



## Four Days in Vietnam January 8 through 11, 2008

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### *Our Arrival at the Airport Tuesday, January 8*

We arrived in Cam Ranh at 3:00 pm in the afternoon. Sister Agnes and Sister Marie, along with five of the younger children, picked us up at the airport in a rented van.

We drove the half hour trip to NhaTrang and checked into our hotel. Afterwards we spent a relaxing and fun evening meal together before the sisters returned to Cam Ranh.



pleasantly cool for Vietnam weather. We embarked on a short 20 minute drive to a gorgeous new amusement park (still under construction) right outside of NhaTrang. There we were greeted by the remaining children. Fifty-seven children in total attended, while seven of them were unable because of testing being done within school. The children were all very clean and extremely well-dressed in new matching clothing. The girls wore matching pink plaid skirts with white collared-button blouse trimmed in pink piping. The older boys and toddlers wore matching khaki slacks and light pink plaid button up short-sleeve shirts. The infants (five of them) were carried by the older girls and wore western-style outfits.

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*Sister Agnes and the little ones serenade the Abels.*

### *A Day at an Amusement Park Wednesday, January 9*

On Wednesday morning, Sister Agnes and Sister Marie picked us up at our hotel early. This time, four of the oldest boys accompanied the sisters. It was a beautiful and warm day with a soft breeze cooling the palm trees. In fact, it was

The children of the *House of Love* are fortunate to have many sponsors who send them gifts and letters. Your response to the plight of these children has been overwhelming. **Brittany's Hope Foundation** ([www.BrittanysHope.org](http://www.BrittanysHope.org)) has created this report to answer requests for information about the well-being of the children. David and Candace Abel visited the orphanage in January 2008, and gathered the information and photos. We hope you enjoy the account of their visit!



*Everyone looked wonderful in their matching finery, and the children enjoyed the day at the amusement park.*

When the children saw our van arrive, they cheered and immediately ran to greet us with hugs and kisses. It was a wonderful moment of reunion for all of us. The children all seemed healthy, clean and happy. After many tears and warm greetings, the children quickly lined up for a song they had rehearsed in our honor. Following the joyful reunion, we entered the amusement park and began a fun-filled day of adventure on the rides with breaks for snacks and a picnic lunch.

Throughout the day, Mai-Lynn (*note: the Abel's daughter Mai-Lynn often travels with them*



to Vietnam and spends long hours serving as an interpreter) and I prepared individual reports of the children, taking time to talk with them as occasion arose, photographing (first using their Child Number sign and then some casual ones) and completing the report with the cooperation of the sisters.

Questions asked regarding the child were: 1) general health, 2) grade level, 3) concerns or needs, 4) personality traits, 5) hobbies or interests, 6) socialization in the center, 7) future dreams or aspirations. We were able to complete 42 of the 64 necessary reports while at the park. We had a fun, productive day and all of the children begged to make the trip an annual event!

### *Improvements at the House of Love Thursday, January 10*

On Thursday morning we arrived early at the actual House of Love to view the new work that was done. The children again greeted us with great joy, leaping into our arms.

We toured the facility and were extremely pleased with the improvements our funding has provided for the children and other members of





*New beds for the children to sleep on.*



*New guest bedroom for visitors and displaced families.*



*New guest bathroom.*



*Strollers for the infants and toddlers. The strollers make it easier for the tiny nuns or older children to carry little ones.*

*There is new playground equipment where the children can just be kids: a fun ball pit to bounce in, a safe swingset, and other things to climb on.*



*David and Mai-Lynn Abel join the nuns and children for a fast pickup basketball game at the basketball hoop purchased by Brittany's Hope in June 2007.*



*A new fence for added security.*

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*The old inner kitchen was cramped and impossible to keep clean. The food was prepared over burners on the floor.*



*The old outdoor lean-to used for storage and cooking.*



The House of Love and the Brittany's Hope Foundation are grateful to the following people. Their generous donations made the new kitchen construction possible:

Tri & Kristy Le

Ralph & Nancy Lehman

Carlo & Teresa Lonardi

Christopher & Evelyn Mautner

John R. Penatzer

Anonymous Donors

*The new kitchen is tiled for easy cleanup, is more spacious to accommodate the growing needs of the orphanage, and contains a new refrigerator.*

the community. Improvements include:

The nuns were also quite happy to share their new kitchen provided by kindhearted sponsors who donated to the Brittany's Hope Foundation. Prior to our partnership with House of Love, the kitchen was too small to handle the demands of feeding sixty children. The cooking facilities were a fire hazard and dangerous to the children. The nuns had adapted by using a outdoor lean-to/porch area, while the children ate their meals

outside squatting in the courtyard.

In January 2007, Brittany's Hope provided an oven and steel tables and stools for the center, but the sisters were still left with the problems of too small an area for cooking, inadequate dining space, and less-than-sanitary cooking conditions that posed safety hazards to the children. The enlargement of the kitchen required a complete renovation of the old kitchen and expansion by





*To prevent cross-contamination, the new kitchen expansion has separate areas for preparing meat and vegetables.*



*A new large oven is cleaner, more efficient, and safer because of the fire wall behind it.*



*The new sinks make it easier to clean up after meals, and storage shelves and hooks keep the new cookware sanitary.*



*The children now have a place to eat with a roof over their heads, rather than squatting in the courtyard during meals.*



*After church services, the children enjoyed a nutritious lunch of soup, bread, chicken, vegetable rolls, and shrimp.*



*Bread baked in the new oven is a special treat on Sundays.*



*Sister Marie sets out lunch at a special table for guests.*

The House of Love and the Brittany's Hope Foundation are grateful to Garland Rhonda Rohde and TYCO Corporation for their generous donations of the funds to build a water purification system.



Above: The Ray Diener Clean Water Project will provide safe water to the orphanage and surrounding community. Left: One of the children helps to carry water bottles.

with removing the outer lean-to and replacing it with a new kitchen space. ***A New Well & Water Purification System Arrives***

The real pride of the sisters' improvements was a new well and water purification system. This new facility is used to provide free, safe water to the children and surrounding community. The costs were covered by donations to Brittany's Hope and named in honor of Ray Diener, whose passion was to create clean water systems in impoverished areas of the world. He was also the beloved husband of longtime Brittany's Hope Board Member Barbara Diener. It will be called the ***Ray Diener Clean Water Project of Cam Ranh.***

We tasted the water and drank it during our visit. The children help local volunteers distribute the water to families in the community.

After the tour of the facilities, we met with the local officials to discuss the licensing of the

orphanage and our plans as partners with the House of Love.



Happy news! The House of Love received their official orphanage license. The nuns were thrilled!



Provisionally, the official license registering the House of Love arrived in the middle of our meeting with the officials.

A long discussion followed regarding our plans for the future House of Love. Some discussion followed of the use of the adjoining land to enlarge the center. The officials and the Bishop stated that they prefer the center remain in the local community as the sisters are the only available social services for the people. We toured the area where the center could be expanded and discussed how to raise the level of the area to provide for the rainy season and prevent flooding. The officials recommended an architect and engineer who could provide the necessary plans and drainage system to ensure a facility that will be safe, quality-built and prepared for growth.



*Mai-Lynn Abel presented thank you gifts to the officials who attended the meeting to discuss the future of the House of Love. Mai-Lynn translated during the meeting between local officials, Candace and David Abel, and the nuns.*

It was a very productive day with good rapport with the local officials and a sense of purpose in planning the next phase of the House of Love.

Following the meeting with the officials, David, Candace, Mai-Lynn, Sister Agnes, Sister Marie and Father Peter sat down to continue the discussion on our mutual vision for the center. After considerable debate, a plan to share with the architect would include the following needs:

- classrooms for education purposes
- cafetorium with stage
- music room
- computer room
- offices

Separate buildings would include a dorm for nuns, volunteers, baby house, bedrooms for school age children, apartment style housing for transitioning older children, vocational/training center, chapel, and clinic, and space for a playground.

Additional discussion occurred around the need for quality teachers and care providers, English programs, and programs that provide the children with self-worth and confidence, hygiene, and social skills.

The nuns also shared their desire to begin an adoption program and exchange program for the older students to study in the United States.

Brittany's Hope made the suggestion that the sisters begin planning with the architect and create a three- or five-year phase plan, detailed with expected costs and projected time frame for each completion of a phase. The plan will then be presented to the Brittany's Hope Foundation Board of Directors for review and approval.

### *A Day of Fun and Relaxation Friday, January 11*

The next day, Brittany's Hope representative had the opportunity to meet with the Bishop of



*The nuns and the Abels met with the Bishop of the region to discuss the House of Love partnership with Brittany's Hope.*

the region, who gave his full blessings on our plans to partner with the House of Love and develop the new center.

After our meeting with the Bishop, we took the children who had not been able to attend the amusement park outing to a local arcade for

some fun. Everyone had a wonderful time and even the sisters got carried away with the fun of the day by playing Dance Dance Revolution and other games!



*The nuns really had fun playing Dance Dance Revolution!*

After the arcade we returned to the House of Love and finished gathering information about the children. The children also received gifts and letters from their sponsors. We helped to cook and serve a meal, took a tour of the local community,



*The girls couldn't stop giggling when Candace took pictures of them washing each other's hair outdoors.*

*This little girl loved receiving school supplies, family snapshots, clothes, and a stuffed bear from her sponsor family.*



*The Abels' last day of the trip was spent relaxing and enjoying quality time with the children.*