Sai Gon.



7. Update on children at the orphanage

Be Hong

Be Hong had her first yearly checkup in December following shunt surgery for hydrocephalus. The surgeon in Sai Gon was quite pleased with her progress. She is alert, interactive and lifting her head from the bed. We are still providing her a special milk supplement to improve her nutrition and calcium intake.



Hien and Hau



We have been working to get Hein and Hau back living with their mother in the countryside. We rebuilt their house and tried to increase the earning potential of the family by buying pigs that could be bred and sold. On our trip in January we visited Hein and Hau's mother and sister.

They are doing well but don't have the means to take the twins back home. Though reuniting them with their family is a long-term goal, I think that they will remain at the orphanage for the time being.



Anh and Trang

Anh and Trang have severe scoliosis and live at the orphanage with their father. They both are very smart and doing well in school. During our visit in January, Trang developed severe pneumonia and was hospitalized. Due to the recent death of Luu Mai, everyone was quite worried. Trang recovered well from the infection and was returned to the orphanage. The brothers continue to do well and we are looking at ways to sponsor their advanced education as they get older.



Hai



Hai had an extended seizure last October, which caused significant changes in his personality and interactions. He seems to be slowly improving and getting back to his old self (stubborn and determined). It's great to him improving.

8. Future Plans

Once we are able to secure the money we need for the next year, we will be able to move forward with our plans. With the money we have raised so far, we have been able to provide better living conditions, schooling and physiotherapy for the children. We hope to work on improvements in nutrition and medical care in the next year. The goal would be to get regular health check ups on the children and arrange emergency care through the new hospital in Hoi An. We would also like to promote the Hoi An Orphanage as a model for other orphanages in the area which care for disabled children.

9. Transitions and thank yous

I was very happy to see the progress of the children during our last visit. The physiotherapy and schooling for the disabled children is going very well and the overall atmosphere is much better. I have decided to move over to Viet Nam to help with the wonderful work that Jackie, Nick, Colin, Roe and all the volunteers are doing there. Thanks to all of the people who have supported me and the work of the foundation over the years. It is through your love and support that we have been able to accomplish so much.

Josh Solomon

