



ANNUAL REPORT

2022

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Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2022



Mission Statement:

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

2022 was a better year for the Bridges to Learning organization, and for the schools in Vietnam, especially as in-person classes resumed. In fact, the beginning of the 2022-23 school year began with a bang as the teachers and children were able to celebrate with dancing, music, games, and special foods. The joy was palpable, even as it was conveyed by photos and videos.



The older students escort the first grade students into school on the first day.

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The schools' biggest challenges throughout the year were to motivate the children to return to the classroom, and to "catch up" on missed learning since many fell behind due to online classes and lack of resources.

The Bridges to Learning Board continued to meet online, but moved closer to "normal" as the 3rd Annual Golf Tournament was held at The Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake. The tournament was a record-breaker with beautiful weather, 115 golfers attending, and proceeds of over \$25,000 raised for the children.



In the fall of 2022, the Holiday Wine Tasting resumed, with Joe Kotnik from Rootstock Wine Co., and Dan and Kate Campo from South Lyndale Liquors, donating their time and talents to the successful event. The highlight of the event was Sr. Cam Thuy, former principal of the Anh Linh School, visiting from Vietnam. She shared photos and stories of the success of three former Anh Linh students as the "kids" are now attending college and preparing for successful careers. All of the students are very thankful for the opportunity

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to attend the Anh Linh School, as they did not have the money to attend public school as children.



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Here's a look at our goal achievement in 2022:

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 with each member volunteering their time over and above the monthly meetings.

The board experienced some change in 2022 as two board members stepped down in November at the end of their terms, and one member joined the board in March. For most of the year, there were nine board members. At the end of 2022 there were seven members.

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.

Board members and our staff in 2022:

- Donny Chau (vice board chair)
- Brian Hammer (secretary)
- Joe Hellman (board chair)
- Garrison Kiefer
- Robert A. Mac Murdo (treasurer & co-founder)
- John Nesheim
- Linh Phan
- Pooja Shah
- Stacy Phan (part time staff)

We are deeply grateful to co-founder, Jerri Hirsch, who is retired from the board, but continues to provide support and guidance, and promotes the mission.

Fundraising Goals in 2022

The beginning of 2022 offered an opportunity to begin to gather together for events that COVID has curtailed. The annual golf event was planned as was a wine tasting for the fall.

Linh Phan again volunteered her time to organize and promote the 4th Annual Bridges to Learning Charity Golf Tournament. Linh, along with Stacy, and a troop of volunteers created a golf tournament attended by 115 golfers and the financial results for Bridges surpassed our goals allowing Bridges to provide support to the Anh Linh and Viet Anh Schools.

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The Fall wine tasting event was an event that helped further our revenue generation for the year.

Overall the revenue goals for the events were forecast at \$33,493. The final tallies at the end of the year show gross revenue at \$39,421.

We can't thank our golfers, wine tasters, donors, volunteers, golf hole sponsors, and wine tasting event sponsors enough for their support.



Jake Fisher

Lance Crooks – Elite 8

Community Served

In 2022, Vietnam was in a period of rebuilding as the pandemic started to subside. The economy started to rebound after months of near total shutdowns. The parents and guardians of the children served by the Anh Linh and Viet Anh Schools live on the margins of society with little means. As some jobs came back, families slowly moved back to Ho Chi Minh City from remote villages. Others had stayed in the city, but had little means.

In rural Vietnam, many people live off the land, which can be invaluable as they can forage and subsist on what the land has to offer. However, as the

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economy was severely strained, any trade or income they could have generated fell away. The families in rural areas bore the brunt of the pandemic.

The leaders at each school did what they could to reach out to families and provide resources and food. As the 2022-23 school year approached, they encouraged the children to come back to school. As with school children around the world, having a safe space with games, sports, and activities helped motivate the students back to the classroom.



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

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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 2022, Bridges to Learning allocated \$3,500 to the Viet Anh Primary School.

After seven years leading the Viet Anh school, the principal, Sr. Kim Ngoc, moved to a new position in France to share her experiences as a leader and educator. Part of the message from Sr. Kim Ngoc to the school supporters, "I sincerely express my deep gratitude to you, who have loved the ethnic minority children of Viet Anh School, and have always supported me in many ways so that I can do my work well. I have learned and received a lot during my time working with you."

Sr. Phương Thảo stepped in as the new principal of the school as paperwork was straightened out so Sr. Pham Thi Mỹ Trinh (Anne Trinh, pictured) could assume the role. Sr. Anne Trinh has worked at Viet Anh School since 2018 in a variety of roles, including teacher.



At the Viet Anh School, during 2021-2022, because of the epidemic, there were not many activities for students to participate in to build their social skills. The music and art classes were even omitted to focus on the main subjects such as math and Vietnamese. By the beginning of the 2022-2023 year everything was better. The teachers and the students have fun together in teaching and learning. After the regular classes, the children participate in clubs, depending on their interests and needs, such as Vovinam club, English Club, Swimming Club, and piano/organ Club. In the boarding-area, the children can read comic books and novels.

The Viet Anh's students come from different places in Lam Dong Province. The students come from:

- Đồng Nai Thượng Village, Cát Tiên District (about 60 kilometers from the school, which is about 20 kilometers from the mountain pass, about 37 miles and 12 miles respectively).
- Madaguoi, Đạ Huoai District (about 25 kilometers from the school, or 16 miles).

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- Đạ Nhar (about 12 kilometers or 7 ½ miles).
- Tổ Lan (10 kilometers or 6 miles), Tôn K' Long (45 kilometers or 28 miles).
- Lộc Bắc (25 kilometers or 16 miles).

Transportation typically includes motor bikes and bicycles on unpaved roads. The bus the school received a few years ago assists in transporting the kiddos.

Due to the distance, about 90 of the 150 students boarded at the school, about 15 more than the previous year. More than three-quarters of the children at the Viet Anh School and of the children who board at the school belong to the Châu Mạ minority group. The minority groups in rural Vietnam are historically underserved in education and employment opportunities. Student enrollment may increase in the future because Đạ Tẻh is in the process of developing into a new urban area with many projects to build industrial zones.

Bridges to Learning works with the school leadership to stay up-to-date to their changing needs, in order to serve them better.

Major Programs

Education and Supports, Child Sponsorships

Bridges to Learning's primary focus is to provide education for underserved children, which includes not only the teachers, classrooms, books, and supplies, but also nutritious meals, uniforms, haircuts, games, music, sports, dance, holiday celebrations, and special field trips when possible.

All of the things that help build strong, knowledgeable, curious students who strive to learn more and have hope for the future.

The mission is largely carried out through sponsorships funded by a large group of our constituents, our Sponsors. General donations and proceeds from fundraisers supplement the students as well.



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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
- 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, however, during the pandemic, it has been very difficult to maintain communication, especially when the city locks down and children move to remote villages; Bridges to Learning and the school are working to restore regular communication;
- 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.

The sponsorship program suffered during the pandemic as the student population fluctuated and many students moved away. Also, the principal and teachers focussed on shifting education online, and provided the most



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basic support of food and medicine. Regular communications are starting to resume between the students and sponsors.

Bridges to Learning commits 100% of every dollar received as sponsorship funding to Anh Linh School for the 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 51 students in 2022-2023. That amounts to approximately \$25,500 annually for the 51 children. The total support sent to Anh Linh School for sponsorships was \$27,826 in 2022.



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

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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 2022, B2L provided \$7,500 to the Anh Linh School for the breakfast fund.

Financial Statement

2022 financials reflect the ongoing sustainment and rebuilding in 2021. We hosted the 3rd Annual Golf Tournament fundraiser in 2022, raising over \$25,437 and also held a wine tasting event, which raised \$10,949. Throughout the year, we received additional donations and sponsorships as well. In total, Bridges to Learning raised, or received, a total of \$85,480.

In 2022, there was a total of \$70,718 in expenses, including a total of \$33,454 which was sent to the schools as sponsorships, general funds, and the breakfast funds. Program services expenses totaled \$5,860, and the remainder was fundraising and operating expenses.

We began the fiscal year with just over \$61,878 in reserves, which was higher than where we started in the previous year. Due to successful fundraising efforts and the generosity of our supporters, reserves increased by \$14,762. We are ending 2022 with reserves of \$76,640.

Bridges to Learning holds reserves of funds for the schools as it can attract too much attention to their financial situation if they hold too much money in their bank accounts. It puts the funds at risk of being confiscated.

The average program to expense ratio for the past three years is 84% as Bridges to Learning keeps overhead low, and relies heavily on the helpfulness of talented volunteers. In addition, the pandemic positively affected the number. It is returning to "normal" as B2L resumes regular activities. We are watching the ratio to ensure Bridges to Learning is investing in a solid foundation for the organization to continue working towards the mission.

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You can find the formal financial documents at www.bridges2learning.org by clicking on “Public Documents” at the bottom of the page.

Goals for 2023

- Add board members, focusing on key skills and diversity.
- Host two fundraising events: Golf Tournament and Wine Tasting.

Looking Ahead to 2023

What to look forward to? At the time of this writing we are well into 2023, and things are returning back to “normal”.

We are most delighted to know students are in the schools, enrollment is increasing, and the students are experiencing not only the academics that school has to offer, but special programs and celebrations, too. The extra activities go a long way to motivate the children to attend and learn, along with growing socially and emotionally. Every day, every month, and every year where each child is provided with education, meals and a nurturing environment is a gift that builds to a hopeful future.

We held a golf tournament in June, and are starting to plan the Holiday Wine Tasting event. Both help improve B2L’s financial position as we recover from the impact of Covid. It is great to see supporters gathering together to have some fun and support the mission. In addition, B2L is fortunate to have some cash reserves to continue support to the schools for the near future.

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



Cảm ơn!

Thank you for your interest
and support,
from Bridges to Learning,
the Anh Linh School, and the
Viet Anh School!