

## Introduction



The new year has started some weeks ago for the Western people (người tây), but not yet for the Vietnamese. Because of the lunar calendar, the date changes every year. It starts between half January and half February. Tết Nguyên Đán, in daily language Tết, is a very important holiday for the Vietnamese. This holiday is surrounded by many traditions: clean your house, pay your debts, end disputes, buy new cloths, prepare gifts, "lucky money" and delicious traditional food. Every year has the name of an animal. On 23 January 2012 Tết is the beginning of the year of the dragon. Chúc mừng năm mới or happy Vietnamese new year.

Marc de Muynck

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## Orphelinats

### Mái Ấm Sơn Ky

There is one orphanage left to present to you: Mái Ấm Sơn Ky, located in district 12 in the north of Ho Chi Minh City. Due to the fact that brother Jérôme, the person in charge of orphanage, has been very busy for Christmas and Tết, he was not able to find the time to tell more about the orphanage. We hope to present this orphanage next time.



### Contact with your foster child

Last year there was a contact between foster parents and their foster child via Skype with the help of our volunteer Tam (Le Duy). On the advice of our volunteer Jeff (Duboc) we bought an usb stick 3G to connect through the internet. When he is in Vietnam, Tam offers his services to you so you can communicate with and see via video conference your foster child translating from French into Vietnamese and vice versa. And fortunately for you and the association he is often in Vietnam. In general he assumes this task from 9.00 a.m. French time (being 15 p.m. Vietnamese time). You need a Skype account and if you do not have one, it is easy to create one. If you are interested, contact us at [contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com](mailto:contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com).

### Patrick et Francine Fay



We have actually been able to contact our small foster child recently via Skype First we would like to thank sincerely Tam who, when he is in Vietnam, is so kind to organise these contacts and to take of the translation also with Marc present. It is for us, the foster parents, a special moment that brings us closer to our foster daughter. We, my wife Francine and I, are foster mom and dad of Anh since a year now. We met Anh last spring. Since our return, we think of course often about her, but being far makes it more difficult to get to know her better and to have a real contact with her. Unfortunately we cannot go very frequently to Vietnam. Thanks to the video sessions organised by Tam, we can feel us a little bit closer to her. That will ease our relation in the long run and will allow us to create gradually a real dialogue. It needs time, we think, before tighter relations can be forged. These moments are as usual full of emotions, but we are very happy to see her on the computer screen. This connection at kilometer's distance has a magical side. It is the same difference as seeing someone on a picture and the same person in a film. Of course the conversations are limited, the children are probably intimidated by this video contact and do not talk very much. But this brings us so much joy, to us the foster parents naturally, but we are sure to our foster children too.

### Visit ophthalmology

Doctor Thái Xuân Đào of Distict 10 hospital has examined the eyes of all the children of the orphanages Minh Tam and Truyền Tin for free. 16 January the children of Minh Tam were divided in two groups: one was sent to the hospital and the other to her private cabinet. Result: of the sixteen, three will get glasses. 17 January the operation was repeated for the children of Truyền Tin. Result: of the twenty five children that were examined eight will need to wear glasses. A small girl of 11 already shows signs of a progressive cataract and will have to be operated in the coming years, in the meantime a yearly check-up. We thank doctor Thái Xuân Đà for her time, support and the financing of the glasses. All the other costs for this screening operation for the



children have been paid by the association. We thank all the volunteers and the sponsors for their support.

### Handing-out gifts

Like every year our association participated with the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City in the distribution of gifts for Têt for the poor families. We have offered fifteen parts (being 15x400.000VND per family of which half in cash and half in kind: food)

### Drawing workshop at Truyen Tien

Sunday 27 November 2011 in the morning, a drawing workshop started with young volunteers. The subject proposed to the children: create Christmas cards with wishes.



These cards will be sold in favor of the orphanage. On the pictures you can recognize Thuy, translator and interpreter of our association and her student Tam (Jessica) interior designer and drawing teacher whom proposed to animate this activity.



You will see also Eve, a young French volunteer of Vietnamese origin who helps with the daily activities and the life in the centre despite the difficulties in communication.

### Our orphanage

You are aware of our desire to construct our own orphanage. Till today we support small centres, but because of the difficulties to obtain from the people in charge more rigidity in the administration, management and the application of basic hygienic rules in their house, we would like to have our own centre.

We are in touch with the association "handicap children without borders (handicap enfants sans frontière, HESF) for a possible future partnership with regard to our important project. Recently Mr. Jean Jacques Reith, president of the HESF, and Marc de Mynck have visited two properties that could be put to our disposal for fifty years,

renewable. It are surfaces of 5.000 m<sup>2</sup>. These areas are located north of the area of the future international airport, on the current road to Vung Tau about forty kilometers from Ho Chi Minh City. They met also the president of the People's Committee who seems to support this project. In case the partnership will be concluded, we will in particular be in charge of the orphanage and our partner of a centre to support handicapped people to integrate professionally.

We will think both about which area to choose and after that start the various administrative procedures necessary to make this big project work.

If you are interested in supporting this project or you know possible sponsors, please contact us at [contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com](mailto:contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com). On request the complete file for this project will be sent to you. We need financial support for the construction but also for the daily costs after the construction has been completed.

### Contributions

#### Scholarships

We have signed a partnership agreement with a school in district Binh Tân, in the north-west of Ho Chi Minh City. Some children of the "Hoa Sen" school have been transferred. This school was closed following the closure of the orphanage in January 2011. We help in the form of scholarships. The costs to go to school are two million VND per year (about 70 euros).



For the moment we help about twenty eight children, but there are other children who need a scholarship in order to go to school. The teachers have various professional training projects, but these small schools have a small budget. Even though still young, the children need already to learn some kind of profession that will allow them to earn some money that will allow them to continue to study. We are planning to help them to buy some material for the sewing workshop. We suggest also buying some computers so they can learn to use them and useful software. We try to find a drawing teacher to create a drawing and painting workshop.

If you are interested or you people who are interested in participating in this program, please contact us at [contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com](mailto:contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com).

## Glasses



We would like to thank the Association of the French speaking in Ho Chi Minh City for their gift of twelve frames for glasses.

## Event

*Caroline Chateau*



The French community living in the Netherlands organised a bazaar in the Netherlands for the Vietnamese in Vietnam.



The French community living in the Netherlands organised a bazaar in the Netherlands. This big bazaar takes place once a year. You can find anything there, crafts, antiques, cloths, books, games for children and you can eat and drink there. Various stands representing countries of different continents like Egypt, Africa, Vietnam, Switzerland, Belgium and Italy present there gastronomy and a large buffet presents a wide variety of regional dishes. There is a well-stocked bar (with a stand with Champaign where people order take-away cases and various Belgian beers) and a tea room with delicious pastries. Well before this day, we organise the collection of books, objects, games and prices. What brings in the most



is the raffle. Canvassing at the big enterprises, embassies, European organizations and others to donate prices (ex: Air France always offers tickets for two persons) and after that several are requested to sell the raffle tickets within their organizations (sales at the European patent office: €

9 300). This year the revenues have been € 50 000. This money will be divided between about twenty projects worldwide, amongst which one of the association the Children of the Dragon.

## Bille et Boules School ([www.bouleetbilles.net](http://www.bouleetbilles.net)),

*Yen Thu Pham-Fernandez*

Saturday 17 December 2011, during the Christmas tree event of the school Boule et Billes, Mr. Marc de Muynck and volunteers of the association the Children of the Dragon had a stand on our Christmas Market.



The total amount of the sale of confections of the school children: cookies, shortbread, mini bonbon skewers, cards, candles, candlesticks and various decorations for the house (Christmas tree, table) was given to the association. The students' parents also gave financial contributions, cloths and toys.

All the children of the school Boule et Billes have been made aware of the cause and it is with pleasure that they participated in this event. It was also an opportunity to learn more about the association the Children of the Dragon and its actions. In this way we can wish the children a Merry Christmas.



Thank you, Mr. Marc de Muynck and the volunteers, to have accepted our invitation.

The school Boule and Billes hopes to renew its support for the association and uses this opportunity to wish you all a happy 2012 and give you our best wishes.

We thank the director of the school for the organization of this event and all the children and their parents for their contributions.

## HELP-portrait

On 11 December 2011: visit to the orphanages we support and taking pictures for the foster parents. Our friend Hoa and his friends, all passionate about pictures and members of HELP-portrait, came to take pictures of the children. HELP-portrait is a global organization of photographers who give their time, their material and their expertise to persons who need them. Hoa is a very sympathetic guy who studied at IFI (Institut Francophone d'Informatique) and who is now an engineer at IBM in Ho Chi Minh City. With his friend Ha from the same university he already intervned as volunteers for projects where IT-rooms have been installed, they do their best to supply the material for free.



## Projects

### Xa Gia Canh

#### Houses

In the last bulletin we announced the start of the construction of the third house. We are happy to announce you that the house is finished and the handing over of the keys has taken place already.



We are pleased to announce that the construction of the fourth house has started too. This house is for the family of Mrs. Trần Kim Lê, widow and mother of two children: her daughter Thủy a student in the first class and her son Phúc a student in the third class.



When the people of the neighbourhood learned that we were going to offer a house to this family, members of her family and family-in-law, her friends and neighbours have collected money to allow her to have a slightly bigger house than we normally build with a kitchen in the house (in general that is at the back of the house in the open air). A great example of solidarity of all these equally poor people.



We are very happy that this project started well in 2011 and we hope that with your support we can continue this project in 2012. We have engaged ourselves to build twenty houses in three years, so we are looking for funding for another sixteen houses.

If you are interested in supporting this project or you know possible sponsors, please contact us at [contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com](mailto:contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com).

### **Wells and water reservoirs**

The drilling for water for the habitants of a village has been finished too. During a meeting we finalize the installation of a well with a water reservoir.



It is station for treating drinking water for 200 persons, in particular meant for the poor of Xã Gia

Canh, Huyện Định Quán, Tỉnh Đồng Nai. Our friend the monk Minh has installed all the material together with a friend for the reservoirs of 2.000 liters. The water supplied is of an excellent quality and even better than some water that is sold commercially. The local person in charge informs us that it is now meant for 2.000 persons.



### **Xa Hung Phu**



You have read about our meeting with the People's Committee of Xã Hưng Phú. We have obtained the authorization to continue the construction of houses in favour of the poor as well as the drilling of wells in Sóc Trăng province. Two of these wells will be for the primary schools of the hameau.



We have also restarted the construction of the houses of which the first is already built. Thanks to the funding by one of our volunteers here in Saigon, Mrs Nguyen Thi Thang a widow of 55 years old and mother of two children (14 and 21 years) has obtained a house. She is very happy to have a real roof, because during the rainy season water came through the roof. Mrs Thi Thang lives of small jobs, amongst which sewing for the neighbours. The inauguration took place in the beginning of this month.



## General Assembly

On 18 December last the Le the general assembly took place. We apologize that the minutes are not ready yet. We hope to give you soon some information about the topics discussed during this meeting.



## Foster parent of the association

In the last newsletter we presented you the story of our foster parent Rémi Bauchmann. He will give a concert in



St. Raphaël on 23 March and on 31 March he will play in Toulon. If you go to one of his concerts, you will be supporting our association.

For more information: [www.remi-bauchmann.fr](http://www.remi-bauchmann.fr)

## Impressions of a foster mom

### Can you tell something about yourself?

My name is Evelyne Klein. I am a mother of two grown-up children and grandmother of a small boy of 18 months. I work in my house where I host guests and prepare breakfast and sometimes dinner for them.

### Since when are you a foster parent?

I am a foster mom of a small girl (Buom) since last spring.

### What made you decide to become a foster parent?

My friend Caroline who knows well the orphanage Truyen Tin praised its seriousness. Since a long time I am also very attracted by Vietnam and I wanted especially help a child in that country.

### Can you tell some more about what is it like to be a foster parent?

To know that a child at the other end of the world is helped a little in its daily life thanks to my small contribution, gives a bit more sense to my life, here in Europe.

### Why did you choose Vietnam and the association 'dragon's children'?

I am interested in Vietnam since my twenties, when I met Vietnamese in Montreal. Mr. Tong had to flee his country and was reconstructing his life working day and night and in a very meagerly way. In the student house we lived in, he was the oldest. He taught me how to made spring rolls and when on Sundays we took him by car to the north of Quebec, he was the happiest of all men. I still have his smile in my heart. So when Caroline who knows Vietnam and the association "Les Enfants du Dragon" very well, asked me, I did not hesitate to join.

### Did you choose a boy or a girl?

In the first place I chose to foster a small boy, because having a grandchild with a south-american mother, I dreamt of reuniting in some way the three continents. But they proposed Buom and I am delighted because it is maybe easier to be in touch with a girl.

### Did you already meet your foster child?

No, not yet.

### Will you visit her soon?

Yes, I will discover Vietnam next March and I certainly will meet Buom and I am very pleased about that.

### In what way do you communicate with your foster child?

For the moment there is no communication between us. Buom is small girl of only 6 years and I wait till she has met me in order to deepen the relation.

### Can you tell us about your most moving moment?

For the moment I have to tell that there have not been many moving moments as we have not been in touch directly. Yes, maybe when I discovered her face on a picture. I looked at her face a long time to try to see if she already had something to tell me.....

### Do you have a tip for the other foster parents?

I think that since some weeks, modern means (skype amongst others) have been put in place and that can only facilitate the communication. I met Tam (from Geneva) who also proposes to facilitate the communication when he is in Vietnam. So you should contact him and also with the google group.

### Do you want to share something else with the readers?

I think I will have much more to tell once I will have met Buom this March. For the moment I think you

need to be patient, to show up at key moments, such as birthdays, Têt, etc.

### Impressions of a volunteer



#### Can you tell something about yourself?

My name is Caroline Chateau and I am forty seven years old. I am a French expat living in the Netherlands for twenty years in order to follow my husband who found a job at the European Patent office. I did replacements at the French school in The Hague as a teacher and gave piano courses at home. My two boys are already grown-up,

#### Since when are you a volunteer?

Since fifteen year I am a volunteer for a small French association in The Hague that organises a big fair with the goal to collect enough money in order to support humanitarian projects in the whole world, but also in Europe.

#### In which country are you a volunteer now?

My first trip to Vietnam and meeting children and adults moved me. Everything started with a small school in Dong Ho, near Hanoi, that I wanted to help and from there it was a snow ball. I met other persons that proposed other projects etc. Then we built several schools in the centre and the south of the Mekong delta, supported several years a shelter for street children in Hanoi, built toilets and wells, renovated orphanages and brought lots of school furniture and teaching materials.

#### Have you been doing volunteer work before and in which country?

When I was young in France in my village, I animated recreational Saturdays for the children in my village and I was part of a committee in charge of collecting funds in order to rent the premises and necessary material. Later in the Netherlands I was a volunteer within my ping-pong club to help organise parties and jubilees.

#### In which country are you a volunteer now?

In the Netherlands, but my projects are mainly in Vietnam and Cambodia.

#### Is there a difference between doing volunteer work in Vietnam or elsewhere?

I have been always impressed by the energy and the mobilization of the Vietnamese to help to well finish the projects. The projects that I could follow in Africa took more time. I have also often been surprised by the small requests, in general even if a

priori the needs are huge, they seem to content themselves with what they have and out of modesty or pride, they are reluctant to ask for support.

#### Why did you choose the association the children of the dragon?

Another story about an encounter. An acquaintance who came to work in Venice presented me to Marc. I loved the fact that it is a small organization working locally and is not scattered. The members live there, side by side with the local population, which is the best way to evaluate the needs and to check the proper functioning of the humanitarian actions and correct investments of both people and money. I think small enterprises are most efficient and have the lowest operating costs. I admire beaucoup all volunteers who give their time (so precious in our society) to form, keep busy, distract and support the orphans or to help relocate poor and needy families. Marc is also an example of devotion and generosity. He is full of energy and good ideas to improve the daily life of the needy.

#### What kind of volunteer work do you do?

I organise voluntarily trips to Vietnam that allow me to supervise my projects, with the help of Vietnamese friends and to take back Vietnamese handicrafts (in the suitcases of the participants of the trip). I resell my acquisitions during the French fair that takes place once a year, the last weekend of November. A couple of Vietnamese friends prepares spring rolls that will be sold on that occasion. The money of the sales goes into the general funds of the fair, the total sum (this year 50 000€) will then be divided between around twenty projects.

#### Can you tell some more about what it is like to be a volunteer?

To be a volunteer is to give his or her time and to share your competences to try to help a bit. Often tiring, but always worthwhile.

#### What has been your most moving moment?

I have many ! The way the children look and the laughter of happiness when you play with them. The impression of being part of a family, when they, very poor, invited me to drink a tea on a small low table where was put a mountain of different kind of fruits, beautifully arranged. "We do not have a lot of means, but we are rich with feelings" told my host.

#### What do you find difficult about being a volunteer in Vietnam (or elsewhere)?

Not to speak the language, this forces me to use interpreters. The formalities with the authorities as well as the necessity to listen to long speeches...

### Addresses of the association

#### France

Les enfants du dragon  
73 rue Roger Salengro  
59243 Quarouble  
Tel. +33 (0) 327 273 751

#### Vietnam

B 23/26 Đường Số 5, Tổ 23 - Ấp 2  
Vĩnh Lộc B - Huyện Bình Chánh  
TP Hồ Chí Minh  
Mobile +84 (0) 937 126 605

#### Switzerland

Rue du mont 6  
1023 Crissier  
Mobile +41 (0) 78 619 78 65

### Council of the association

President	BUI HUY Lan
Vice-President	Marc DE MUYNCK
Secretary	vacancy
Treasurer	Thierry LETAUT
Communication	Marieke VAN DER PIJL
Representatives	PHAM Hai
in Switzerland	Lê Duy Tam
Webmasters	Sylvain LORILLOU PHAM Hai
Fosterparents	Marie-France BAILLEU

### Colofon

Editors	Marc DE MUYNCK Marieke VAN DER PIJL
Translators	LE Duy Tam LY Thu Thuy Marc DE MUYNCK Marieke VAN DER PIJL
Lay-out	Marieke VAN DER PIJL

For more information about the association and its activities see: [www.lesenfantsdudragon.com](http://www.lesenfantsdudragon.com).

If you have comments or questions do not hesitate to write us at [contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com](mailto:contact@lesenfantsdudragon.com).