



NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 18, Oct 2011

TOGETHER WE MADE IT HAPPEN

TRAVEL DIARIES BY SAVICE VOLUNTEERS FROM THEIR TRIPS ACROSS VIETNAM TO DELIVER 2011 SAVICE SCHOLARSHIPS

Dear SAVICE,

9/19/2011. I accompanied the husband-and-wife team, Mr and Mrs. Vinh Dao to deliver SAVICE scholarships to students living in the last of the eight Central Provinces receiving scholarships for the school year 2011-2012.

Long gone were my apprehensions about the series of lengthy trips since receiving the news that I would deliver SAVICE scholarships from Nha Trang to Quang Binh by means of whatever buses I could get. Meeting the students made my trek worthwhile.

Each bus trip wore me down but at each destination, when I was met by friendly faces and given a radiant welcome, it was as if I had a new energetic body.

SAVICE scholarships for the academic year 2011- 2012 have been delivered into hands of hope in the form of studious effort. Recipients are already living a slightly brighter future this year and are closer to escaping from deep, debilitating poverty.

Along with this letter, I send along pictures and letters of gratitude from our SAVICE students. I also attached notices of university entrance for some of our bright scholars. One particular bright star is Duong Dang Thanh, who has received acceptances from two universities. *(see future editions of our newsletter)*

Wishing everyone peace and good health,

Nguyen Van Thuan, SAVICE representative in
Central/Central Highlands of Vietnam



SAVICE students in Truoi village, Hue



SAVICE students in Hue City.



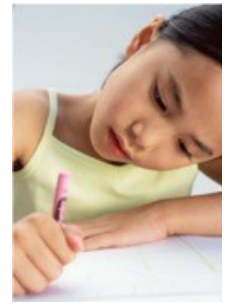
SAVICE students in Quang Binh.



SAVICE students in Quang Tri.



SAVICE students in Quang Nam



Dear SAVICE,

September 2nd was a public holiday, we have leave from work, and could easily coordinate a meeting with students and their parents to hand out SAVICE scholarships. Most students live in villages at least a few dozen kilometers from the Pleiku township. They all were told to make the trip with their parents to Duc An hall, which we had previously booked to hand scholarships directly into the hands of students. Pleiku is in the middle of the rainy season, wet and dreary... We had set the meeting time for 8 am, but the monsoon rain pushed the back the arrival time...to when? We had no idea.

The water continued to pour, making the soil soggy, and blurring the sky. Nine o'clock came and went but only a lucky few had dropped in. I began to worry. I wondered if students would be able to come at all through the rain. But then, nothing, not even the weather could deter our students from meeting with SAVICE. I watched students and parents brave the rain. Everyone was wet and cold but each face was radiant. About 10 o'clock, SAVICE began handing out scholarships to 27 students from Gia Lai and Kontum provinces. Of the 27 students, only 5 are of the ethnic Vietnamese Kinh majority. The remaining 22 students are aboriginal minority.

This year, I accompanied our SAVICE aboriginal collaborator, and SAVICE volunteer Ms. Uc to represent SAVICE (Volunteers Mr. Quoc and Mr. Thuan were not able to accompany me). This year I represented SAVICE in passing along the sentiments of benefactors and supporters of SAVICE to our students. Students show that they understand the value of education and dedication in their efforts to achieve the requirements to be a SAVICE scholarship recipient. For many disadvantaged aboriginal students in remote villages, to reach junior high in their second language, Vietnamese, and to achieve high grades, require tremendous effort. SAVICE has accompanied these aboriginal students since 2009 on their academic journeys. Students renewed their promises to continue their resolve to study well in the next school year in order to receive next year's scholarship from SAVICE.

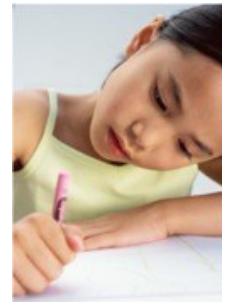
Students's eyes were brimming with tears as they picked up the envelope carefully enscribed with the words "SAVICE Scholarship" that Ms. Uc and I had the privilege to hand out. I saw in the eyes of these children liquid crystals of hope and gratitude. Although I was weary from travel, my only care was that the rain should wash away these drops of chrystal ...Thank you, thank you SAVICE.

Watching students as they made their way back home in the Pleiku rain, I thought about how fortunate for these unfortunate souls, that the open heart that is SAVICE will continue to support the only real chance they have to turn a simple dream of being able to go to school into reality...

Nguyen Thi Thu Sang
Pleiku, September 3, 2011



SAVICE students in Pleiku



Delivering SAVICE scholarships to the North...

I got cheap airline tickets to Vinh city in the afternoon on Saturday, September 3rd, but because I arrived late, I had to buy new tickets for the early 6:30 flight the next day. What a great start!

4/9/2011:

The aircraft landed gently in Vinh city, central north, at 8am. I packed a backpack because the provinces are far apart and I had to take a bus that was supposed to “speed” through the 16 stops between Vinh and Thanh Hoa. From the airport to the center of Vinh city is 138 km, roughly the distance from Saigon to Vung Tau. The highway condition was not so bad, but it still took 3 hours to get there.

I stopped by at Ms. Tham’s house to meet another SAVICE volunteer in Thanh Hoa for lunch before heading straight for Yen Dinh, 42 km from Thanh Hoa. Yen Dinh is the first location selected for my meeting with scholarship recipients in our journey to the Northern provinces. I remember in 2009, it was SAVICE Volunteer Quoc who had made this very same journey. This year is my first time representing SAVICE and following in his footsteps. I was apprehensive travelling alone but upon meeting Ms. Tham, all my worries melted away. Ms. Tham is familiar with the region and armed with her guidance, I had nothing to worry me.

After the stop in Yen Dinh and 15 scholarships delivered, I’m back on the road heading toward Tho Xuan district, 20 km away, to deliver another 15. Because today is the day before the first day of school, students are attending required training in school formal codes, so we had to wait for them to finish around 5:30 pm to begin handing out scholarships. We then trekked 50 km back to Ms. Tham’s home. We arrived close to 2 hours later. Now I see how it took SAVICE Volunteer Quoc the entire day to deliver scholarships to 3 meeting places.

5/9/2011:

Ms. Tham kindly dropped me off at the bus station for my trip to Thai Binh Province. The sweet and thoughtful Ms. Tham packed a bag of fruits, a bottle of water and paper napkin for my three hour bus trip to Vu Thu District, Thai Binh Province. SAVICE collaborator Nguyen Van Tuong picked me up at the station and took me to Vu Thu and Hoang Xa to deliver 24 SAVICE scholarships. In the afternoon, after lunch, he took me on his Honda motorbike to visit the home of Hanh, a poor student who had received a SAVICE scholarship just that morning.

After the home visit, I continued to Sa Cat, a border district of Nam Dinh Province, where 9 students are waiting for their scholarships. By evening I found my way to Thai Binh City where I spent the night and get rested for an early morning trip.



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6/9/2011:

My early morning departure to Nam Dinh was the last trip in my itinerary for SAVICE. Mr. Tuong would not hear of my taking the bus, so he showed up on his motorcycle. The 40km road required that I take a ferry, with which our SAVICE volunteer Quoc is familiar because he took it last year. He did not tell me that the old ferry was sickly and its engine screamed instead of humming or rumbling...

Our SAVICE representative for Nam Dinh is Mr. Hau. This year, only 8 students from Nam Dinh were eligible to receive scholarships. From Nam Dinh, I caught a bus to Hanoi for a flight back to Saigon.

The trip is only three short days, but I learned so many things ...As the old Vietnamese proverb reads "a day of journey is a gurney of wisdom learned." My life has been more fulfilling ever since I became involved with SAVICE. SAVICE has given me the opportunity to bring hope for a brighter future to impoverished children, to bring joy to families, and to help parents let go a little more of the hardships in their daily lives.

Moreover, I have had the privilege to work with members of the extended SAVICE family stationed all over the country here and elsewhere in the world. We all share a worried heart for our poor students, and a work that brings them a brighter future. What a great ending!

Thank you SAVICE for the opportunity to visit the North this year!

Phan Thanh Liem



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