

Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2020



Mission Statement:

Bridges to Learning provides education, health and social development programs to empower impoverished Vietnamese children to change their world.

2020 was a very challenging year for Bridges to Learning, the schools, and the world at large as a global pandemic sprung up in late winter.

Due to Covid related restrictions, and a goal to keep people safe while continuing to achieve the mission, a few adjustments were made in 2020:

- all board meetings were moved on-line;
- all in person fundraisers (e.g. Golf Tournament and Wine Tasting) were postponed until 2021;
- a year end “ask” via mail and email was the main source of fundraising.

Here’s a look at our goal achievement in 2020:

Board Members

In order to achieve our mission, it is critical that B2L has an active and engaged board of directors. Our board goes above and beyond as an active board with each member volunteering their time above and beyond the monthly meetings.

In the midst of the pandemic, we gained a new board member, and those already serving continued in their roles, so we had seven members throughout most of 2020. Our board continues to represent a mix of backgrounds, cultures, and age groups, providing a wide range of experiences and insights that support our mission and the schools.

Current Board members and our Administrator are:

- Donny Chau (secretary)
- Brian Hammer
- Joe Hellman
- Robert A. Mac Murdo (treasurer and co-founder)
- John Nesheim
- Linh Phan (board chair)
- Pooja Shah
- Stacy Phan, Administrator



The board of directors toured the school virtually, meeting students and teachers.

Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2020

Fundraising Goals in 2020

While fundraising nationally was up in 2020, most funds are going to local nonprofits that focus on immediate needs for food, shelter and supporting the medical community.

The B2L fundraising goals for 2020 were tabled by late spring as it became apparent that we would not be hosting a golf tournament in June, and it looked like a wine tasting in the fall may not happen. However, B2L is in the fortunate position to have some cash reserves to continue support to the schools for the near future. Additionally, we were fortunate that Vietnam was not hit as hard with Covid in 2020, and although they did shut down schools intermittently, overall the classes were in session and they did not have overwhelming additional financial needs.

Since we are stewards of the schools, and local fundraising settled down a bit, at the end of the year we did a mail and email fundraiser which focussed on raising funds to pay the teachers salaries. We had an excellent response, raising over \$11,000 through generous donations in 2020, and additional donations were received in early 2021. Due to the value of the dollar in Vietnam, the contributions covered the salaries of nine teachers for three months! Thank you to the donors for their support!

Community Served

Vietnam was fairly successful in managing the pandemic, allowing for schools to complete the 2019-2020 year after shutting down for a couple of months. School resumed in person for the 2020-2021 school year.

Since our inception in 2004 we have focused on the support for Anh Linh School in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and the children who receive their education and care from the staff at Anh Linh Free School. In 2016, a former principal at Anh Linh assumed the management of a new school, Viet Anh Primary School in the central highlands of Vietnam. Bridges responded to the director's need for support and granted the school \$3,500 annually to augment their resources which provide for the education of minority children in the province. In 2020, Bridges to Learning allocated \$3,500 to the Viet Anh Primary School, which was wired in January 2021 due to limited banking appointments due to Covid.

Major Programs

Bridges to Learning's primary focus of providing education for underserved children is carried out through sponsorships funded by a large group of our constituents, our Sponsors. General donations supplement the students as well.

A sponsorship of \$500 annually provides the student with daily classes that meet the State requirements as well as the following:

- Two nutritious meals a day
- Two new uniforms a year
- School books and supplies
- Monthly haircuts
- Health, dental and vision screening, and treatment as needed
-



Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2020

- Special programs and activities throughout the year
- English classes, open library and games, and activity area when not in scheduled classes.

A sustaining sponsorship is a three-year commitment to help the students and sponsors become invested in the relationship that develops with the sponsor. The relationship becomes an important part of an individual's decision to sponsor rather than simply donate. A student is carefully selected based on the principal's belief that he/she would significantly benefit from having a relationship with a sponsor. Sponsorship provides the unique opportunity to:

- Develop a relationship with their sponsored child by exchanging photos and letters;
- Know that they are supporting the happiness of a specific child who would otherwise face a bleak and limited future;
- See the amazing difference that a small amount of caring can bring.

Breakfast Fund

The Breakfast Fund was created early in our involvement with Anh Linh when our Founder, Jerilyn Hirsch taught at the school in 2004-2005. Jerri noticed that many of the children were hungry in the morning. She discovered that many children were from circumstances that could not afford a breakfast meal. Searching about in the ex-pat community in Ho Chi Minh Jerri found someone who could provide high protein supplements for the kids and the Breakfast Fund was created. Now all elementary students receive a healthy breakfast each morning.

Bridges to Learning primarily draws from unrestricted funds to support the Breakfast Fund to the level of \$7,500 annually. In 2020, B2L provided \$7,500 to the Anh Linh School for the breakfast fund.

Sponsorships

Bridges to Learning commits 100% of every dollar received as sponsorship funding to Anh Linh School for the specific child sponsored as these are considered restricted funds. In the past we have strived to maintain a base of 70 sponsored children but through recent attrition we are only supporting 54 students in 2020-2021. That amounts to approximately \$27,000 annually for the 54 children. The total support sent to Anh Linh School for sponsorships was \$27,798 in 2020.



Pre-pandemic Tet celebration as the students and teachers celebrate, oh what fun!



What a difference a week makes! Masks on, the students receive "lucky money" as a new years treat made possible by B2L donors.



Enjoying the books made possible by the prior year's grant from the RCF Foundation.

Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2020

Goals for 2021

- Build the number of sponsored children at Anh Linh back to 65.
- Add at least two more board members to bring the total to eight.
- Host two fundraising events: Golf Tournament and Wine Tasting.

Financial Statement

The 2020 financials reflect the ongoing sustainment and rebuilding in 2019. We had one fundraiser in 2020, the Year End Ask for Teachers, raising a total of \$11,000 in 2020. Additional donations were received in early 2021 as well. Throughout the year, we received an additional \$14,579 in donations and \$26,882 in sponsorships. We began the fiscal year with just over \$77,803 in reserves and a forecast revenue for the year at \$59,197 against an Expense forecast of \$71,308.

It was a tough year financially as we conservatively budgeted a net decrease for 2020 since we were still rebuilding. We ended the year with a net decrease of \$23,532, leaving us to begin 2021 with \$51,349 in reserves. You can find the formal documents at www.bridges2learning.org by clicking on “Public Documents” at the bottom of the page.

2021

What to look forward to? At the time of this writing we are well into 2021, and are still grappling with the pandemic and global economic uncertainty. However, the good news is vaccines are available and activities are getting back to normal. We held an extremely successful fundraiser in June before the Delta variant of Covid started to impact the community. Plans for the in person, fall Wine Tasting were put on hold due to rising rates of Covid. We are considering a year end “ask” in 2021 and a number of fundraisers in 2022, including our increasingly popular Golf Tournament, and perhaps a Vietnamese Gala. However, B2L is in the fortunate position to have some cash reserves to continue support to the schools for the near future.

Unfortunately, Vietnam has been hit hard with Covid in 2021 resulting in schools closing earlier than usual in the spring, and in the fall school has resumed on-line. The pandemic resulted in extreme lockdowns and devastated the economy. The poor, who the Anh Linh and Viet Anh schools serve, are extremely dependent now on free food and medicine distributions. The teachers, staff, and older students living in the dorm have worked tirelessly distributing food and medicine throughout the sweltering summer throughout the neighborhoods. Fortunately, they were some of the first people to receive vaccinations to make their work a bit more safe healthwise.

We continue to strive to support the well-being and education of the children. It is our primary focus and motivates our work.