
VietHope Newsletter

Spring VI

March 2006

VietHope is a non-profit organization dedicated to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. We believe that the wealth of Vietnam lies in its human capital and its prosperity is dependent on the harnessing of this human capital. As such, we believe that good education is indispensable to Vietnam's growth and future.

Contributing writers:

Uyen Kim Huynh
Lynn Huynh
Anh-Hoa Nguyen
Chi Pham
Kim-Son Nguyen
Uyen-Khanh
Quang-Dang

Editor:

Uyen Kim Huynh

Assistant Editor:

Hansel Pham

www.VietHope.org
info@VietHope.org

WORD FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

by *Uyen Kim Huynh*

Dear friends,

VietHope is entering its fourth year as a non-profit organization with several successful projects accomplished. To date, VietHope has provided scholarships to over 400 children to attend primary and secondary schools in Vietnam, built a new elementary school in the province of Ca Mau, and constructed a community library and computer classroom in Thanh Hoa. VietHope's newest program is its University Scholarship Program which funds college students to attend Vietnam's most prestigious universities.

Last year VietHope successfully met its fundraising goal thanks to the generous support of all of its donors. The support VietHope has greatly increased the total number of Merit and Community Scholarship awards to school age children in Vietnam.

As central to our mission, we will continue to expand the Merit and Community Scholarship Programs in order to provide funding for the vast number of children living in poor rural areas who still do not have the opportunity to attend school.

VietHope has also targeted college students and has awarded 40 scholarships to well-deserving first-year university students to attend Vietnam's most prestigious universities. Focusing on subjects ranging from economics to medicine, these university students have demonstrated and

maintained academic promise, scholarly achievement and most importantly, a long-term commitment to improving Vietnam's future.

Lastly, as a growing non-profit organization, VietHope relies on the ongoing hard work of our staff. We currently have staff in Boston, New York, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco and Hanoi. VietHope's operations are completely managed on by a talented and dedicated staff of volunteers. Because of our low overhead (which is covered by membership fees), all of our donations are allocated directly towards our projects. Thus, we rely on support from our donors to keep our programs operating successfully.

Your generous support has been vital to our work and we greatly appreciate it. Thank you for your continued support in providing educational opportunities for children in Vietnam.

We look forward to a great year ahead!

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Ways to Support VietHope:

VietHope welcomes anyone who shares our mission. There are a number of ways in which you can support VietHope.

Sponsorship:

Sponsor a child's education for \$120/year

Donations:

Make a donation of any amount to VietHope

Donate to other VietHope projects

Membership:

Membership fees cover VietHope's administrative and operational expenses.

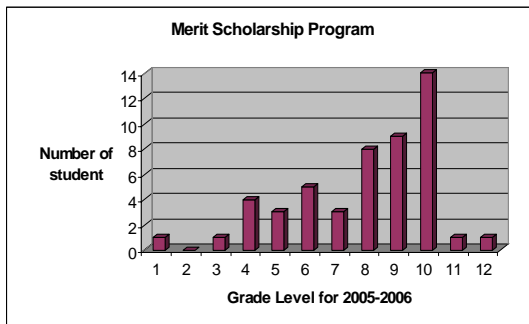
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UPDATES ON VIETHOPE PROGRAMS

VietHope's Merit Scholarship Program

by Lynn Huynh

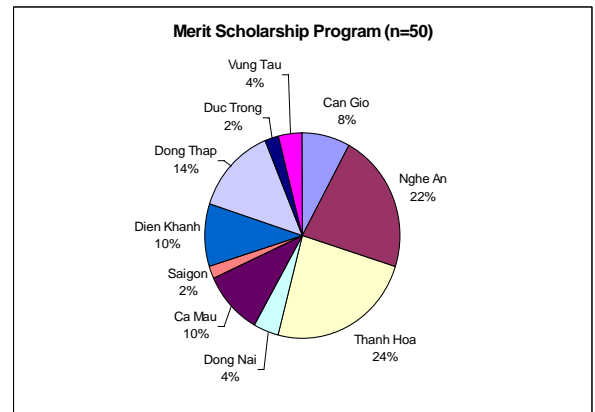
VietHope operates three Scholarship Programs: Merit Scholarship, Community Scholarship and University Scholarship Program. The Merit Scholarship Program commits to sponsoring a child starting as early as grade 1 up to grade 12. VietHope supports the students, who in return must continue to maintain high grades throughout the academic year. Students are selected based on merit, financial need, and motivation to excel. They are required to submit to VietHope an application, recommendation letter, and grade report. We then select students who best meet VietHope's criteria.



Last September, VietHope selected 30 outstanding students from 4 regions—Thanh Hoa, Nghe An, Can Gio and Dong Nai. This number has brought VietHope level of sponsorship to 50 students for 2005. It was very difficult for us to choose 30 students since all the applicants displayed similar strengths and faced great financial need. VietHope will monitor these students' progress and watch these students as they grow and reach their full potential.

VietHope's Community Scholarship Program

VietHope's other primary/secondary scholarship program is the Community Scholarship Program which financially supports every student in one village from grades 1 through 12. With \$10 per student, VietHope purchases uniforms and general books for the students in the village. Based on the success of VietHope's initial implementation of the Program in 2004 in Binh Gia, Vung Tau, VietHope has expanded the program to three more villages Binh Gia, Preyong, and K'ren in Lam Dong, a total number of 373 students.



"The reason why I would like to receive this scholarship is because I was born in a poor family. I have 11 brothers and sisters—7 go to school where I would like to join them.

Pham Van Luong, grade 8,
 Province of Nghe An

Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life.

--John Dewey,
Democracy
and Education,
1916

THE UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

By Anh-Hoa Nguyen

VietHope's University Scholarship Program

In February 2006 VietHope awarded University Scholarships to 40 first-year college students. These students demonstrate both academic achievements and financial needs. They have been accepted to Vietnam's leading universities: Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City School of Medicine, Hue University of Science and, Hue Medical School. Each VietHope scholarship recipient received \$150, which helps cover a full year tuition and educational materials.

In late February 2006, VietHope held its first University Scholarship Program Award Ceremony at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology. The students came from all over Vietnam and had the chance to meet one another, exchange stories and ideas about their studies as well as meet VietHope in person. They were awarded the scholarships by Huynh Van Thi, a staff member from Hanoi.

VietHope will continue to strengthen the progra and expand it to northern provinces in Vietnam for the 2006 - 2007 academic year. We believe that our scholarship model works well and our aim is to increase our scholarship recipient pool to 150 talented and poor students next year.

The University Scholarship Program would not have been possible without the invaluable financial support of our donors. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and hope that you will continue to support

this program as well as other VietHope projects that aim to improve access to education for poor students in Vietnam.



2005-06 VietHope University Scholarship Recipients Awards Ceremony

"I would like to receive this scholarship in order to become a better educated person so that I will have a good career for myself, a better life for my family, and become a person who can serve his community and society similar to the greatness that your organization is doing."

Phan Dinh Hao,
Province of Thanh Hoa

www.VietHope.org
info@VietHope.org

423 Brookline Ave.
#199
Boston, MA 02215

for a
prosperous
Vietnam
tomorrow...

ISSUE IN EDUCATION

Rising Levels of University Tuition in Vietnam

By *Chi Pham*

On September 13, 2005, government officials voted to increase tuition in Vietnam's public universities up to 40% for the upcoming school years. Their argument is that the current tuition fees set by Decision 70 from the Prime Minister in 1998 no longer reflects the actual cost of attending university. According to Decision 70, tuition must not exceed 1.8 million VND (Vietnamese Dong or, \$120 US) at universities or exceed 1.5 million VND (\$100 US) at colleges. However with the increase in prices of everything from petroleum, to food, to housing, universities must also increase faculty wages while modernizing their facilities and curriculum.

Currently, universities are subsidizing 70% - 80% of the cost of education for each student but they find the increase in prices too much to bear. The proposed new fees could see university tuition rise up to 2.5 million VND (\$168 US) and college tuition rise to 2.1 million VND (\$140 US).

The increase in tuition fee will depend on the subjects and projected salary students will earn from each subject. For example, subjects such as engineering and medicine will see a higher increase than sociology or economics because the costs associated with teaching the former are higher than latter. Universities noted that the rise in tuition will also reflect improvements in school facilities such as libraries and technology and also the quality of teaching and professors. In the grand scheme, improvements in facilities and the quality of teaching both justify the increase in tuition but, for students whose

families are already struggling to meet the current tuition fee, a rise in the cost of education could mean the end of the dream for higher education for many.

In 2004, the average family income in Vietnam is 7.2 million VND (\$482 US), but drops to merely 4 million VND (\$266 US) for those living in rural areas. For these families, university tuition of \$168 US is more than half the family's annual income and requires significant sacrifices from other members of the family in terms of financing for medical care, food, and education for younger siblings. Furthermore, students also face high living expenses by moving to the cities. Yet, obtaining higher education is precisely what these students need to assist in increasing their families' economic capacities.

For this reason, VietHope's University Scholarship Program is more relevant than ever. The scholarship program was established in 2005 to help college freshmen coming from rural regions and who meet VietHope's criteria of academic merit and financial needs. It awards \$150 per year to first year college students. Though small in amount by American standards, the modest scholarship allows these Vietnamese university students to successfully complete their first year of college studies. We hope to continue expanding this important scholarship program in the years to come.

www.VietHope.org
info@VietHope.org

423 Brookline Ave.
#199
Boston, MA 02215

THE SUCCESS OF OUR AUTUMN

FUNDRAISING EVENTS

By Kim-Son Nguyen

VietHope organized two successful fundraising events on the East Coast this past autumn. On October 15th, 2005, the Boston-based staff put on a memorable dance party on the campus of Harvard University. Almost one hundred people braved the heavy rain to attend the event. A delicious course of Vietnamese food, generously donated by Pho Pasteur of Harvard Square and Pho So #1 of Dorchester, started out the evening, followed by a fantastic performance from VariAsians, the only Asian a capella group in the Boston area. The five talented, young singers performed a wide range of songs, from Madonna classics to Vietnamese ballads.

The audience was then treated to a mesmerizing performance from the Argentine tango club from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Free ballroom lessons preceded the dance. Dr. Long Ngo, a Harvard professor and a long-time supporter of VietHope, and Chi Pham, our very own Director of Communications, showed the participants the basic steps of rumba, salsa, and cha-cha. At the end of the night, everyone expressed generous compliments on a fun dance party that served a great cause. The event raised over \$3000, far surpassing our expectations.

Not to be outdone by the Boston staff, our VietHopers in Washington, D.C., also organized an extremely successful fundraising event on November 12th, 2005. Those who came to the beautiful ancient church located a few blocks from Georgetown University were treated to a memorable performance from two young

Vietnamese-American artists. Thu Nguyen, an English teacher at a local high school, recited her poignant poems, while her younger brother Nguyen K. Nguyen, along with his jazz band, performed songs and showed films he had created during his trip to Vietnam on a prestigious music fellowship.

Through their poetry, songs, and films, the Nguyen siblings awed all in the audience, inspiring them with the beauty that lied deep in the human heart amidst the seemingly debilitating poverty that plagued Vietnam. The night ended with a touching video clip of several VietHope scholarship recipients thanking all donors for their financial support.

With the Washington, DC, event also raising over \$3000, VietHope ended the year with much optimism toward future fundraising efforts. We will continue to organize events that will bring people together, provide great entertainment, and raise important funds to help poor children in Vietnam get a much-needed education.



Anh-Hoa Nguyen, Nguyen K. Nguyen, Thu Nguyen, Hansel Pham & Lynn Huynh at our Washington DC Fall Fundraiser

www.VietHope.org
info@VietHope.org

423 Brookline Ave.
#199
Boston, MA 02215

VietHope Executive Committee:

Nam Tran Nguyen,
President

Hansel Pham,
*Vice-President and
Admin Chair*

Lynn Huynh,
*Secretary and
Scholarship Program
Chair*

Chau Nguyen,
Treasurer

Kim-Son Nguyen,
Project Manager

Uyen Kim Huynh,
*Fundraising Director
and Newsletter Editor*

Uyen-Khanh
Quang-Dang,
Public Relations Chair

Chi Pham
Communications Chair

Van Nguyen
Fundraising Director

Alan Tu
Finance Director

www.VietHope.org
info@VietHope.org

423 Brookline Ave.
#199
Boston, MA 02215

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Zazzle & VietHope Join Forces!

by Uyen-Khanh Quang-Dang

After months of planning, VietHope is excited to announce the grand opening of our online store! In partnership with Zazzle.com, we have postage stamps, greeting cards, and shirts (even infant-wear, tank tops, baseball t-shirts, baby-T's, and hooded sweaters) that were designed by our very own VietHope Scholarship Recipients from the village of Preyong, Vietnam.

Please visit www.viethope.org, click on our *VietHope Store* link. Twenty-seven percent of your purchase amount will go directly to the children VietHope supports!

VietHope in the Press: National Vietnamese-American Magazine

NHA Magazine, a bilingual Vietnamese-American magazine dedicated to a diverse array of topics such as business, politics, sports, fashion, and entertainment, has published a feature article about VietHope in its Nov/Dec 2005 issue. With one special VietHope Scholarship Recipient's personal story as a framework, the article details the trials that VietHope faced in its three years of existence, its successful programs and projects, and how VietHope deals with the more philosophical side of nonprofit work.

Please visit www.nhamagazine.com for info on ways to get the issue; the VietHope article is also available on our website.

www.VietHope.org

VietHope
for a prosperous Vietnam tomorrow

Donation Form

The objective of VietHope's Scholarship & University programs is to provide financial assistance to children in poor rural areas in Vietnam who cannot afford the costs of continuing their education. The students are selected on the basis of financial need, performance in school, and their motivation to excel. Your contribution will directly support the education of these children.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please check one ore more of the boxes:

- I wish to sponsor a child through VietHope's Scholarship Program. With my support of \$120/year, I will help children in Vietnam attain a higher level of education.
- I wish to make a contribution of \$_____ towards the University Scholarship Program.
- I wish to support and become more involved in VietHope's work by becoming a member for \$25.

**Please make checks payable to:*

**VietHope, Inc.
423 Brookline Avenue, #199
Boston, MA 02215**

Signature

Date