



SAP-VN

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FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

■ SAP-VN's sole mission is to provide free medical, educational and welfare services for less fortunate people, especially needy and handicapped children, in Vietnam.

■ Funding for SAP-VN programs comes from private donations and fundraising proceeds. All donations are tax deductible as permitted by law.

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Garden Grove, CA 92842

GREEN CROSS

SAP-VN Quarterly Newsletter No. 61

December 2011

A HELPING HAND FOR NEEDY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM

HAPPY NEW YEAR



Mừng Xuân
NHÂM THÌN 2012
Year Of The Dragon



HỘI ĐỒNG QUẢN TRỊ

ĐOÀN KIẾN TRÚC
 HUỖNH PHƯỚC ĐƯƠNG
 LÊ NGỌC HƯƠNG
 NGUYỄN PHƯỢNG CHÂU
 NGUYỄN NGỌC THÀNH
 NGUYỄN THỊNH
 VÕ VĂN ĐẠT

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NGUYỄN NGỌC THÀNH
 Chủ Tịch

NGUYỄN KHÁNH LÂM
 Tổng Thư Ký

NGUYỄN THU TRINH
 Thủ Quỹ

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Cố Vấn Chương Trình Y Tế

JEAN LIEU, DPM
 NGUYỄN THÁI VÂN, MD
 TRẦN MAI KHANH, MD

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Cộng Tác Viên

Sài Gòn - Việt Nam
 ĐỖ QUANG HẢI
 VŨ THỊ ĐIỂM THU

■□■

- Social Assistance Program For Vietnam (SAP-VN) là một tổ chức từ thiện được thành lập vào năm 1992 theo qui chế 501(c)3.
- SAP-VN chủ trương trợ giúp đồng bào kém may mắn và trẻ em nghèo khổ và khuyết tật ở Việt Nam.
- SAP-VN được quản trị và điều hành bởi các tình nguyện viên làm việc bất vụ lợi và không hưởng lương.
- Tất cả các chương trình trợ giúp của SAP-VN đều được thực hiện trực tiếp bởi các thành viên về từ Hoa kỳ và cộng tác viên ở Việt Nam.
- Ngân quỹ hoạt động của SAP-VN do sự đóng góp tài chánh của mạnh thường quân và những cuộc gây quỹ.
- SAP-VN mong được sự tiếp tay của quý vị hảo tâm để có ngân quỹ hoạt động, để giới thiệu về SAP-VN, và giúp phổ biến bản tin đến thân hữu nhiệt tâm ở các nơi khác.
- Muốn nhận Green Cross, xin vui lòng gửi tên và địa chỉ về SAP-VN.
- Chi phiếu ủng hộ xin ghi tên

SAP-VN

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ORTHOPEDIC VISITS 2011*by Thanh Nguyen*

This year marked my 17th annual trip to Vietnam and 19 years working with SAP-VN. As soon as I arrived in Sai Gon, I went with 3 SAP-VN members to work in the Mekong delta provinces. Our group included Vinh Nguyen, Khanh Pham, Thanh Pham, and me. We went to visit children in Dong Thap, Tra Vinh and Ca Mau. We visited 8 y.o. Le Thi Hong Tham in Tac Van, Ca Mau. I met her at Can Tho ortho & rehab center last year. Before surgery, she could not walk at all. With parent's support, Tham could only stand up on the tips of her toes. After surgery and rehab, Tham was equipped with orthopedic braces. Tham is now walking, though tentatively. She was smiling when we came to see her.

Jean Lieu and Nghia Trinh joined our group in Kien Giang and An Giang. We worked with Dr. Nguyen Quoc Lap (Can Tho Ortho & Rehab center) to screen children for surgery. Of the 100 children that came to the screening in Kien Giang, 21 were selected for surgery and 15 for orthopedic equipment. It broke our hearts to see many children with conditions that we could not help. It was hard for me to look at the sad faces of the parents when Dr Lap told them that orthopedic surgery would not change their children's condition. We also visited 8 children who were being treated at Can Tho center. As we went along, members of the group reflected on everyday activities. They also gave me valuable observation and inputs to improve our orthopedic project. I really appreciated their insights.

As we made home visits, we saw the children in their living environment. We interacted with families and children on a personal basis. We also provided encouragement and advice on how to improve the children's conditions. We were happy to see drastic changes in most children. Occasionally, we were disappointed because there was little difference after surgery. By talking to parents and doctors, we realized that the intervention of corrective surgery was just the initial step in a long rehabilitation process. It's like forming the shape of a bonsai plant. Progress is slow and sometimes not noticeable. Thus, parents play a critical role in a child's post-op rehab period.

After the southern part of the trip was complete, I said goodbye to the group and went solo to visit the provinces in the North. The weather was much warmer and more humid that it was unbearable if one had to be outside in the sun for a long period. In the highland region of Thai Nguyen, Tuyen Quang, and Cao Bang, it took longer time to make home visits. The huts of ethnic families scatter in the mountainous areas. The unpaved rocky roads were only accessible by a 4x4 vehicle, horses or by foot. It was scary to travel on these roads because one side of the no-guardrail road was deep canyons. In Cao Bang, I had to climb over a steep hill to visit Ly Van Cap, an ethnic Nung boy. It took two hours to get to his hut and back. The Nung families build their house on stilts with cattle live below the wooden floor. There is an open fire stove right in the middle of the hut. No wonder their children are vulnerable to be victims of burn at a very young age. In Thai Nguyen I visited Truong Duc Duong, an 8 y.o. boy, whom I met during screening in 2009. Duong was born with deformity on both hands. His middle and ring fingers were fused together. I was happy to see that his fingers are now separated.



Dr. Jean Lieu is doing post-op examination in Kien Giang



Thanh with Truong Duc Duong in Thai Nguyen

Leaving the highland, I went on to Son Tay, Ninh

Binh and Thanh Hoa. At Thuy An rehab center in Son Tay, I saw children trying very hard to walk, some with crutches, some with walkers, and some with the parallel bars. Technicians and parents worked on young children's hands, feet or legs. The scene and sound of children talking, laughing and crying, of technicians encouraging children to keep trying, seemed chaotic. Yet I was impressed and satisfied with the staff effort to help the children in the rehabilitation process. Parents were eager to tell me that just last year their son/daughter was not even able to stand up. Now he/she is moving in little baby steps. With time and determination, their son/daughter will be able to walk and doesn't have to rely on parents' help in his/her daily activities. Children at rehab centers were very determined to follow technician's direction. It seemed to me that they were aware that the more they practice the better chance they would gain movement functions that they currently could not do. They approach the rehab challenge as a battle that they must win. It must be a thrill for someone who used to crawl on the floor to stand up on his own legs.

In Thanh Hoa, I met 19 y.o. Le Thi Hong Sen. Until last year, Sen was a self-pity, depressed, and withdrawn girl. Suffering Polio at a young age, Sen's left leg and foot were respectively contracted and twisted. She moved around by holding on to a wooden pole and hopping on her right leg. In 2010, SAP-VN sponsored her two surgeries at the Orthopedic & Rehab center in Thanh Hoa. Now, Sen is a completely different young lady. She's confident, happy, and more optimistic about life. Sen is walking with both legs on her own. She's learning to be a hairdresser. Dr. Nguyen Hong Anh was instrumental in Sen's transformation, physically and mentally. When Dr. Anh and I came to visit her, Sen was smiling and talking happily about her change. For me, Sen's case reconfirms my belief that SAP-VN's orthopedic surgery project does make miraculous change.

For those who volunteer to do charity work, we are happy to reach out to those who are in need. We feel privileged to serve our targeted recipients. We are satisfied to know that our effort does make a difference. My charity work does bring me happiness. The children that I met during the trip are my heroes. Their suffering, struggle and successes teach me to be humble, patient, resilient, and grateful.

MOBILE CLINIC 2011

by Kimthy Phung

Last summer we finally got a chance to help with SAP-VN mobile clinic. We heard about SAP-VN through Khanh Dang 2 years ago but could not coordinate our schedule to go until this year. One of the reasons why we wanted to go was to bring the kids along on this service trip. Not only does it allow me to do something meaningful in my profession, but it also allows my kids some exposure to a service project to help them realize & appreciate what they have. The mobile clinic was in



Kimthy is consulting a patient

the summer and the schedule was flexible enough to allow us to combine this project into our family vacation schedule. We could make our trip to Vietnam much more meaningful than just sight-seeing, eating, and enjoying the scenery.



Pharmacy team

Prior to our trip, I tried to include the kids in the planning and preparations. We attended the initial team meeting in April. We started collecting stuff animals from all their cousins and got some chewable vitamins to donate. In June, we helped pack the supply boxes. Getting the kids involved each step of the journey helped them and us to realize the logistics of trying to coordinate such an event as well as to give us a chance to meet other volunteers. We traveled 1 month ahead of the team to visit family & to do some sight-seeing in Vietnam. It also gave the kids some time to acclimate to the weather, food, and environment (and yes, the bathrooms!) before the mobile clinic schedule began.

This trip was rewarding for me in many aspects. In a very small way, I was involved in giving back to a community which really needed our service. I remember arriving at our 1st location and stepping off the bus to a small school with a courtyard almost completely filled with patients already waiting to be seen. I saw little children who probably woke up even before I did, maybe traveling by foot, to arrive at the same location. I felt needed and privileged to be there. I worked alongside my children as they helped out in the pharmacy. The bus ride every morning and every evening gave us a chance to review the day and discussed what we saw, what we felt, and what we experienced. My kids were exposed to things they had never seen before growing up in the US or even in their previous travels through Vietnam. They saw how different their schools are compared to a school in a rural third world country. They saw how little other children had compared to what they take for granted at home. My boys talked about the sharp contrast between our hotel accommodations, our fancy buffet style breakfast as compared to our work location. They also saw examples of dedication and service in the other volunteers who traveled with us. St Francis of Assisi coined the phrase "it is in giving that we receive". I believe I received more than I gave on this trip. These experiences are priceless and I got to share them with my family as well as with other newfound friends on this trip.

If you are remotely interested in such volunteer work, take time out of your busy schedule to make it happen. Often times, you can combine it with a vacation that you are already planning. I appreciate that SAP-VN allowed some minors, younger volunteers, and students to join on the trip. Experiences like this are much more valuable than any classroom setting or lectures that we can provide to educate our children. They provide tangible connections to Vietnam and to the people there. Hopefully these experiences and connections will stay with them and bring them back as adults. SAP-VN does this every year, every July. You have whole year to plan...if you can't make it this year, try for next year...I promise you, it will be worth it.

LETTER TO SAP-VN

by Lee Lam

Hello Anh Lam,

Yes! My family certainly has an eye opening experience in the 2011 trip with the SAP-VN Mobile Care unit. We have always wanted to give back or "pay back" since both Lee and my family were able to survive at sea and thrive in the American and Australian soil. We had a plethora of help by charity organizations along the way. For this reason, we have been looking for a meaningful way to give back and did not know how until we found the SAP-VN Mobile Care.



Lee Lam is consulting a patient

SAP-VN has certainly facilitated the process of "giving back" for our family. Professionals like Lee (Pharmacist), along with other medical professionals, can donate their time, labor, and money to help the less fortunate people in Vietnam. We are so impressed with how well organized SAP-VN is from start to finish. The transportation of medical supplies, the arrangement of work sites, and the efficiency & effectiveness of all the participants were quite amazing. No time was wasted and everything fell into its place.

Of course, we won't deny, it was hard work! We woke up at 6a.m every morning and did not finish until 6p.m, had little breaks in between and not to mention the heat! Thank goodness we had trained our children Nathan & Audrey to be fit, strong, and have endurance. They never complained on waking up early, the long hours, and the long bus ride. Instead, they felt very satisfied and rewarded that they could help. Nathan enjoyed the task of measuring blood pressures for many patients, along with giving out tooth brushes, tooth pastes, and toys. Audrey, at the same token, was glad to be able to help with counting, sorting out medication, crowd control, and as well as helping out the elderly. Audrey really empathizes with the elderly due to her close relationship with her Great Grandmother (93 yrs.old) back in Australia. Likewise, I have soft spot for the elderly and feel sad knowing they still have to endure hardships at the end of their lives. We saw a profusion of case with the young and old suffering malnutrition. Indeed, all members of my family feel so rewarded that we were able to "give back" no matter how small. We are proud to be part of the team. We certainly will be more than happy to help SAP-VN promoting the good cause of this mission!

Thank you for opening our eyes AND OUR CHILDREN's eyes to the plight of these less fortunate people. We had made our children promise that they will instill the "Giving back" motto to their lives. We will continue our effort of "giving back" and hope to continue to work with SAP-VN in the near future. I have also enclosed Nathan's feeling of the trip in his letter. It reflects that he is a step closer to be a better person. Please view.

Sincerely,
The Lam family

MY SAP-VN EXPERIENCE

by Nathan Lam

As my parents introduced my sister and I into this new motivation for vacation, the stereotypical image of my boy-scout work came into thought. But it proved to be much different. An experience that would change my image of the less fortunate and motivate me to make a difference in their society for their benefit.

At home, my sister and I began to select the profusion of random stuff animals, with thick layers of dust being applied over years. These stuffed toys were just in gargantuan quantities, and we didn't really consider them as special. Glancing around my home, there were a lot of objects I took for granted, such as being in possession of something as simple as a toothbrush. Three times a day, we would have a meal ready for us on the table and most people don't think much about it. Even going to dentist or doctor, kids would be resistant and wouldn't comply until their parents made it compulsory. But in Vietnam all this was different.

Kids learned to appreciate simple things. Parents for the care of the kids, would order up in a line that would reach all the way out to the streets, just for a simple toothbrush kit that is worth less the 50 cents. And it was literally shark frenzy, when we decided to allocate stuffed animals to the children that had excruciating pains from removing a tooth. A single stuff animal, almost meaningless to us, provided them with joviality to last. The kids learned to love even the most simple of things. For them, having a meal three times a day was lucky. Most of the children had tribulation from malnutrition. Kids who were supposedly my age were half my height.

In a sense, living in this situation has made them more capable than the typical American kid. Instead of having an abhorrence to go to the dentist, teens barely older than me, would independently strive to receive a slip to receive treatments from the dentists and doctors. They were mature, knowing it was for their own good.

Having the opportunity to witness these people has changed me as a person. Back home, I learn to appreciate simple things, instead of taking them for granted. Every time I brushed my teeth, I recalled the parents lining up for their children to receive something worth less than 50 cents. When I contemplated the plethora of stuff animals situated under my bed, I thought about how much the kids appreciated the toys.



Nathan and his sister are sorting medications

Thanks to SAP-VN, I was able to benefit as a person to be motivated to continue doing charity from my experience with this program. SAP-VN truly is a distinct organization that takes the enormous effort and cost to gather people from all walks of life to work together for the sake of the minorities suffering in Vietnam. The extraordinary group has motivated me to do my Eagle Project, a project to benefit society, in the future for the common cause: To help those suffering in Vietnam. SAP-VN is an inspiring group that is motivated to do good, influencing many and many more to come with

their hard work for Vietnam.

With this program, I really witnessed the beneficial change that SAP-VN has provided for the less fortunate. With this, I plan to continue assisting the minorities in Vietnam with this compassionate organization. But now, I will be ready for the exhilarating experiences that lay ahead in supplying medical attention to those with medical tribulations!



SAP-VN Mobile Care Team 2011 - Binh Thuan Province

IT'S GOOD TO BE BACK...

by Chi Vu

It has been four years since I last went on a mobile care trip with SAP-VN. I was excited to be back this year. It was good to see the familiar, friendly faces of SAP-VN volunteers and I was amazed at how the group has grown and there were many more new faces...a lot of whom are very young. I was so impressed with these young people. I remember when I was their age, I was completely clueless about the world outside of my own universe. And here they were, just out of high school or college and already budding worldly philanthropists.

I was terrified at the thought of being in Vietnam in July because from what I remembered it was unbearably and hellishly hot. But I was told we would be going to Mui Ne, a fabulous seaside resort town, which helped me to overcome my fear of premature hot flashes. So off to Saigon we went, and then a long bus ride to Mui Ne. I love it already - we're here to do a medical mission and we get to stay in one of the great resort cities in Vietnam and on top of that we get ocean front hotel rooms (ok at least some of us did). Of course I have to put in the disclaimer at this point that all the volunteers paid for their own airfare and living expenses for the mission. So thank you to our fearless SAP-VN leaders who picked a great place to be our base because they knew that most of us are wussy Viet Kieus who can't really rough it in our own motherland.



Chi Vu is assisting an elderly patient

Off to the first day of work. The bus ride was as bumpy as I remembered it - though the bus we took this time was twice the size of the ones we took four years ago. After an hour or so of driving we got to the little town where we got a lot of looks and attention because well we're 2 bus load of people who are fatter and whiter than the average person on the street and we each had cameras the size of a small child's head, each furiously taking pictures of everything that passed by. We pulled into a small school where we were setting up the clinic that day. We unloaded the supplies truck and it was amazing how 90+ people can unload boxes after boxes and set up a makeshift medical clinic with exam rooms, dental exam and extraction areas, vision, and pharmacy stations within half an hour. And bam, the SAP-VN mobile clinic was open for business.

I was back at my post as crowd control for adult patients. We went through a little bit of a growing pain that first day, trying to figure out the most efficient work flow so we can see as many patients as possible. But by the second day of work, we were a well-oiled machine; it took only 20 minutes to set up the clinic and we had a system going to get the crowd organized and in to get their exams. By the end of the week, we could have done all this with one hand tied behind our back.

Being in the crowd control team was great because I got to talk to the patients as they're waiting to see the doctors. Of course I also got to hear the complaints about why they had to line up and wait for so long before seeing the doctor. In the quest for efficiency, our team had set up a line of kiddie-sized stools for the patients to sit on while they waited and as one patients goes into the triage area, another will move up to take his/her place. We thought it was a simple yet brilliant idea but implementing it amongst the patients proved to be a different story. Every time, a patient were asked to progress in the line they automatically stood up and took their stool with them. We would tell them, it's ok leave the stool and we'll take you to the next station - they would smile and nod and then moved their stool with them. Our rows of perfectly aligned stools soon became a confusing maze. It took a while before it sank in for the patients to leave the stool and just move themselves. They must have thought the stool was their guarantee of a place in line and without it, they won't be able to get in to see the doctor. Even though we struggle with this concept of lining patients up every year, it really is very cute when patients do get the concept and they start to teach each other how to do it. It really warms my heart and makes me feel like I accomplished something great.

And the time when I got to work with the pediatric side of crowd control was great. This team had a number system going for the patients and everything. It was quite impressive. Anyway, the kids were so cute - running around in their mismatched, colorful clothes and no shoes on. There were three brothers who caught everyone's attention. They were three, five, and seven years in age but of course they looked a lot smaller and younger than their age. We later found out that they were orphans who now live with their grandmother. Their clothes were dirty and worn out and they had no shoes. We gave each a soccer uniform donated by SAP-VN volunteers and they looked great in them. The only thing was it was too big for these little brothers - they have to kind of hold up their shorts with their hands. I was thinking wow, it's a good thing that with soccer they

only need to use their legs and have their hands available to keep their shorts from falling to the ground. They were so cute!!

And the other amazing thing on this trip was that we had an overweight pediatric patient who was brought in by his grandmother because she wanted to know why he was so fat. This boy was probably 2 or 3 but he was BIG. He looked like he ate another three year-old boy on his way into the clinic. He definitely stood out because of his size but he was so cute. He saw a bottle in my hand, stared at it, and then pointed to it as if to say I want, give me now. I gave him the bottle, he opened it and took a sip and then just looked really disappointed when he realized that it was just water. Looking at his frail grandmother, I wondered how she could even carry him if he ever needed to be carried. I was curious to know what the pediatrician ended up recommending for him.

The trip overall was memorable as always but so much more tiring - because now I'm older and can't quite keep up with the young ones. I loved the time spent with old friends though and even making a few new ones. I still remember the buffet breakfasts that we had at the hotel each morning before leaving for the day's work. The poor staff at that hotel probably dreaded 6:30 AM every mornign that week because they were bombarded with almost a hundred people who were hungry and ready to eat them out of house and home. And because we only had 30 minutes to eat before the bus left, we had to eat fast and furious; and because our next meal would be around 12 or 1, we needed to eat well and eat a lot for energy reserves. We had no shame in asking - can you fry me up 6 eggs? Can I get 2 bowls of pho? Do you have any more of this or how about that? Oh the good times. Writing about it now makes me want to go back to that week in July. I wonder how things will change in the next four years, when I muster up enough energy to go back for another trip. But I know some things will never change - the good people who are a part of SAP-VN and who make it the great organization that it is.

VISION ACCOMPLISHED

by Malia Cong

"Please, please, try to get me a pair of glasses. I can hardly see and I know one of these days I'll get hit by a car or moped because of it. I beg you. Please help me."

The old woman continued to give me more reasons for her need, but it wasn't necessary. I understood the urgency in her voice better than the literal translation of her Vietnamese. Suddenly, I felt personally responsible for this woman, as if her vision and care depended on whether or not I could smuggle a pair of eyeglasses from Optometry on her behalf. She wasn't leaving our mobile care clinic without a pair of glasses and that was that.



Malia is helping an elderly patient select her reading glasses

Wait. Smuggle a pair of glasses from Optometry? Wasn't giving eye exams and eyeglasses the main reason I traveled to Vietnam?

Let me back up a bit. As one of the 97

volunteers supporting SAPVN's 2011 mobile care mission, we arrived in Vietnam with the overall goal to continue to give health care access to those in Vietnam that just didn't have any. This was our basic daily routine: inhale a big breakfast knowing we needed as much energy as we could get for the day ahead, board one of the buses for about a 1.5 hour nap while we traveled to a remote village, arrive at the village and help unload all the supplies to our team's assigned room, rearrange the room and do whatever necessary to set up rooms for Primary, Dental, Pharmacy and Optometry care.....and then voila! Instant medical clinic in the middle of nowhere.



So, back to my story about the old woman in desperate need of eyeglasses. This happened about 3 hours into Day 1 of our mission when the optometry staff was given strict orders to temporarily shut down. We had plenty of glasses left, so why the sudden directive? Apparently a quick accounting check revealed that the staff had given out more glasses than was allocated for the morning shift and as a result, there was a risk of not having enough eyeglasses to distribute to the groups that were yet to arrive that day. On one hand, we welcomed the respite, but by that third hour, we had found our rhythm amidst the chaos of the first day and didn't want our growing momentum interrupted. Unfortunately though, it seemed our commitment to help outweighed our resources. We had limits to obey.

Except that I couldn't let this woman down. I went back to Optometry and informed my fellow team members about the old woman's need and they quickly advised that we should all follow the order to stop giving eye exams until the next wave arrived. I pleaded the woman's case and, through a slight look of hesitation, I could tell that my fellow volunteer was starting to think less about our numbers and more about this old woman that was waiting outside. "Ok, do whatever you feel is right," she said. "I didn't see you take anything."

With her words of approval (or at least her promise not to incriminate me), I quickly chose a pair of glasses in a power that I thought would be appropriate for the old woman's age. I went outside and spotted her amongst the other 40 or so patients waiting for their medications and asked her to try on the glasses. After a few blinks and frame adjustments, her previous anxiety was replaced with a toothless yet self-assured smile that was infectious. I smiled along with her and knew that although it probably wasn't the perfect prescription for her, it still gave her a vast improvement in her vision, and an entire new outlook. "You don't know what this means to me. I'll be able to really see my grandchildren's faces now....find my way around the kitchen without always being afraid I'm going to burn myself...go to the market and not have to rely on others all the time...I'm so grateful to you, thank you, thank you for doing this for me, you're an angel..." At some point, I got lost in her Vietnamese, but I could feel her gratitude and new found hope overwhelm me. At the same time, however, I felt like I hadn't done much at all. I basically gave her a pair of eyeglasses that was probably worth less

than what I tipped the bellboy at the hotel the other day, and yet the implication of my gesture couldn't really be quantified. I envisioned how her daily life would be different now that she had glasses and wished I could actually see it, but her reaction was more than good enough for now. A few grateful tears maneuvered their way slowly down the deep crevices of her wrinkles, and I responded in kind. I figured I'd cry at some point during this mission, but I didn't think it would happen this soon. And after she told me about all the ways the glasses would help her, she stopped talking and just squeezed my arm. I couldn't find the right words to tell her how happy I was, so I just shook my head as if to say "no, no don't thank me, you have no idea what this means to me either." She nodded her head at me as if to say she did understand.

About an hour later, I had to refocus on the task at hand of giving eye exams. Back home where I had a few years of optometric experience, those visits were comprised of some high tech pre-testing and collecting of copayments. Here, our eye exam was basically: "please try on these glasses. Ok, can you see this newspaper clearly? No? Ok, try this pair; it's a bit stronger. We'll keep trying different powers until I find you the best one." It was without a doubt the world's fastest eye exam, occasionally made more interesting when some patients would say something to the effect of "why are you showing me a newspaper? I can't read." Feeling embarrassed that I didn't even take that into consideration, I looked to my fellow veteran volunteer Co Tuyet for guidance. Co Tuyet (who had been on the Optometry team 7 years and counting) suggested that I show the patient the palm of my hand and ask them if they could see the lines on my hand clearly. How brilliant I thought....and Co Tuyet basically replied "we just need to be creative and resourceful." And after showing the patient the palm of my hand, the typical response was, "yes, I can see better....and oh! I can read your lines and see your future while I'm at it. Would you like me to tell you your future?"

The offer was tempting, but I abandoned my curiosity. I had a job to do! So I steadily saw one patient after another and it struck me that we had no mirrors for them to see how they looked with their new eyeglasses. However, as part of the media team as well, I had my camera with me and asked if I could take a photo of them wearing their new glasses. Some of them happily obliged while others seemed confused by the odd request, giving me a look that said, "do optometrists take photos of their patients back in America?" But regardless of their initial reaction, once I showed them their image on my camera's screen, their faces lit up faster than I could have imagined. It was the kind of smile that couldn't be enhanced or created in photoshop; it was a smile derived from observing what someone with vastly improved vision looked like...



Co Tuyet is checking eye-sight of a patient by having the patient read her palm

and this person happened to be them. They were seeing themselves the same way I was seeing them- as someone who was now empowered with better vision. I immediately knew that a second set of photos showcasing these smiles was a must, and hopefully these pairs of photos for each patient helped reveal the mission's real impact.

On the bus rides home, most of us volunteers surrendered to fatigue from an action-packed day. The ones that somehow remained awake exchanged that day's stories, which were at times funny, sad, inspiring, and everything in between. One of the physicians found a lump in a woman's breast and told her she needed a mammogram, but she sadly replied she could not afford one. At first I thought, what would she think if she knew that most women in the U.S. have that opportunity but are just too indifferent or scared to take it? Despite this idea, I think the most important lesson from this is our will to remember these stories and to keep coming back and finding more ways to help.



Another story centered on a seven year old boy who rode his 5 year old sister on his bike to the clinic. Their parents could not afford to take time away from work to accompany them, but big brother took great care of little sister, never giving his arm a rest from comforting her on this rare visit to the doctor. As SAPVN volunteers stayed by their side, the older brother informed us that his family had heard about SAPVN's mobile care unit and wanted to take advantage of the children's only real opportunity for health care. On one hand, success stories like this made me glad I signed up for the mission. But what happened when their prescriptions ran out? When another tooth started to decay and risked infecting the others around it? And for every school that we visited, we drove by many other schools that most likely represented more desperate need for some kind of help. The idea ran rampant in my mind and I suddenly wondered if we were truly helping or just providing a temporary solution to an issue that warranted something more sustainable. I knew we weren't miracle workers and yet the more I witnessed, the more I wished so badly that we could do more. I struggled with this realization during the trip and after we arrived back in the states. I was grateful to be part of the trip, but felt like there were so many others that needed our help. Did we really make an impact? My internal debate saw no end.

Fast forward a couple of months to October 16th, 2011, the nite of "Gift of Hope," SAPVN's annual fundraising dinner. Aside from reconnecting with other fellow volunteers, I met other SAPVN members for the first time. One of them happened to be a board member and commented that I should consider accompanying Anh Thanh on his annual trip to visit the children after their orthopedic surgeries. "I'd love to, but on the other hand, I've seen some of the images taken from his trip this year, and they were very disheartening for me.



Eye-care team

your own photos. Don't you see those big smiles? You helped make it happen."

The more I thought about my chat with the board member, the more his words resurrected the mission's impact for me- more than the photos, videos and statistics did for me that nite. His insight inspired me to think about memories that confirmed his point and as a result, my internal debate slowly turned a corner. In addition to the health care provided, I thought of the many patients who happily lined up for an instant portrait by one of our photographers, who felt like he had the greatest job in the world; it allowed him to give those patients perhaps their first portrait (and biggest smile) ever. And on the next day, one of the villagers (who somehow had a tripod back at his home), noticed the photographer's need for a tripod and hurried back home to get it. The man said he wanted to give back to SAPVN and he certainly did...much like the little local girls who happily passed out sweet tofu to the SAPVN volunteers who must have looked like they were in dire need of a pick me up. I also remembered how a group of children proudly posed for a photo in their new soccer uniforms courtesy of SAPVN. The uniforms were at least 2-3 sizes too big; but they were no match for the children's tight grips. The photo mirrored the scene that was replayed numerous times- the toys and clothing distributed had a direct correlation with the joyful laughter and smiles of the children we met.

And then there were the times patients would tell me that they needed, but apologized that they couldn't afford, to pay me for the glasses. I told them it was my gift to them and it was one of the greatest feelings ever.

Aside from what I experienced and saw with respect to the patients, I won't forget the volunteers' stories either. Some of them were returning to Vietnam for their 17th mission, while many others were embarking on their first mission, two of which had just turned twelve years old. I met some volunteers who were concerned before the mission due to their perceived lack of Vietnamese skills, and felt this to be a significant barrier in adding value to the team. Yet by the end of trip, I overheard them speaking just enough Vietnamese to fulfill their role and help the patients. Their will had definitely found a way. And collectively, I easily saw the difference between the first and last day- if we had timed ourselves during the set up, I'd guess the first day took 30-40 minutes. By the fourth day, setting up the clinic took at least half that time; in about 15 minutes we were ready for our patients. It was one example of how we had become a well-oiled machine with a heart, and I was honored to be part of it.

In the end, the scope of need for medical care in Vietnam is considerable to say the least. But even if SAPVN can only

I'm not sure if I could do it." His immediate response was "I don't see despair. I see hope. These children know that things will get better; they know someone cares. It helps them to focus on their new abilities and not their perceived limits.....or just look at

address .01% of that scope, that .01% is just as important as every other .01% and it still has to be done. And what we DID do speaks for itself: 10,957 drug prescriptions filled, 2,991 medical patients, 1,147 optometric patients, 955 dental patients and an unknown amount of smiles. That unknown number represents the immeasurable intangibles that I am now certain contributed to a mission accomplished. End of debate. I learned it takes little to make a true difference- whether it's raising awareness for organizations like SAPVN, contributing toys or donations, volunteering locally, or committing to a medical mission and smuggling a pair of eyeglasses. Every little bit counts and cannot be underestimated....especially the part about smuggling a pair of eyeglasses. I would gladly do it again =)

GIẢI THƯỞNG BÁC ÁI 2011

Kể từ 2004, trong suốt 7 năm liền, tuy khả năng chuyên môn không liên hệ đến y tế, nhưng năm nào chị cũng đi cùng đoàn Y Tế lưu động của hội về Việt Nam. Trời Phan Thiết nóng bức và ẩm ướt, nhưng nhìn chị vui tươi, nhanh nhẹn, hăng say đếm, phát thuốc cho hàng trăm bệnh nhân trong chuyến đi vào tháng 7 năm nay, không ai nghĩ chị đã ngoài 70 tuổi và vừa trải qua một cuộc giải phẫu não vào năm 2010. Chị hay "Đi" Mỹ Linh mà các bạn trẻ trong hội thường gọi, là bà Công Huyền Tôn Nữ Mỹ Linh, một tình nguyện viên mà hội SAP-VN đã chọn để trao giải "Bác Ái" năm 2011.

Công tác thiện nguyện và giúp đỡ những người kém may mắn của chị Mỹ Linh không bắt đầu từ ngày biết hội SAP-VN vào năm 1994 mà bắt nguồn từ ngày xưa. Chị cho biết: "Trước 75 thì thỉnh thoảng Mỹ Linh cũng có giúp đỡ mấy người gặp khó khăn. Sau 75, Mỹ Linh có đi làm nên có thể san sẻ phần lương thực lãnh được với bà con bạn bè. Mỹ Linh còn tham gia các đoàn thiện nguyện đi thăm các



My-Linh is presented with the Compassion Award 2011 at SAP-VN "A Gift of Hope" Fundraising Gala

bệnh viện chữa trị ung bướu, phong cùi, AIDS/HIV, các viện mồ côi, viện dưỡng lão, bảo trợ các học sinh nghèo nay đã có em đi làm hoặc học đại-học..." Nhưng chị Mỹ-Linh là người sinh ra để giúp người khác. Khi trẻ, chị phụ giúp cha mẹ chăm sóc em, lớn lên chị chăm sóc cháu, và trở lại chăm sóc cha mẹ già. Chị chọn SAP-VN vì sự thân thiết và lòng kính mến lẫn nhau của các thiện nguyện viên. Tùy tài năng và khả năng của mỗi người, ai ai cũng đem hết tâm huyết ra hăng say đóng góp vào các công việc của

hội. Mọi người đều cùng chung một chí hướng là giúp đỡ người kém may mắn tại Việt Nam. Khi được hỏi sẽ hoạt động với hội SAP-VN đến lúc nào, chị Mỹ Linh trả lời cho đến khi nào sức khỏe không cho phép mỗi thôi! Hội SAP-VN xin trao tặng chị Mỹ Linh giải Bác Ái 2011 để ghi nhận tấm lòng vị tha, những đóng góp thiện nguyện không ngừng của người phụ nữ đáng mến.

A GIFT OF HOPE 9 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

REVENUE	\$89,999.00
Ticket Sale	\$9,150.00
Sponsors	\$59,000.00
Donations	\$11,207.50
Gift & Art Sale	\$10,641.50
EXPENSES	\$14,105.60
NET INCOME	\$75,893.40

COMPASSION AWARD 2011

My Linh Cong Huyen Ton Nu has been a long time supporter and volunteer of SAP-VN. She has known about our organization back in its inception in 1994 and has donated, on a regular basis, whatever small amount of money that she could save up to support our programs and mission. Those who know My Linh will tell you that she is a person who dedicates her life to taking care of others. From a young age, she has helped her mom to take care of her many siblings; and when her siblings had children of their own, she also lent a helping hand with taking care of her nieces and nephews. As her grandparents and parents were aging, she was by their side to nurse and care for them. Being the caretaker for her family made it hard for her to actively volunteer for SAP-VN until 2004 when she had the opportunity to go on her first medical mission to Vietnam. Since then, she has not missed a year in volunteering with SAP-VN's mobile care mission, even when faced with a serious medical condition. In December of last year, My Linh had to undergo brain surgery to remove a tumor and yet comes July of this year, she was full of energy for the mission. You wouldn't know by looking at her that she's 70 years old - especially when you see her at work in Vietnam, helping the pharmacy team to separate, count, and dispense medication to hundreds of patients a day.

My Linh says she enjoys volunteering with SAP-VN because there is mutual respect amongst the volunteers for each individual's skills and talents, no matter how big or how small, and what they bring in their heart and spirit to contribute to the organization. Everyone comes together with the common mission to help those who are in need in Vietnam - the disabled, the elderly, and the impoverished. When asked how long she will continue to volunteer for the mobile care mission, she replies she will keep on going as long as her health allows. We hope that there will many more missions to come! SAP-VN would like to dedicate this year's Compassionate Award to My Linh to acknowledge her dedication to caring and giving to others. We deeply appreciate her volunteerism and altruism, her spirit and energy, and for being the loving and kind person that she is.

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Vietnamese American Cancer Foundation (VACF)

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(viết về chương trình giải phẫu chỉnh hình của SAP-VN)

tay năm ngón
tan vào thành một
em lấy gì
bấu víu giữa cầu tre
cánh tay đoản,
khủy tay buồn, lật ngược,
nó cứng đầu
nên em bảo, chẳng nghe

chân cong quíu
chứa một lần đứng dậy
xương và da dị dạng, khước từ nhau
chúng bất hòa, nên em còn lằm lũi
mỗi một ngày niềm khuyết tật bôn ba

tứ chi em đã bất đồng ngôn ngữ
cuộc đời em vẫn bất toại, lết la
nổi tử hờn ngày đêm mọc trên tóc
xõa trên em một căn cước bên lê

ngủ không lành,
thức không khỏi hăm hiu
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tôi bắt tội ai
cho những đọa đày em chịu?
tôi kiện cuộc đời,
thù hận, hay chiến tranh?
tôi cứ phải hỏi
vì sao em tàn tật?
và vì sao nghèo đói mãi bám chân...

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vì sao em phải đợi
bao tháng năm rồi
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là một ngày đời óng ả ánh nhân

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A GIFT OF HOPE 9

ĐẠ TIỆC CHO EM NIỀM HY VỌNG



Họa sĩ Doãn Quốc Vinh và những tác phẩm nghệ thuật của anh được trưng bày và bán gây quỹ tại Dạ tiệc "Cho Em Niềm Hy Vọng 9"



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Cả nhà cùng bảo trợ, cùng làm thiện nguyện viên!

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GC61

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CẢM ƠN! THANK YOU!

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