



# ANNUAL REPORT

**2023**

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# Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2023



## *Mission Statement:*

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

2023 took a big step towards a return to “normal”, as the students were in the classroom the entire school year! The teachers and staff re-established relationships with the children and got back into the day-to-day routines. As always, the year started off with lots of fun at the Anh Linh and Viet Anh Schools celebrated.



## **Community Served**

In 2023, Vietnam continued rebuilding from the pandemic. The economy continued to rebound and is doing very well in many ways. However, 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. Menial, poor-paying jobs are inconsistent at best.

The Anh Linh School, in Ho Chi Minh City is educating 222 impoverished children who live in and out of their district as the area is starting to gentrify.

The Viet Anh Primary School serves children from the area surrounding Đạ Tẻh in Lâm Đồng Province. There are a total of 149 students enrolled in the school, with 90 of them belonging to ethnic group minorities such as Châu Mạ and others. The minority groups face additional hardships in Vietnamese society.

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The Viet Anh Primary School students come from throughout Lâm Đồng 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).
- 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).

About 50% of the children live in the dormitory during the week as it is too far to travel each day. Transportation is mainly via motorbikes on unpaved roads. Most of the children at the school are from ethnic minority groups.

## 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, basic healthcare, 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.

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.

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Ideally, sponsors provide long term support for a few years, or more, 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.

Throughout the years, several sponsors have supported their child(ren) throughout their education at the Anh Linh school, then into public high school and even college or trade school.

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.

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 46 students in 2023. B2L received \$22,978 from child sponsors for 46 children. The total support sent to Anh Linh School for sponsorships was \$21,616 in 2023. The difference was due to the timing of receipt of sponsorship contributions and wire transfers to the schools.

The results for the end of the 2022-23 school year were not as strong as previous years with more students achieving "average grades". Grades at the end of the first semester of the 2023-24 school year were similar as the work continued to help the children catch up after years of bouncing between in person classes, online classes, or no classes. In addition, the economy was suffering and many people were migrating between Ho Chi Minh City and rural villages in order to survive.

The teachers are bringing the children back to school a week, or two before the start of the new school year to review the previous year's material and prepare for the new year.

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## 2022-2023 Anh Linh School Year Results:

### Elementary:

Grade	Students	Good Grade	%	Fairly Grade	%	Average Grade	%	Bad Grade	%
1	28	0	0%	6	21%	19	68%	3	11%
2	22	4	18%	7	32%	9	41%	2	9%
3	26	1	3.8%	2	7.2%	22	85%	1	3.8%
4	22	2	9%	6	27%	14	64%	0	0%
5	27	14	52%	10	37%	3	11%	0	0%
Sum	125	21	16.8%	31	24.8%	67	53.6%	6	4.8%

### Secondary:

Grade	Students	Good Grade	%	Fairly Grade	%	Average Grade	%	Bad Grade	%
6	30	3	10%	12	40%	15	50%	0	0
7	22	4	18%	11	50%	6	27%	1	5%
8	23	7	30%	8	35%	6	26%	2	9%
9	22	3	14%	14	64%	5	22%	0	0%
Sum	97	17	17%	45	46%	32	33%	3	4%



The secondary students focus on the question as they compete in the Academic Olympiad. A fun and effective tradition to prepare for the end of the year exams.

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ĐỘI	V <sub>1</sub>	V <sub>2</sub>	V <sub>3</sub>	V <sub>4</sub>	V <sub>5</sub>
ĐỘI 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
ĐỘI 7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**KẾT QUẢ**

Giải I: ĐỘI 2  
Giải II: ĐỘI 6  
Giải III: ĐỘI 3  
GKK: ĐỘI 4, 5

The scoreboard shows the standings for each team!

School days are supplemented with activities and opportunities to develop the “whole person”:



Girls enjoy a special coloring gift.



Kids getting ready to celebrate Christmas.



Learn the ABCs and 123s along with how to sew on a button.



Creating a special family tree!



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End of the year field trip for the primary school to the botanical garden.

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 2023, Bridges to Learning allocated \$3,500 to the Viet Anh Primary School.

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



Students practice a fire safety drill.



Students study the board during chess club.

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Students study ecology in the beautiful countryside.



Students enjoy a daylong "campout" to celebrate the end of the school year.



The lion leads the way during the moon festival celebration.

### **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.

Historically, Bridges to Learning primarily drew from unrestricted funds to support the Breakfast Fund to the level of \$7,500 annually. In 2023, B2L provided \$3,750 to the Anh Linh School for the breakfast fund. The reduction is in response to the increased donations of food from the local community in Vietnam during the pandemic. The local donations have continued. The remaining funds will be used by the school for other expenses, such as teacher salaries.



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Kids enjoying lunch at the Viet Anh School



Volunteers cooking up a healthy meal for the kids at the Anh Linh School.



Kids enjoying a donated special treat at the Anh Linh School.

## **B2L Goal achievement in 2023:**

### **Board Members**

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

The board experienced some change in 2023 as three board members joined the board, including one who spent over a year as a volunteer English teacher at the Anh Linh School prior to the pandemic. In addition, the board set and met a DE&I goal of adding at least one more diverse member to the board.

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.

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Board members and our staff in 2023:

- Diane Anastos
- Donny Chau (vice board chair)
- Stacy Dahl
- Sam Hafermann
- Joe Hellman (board chair)
- Garrison Kiefer
- Ellen Klahn-Grove
- Robert Mac Murdo (treasurer & co-founder)
- Linh Phan
- Pooja Shah (secretary)
- 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.

## Diversity

In 2023, the board focused on DE&I which is especially important as B2L serves people in Vietnam with a different culture and language. Two goals were set:

1. Create a formal diversity plan
2. Recruit one diverse board candidate

A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement was approved by the board in September, 2023. It can be found on the website at: [B2L-DEI-Statement.pdf](#)  
Three board members joined the board in 2023, with at least one considered a diverse member.

## Fundraising

Fundraising in 2023 was anchored by two events: the 4th Annual Golf Tournament and a Holiday Wine Tasting.

The 4th Annual Golf Tournament was held at The Wilds Golf Club in Prior Lake. The tournament was lots of fun, even with a rain delay as a thunderstorm moved through. We hosted 96 golfers, who golfed, played games, bid on the silent auction, and capped it off with a delicious meal. Over \$21,000 was raised for the children.



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Linh Phan volunteered her time to organize and promote the tournament. Huge thanks go to Linh and her troop of volunteers who created and ran the event. Also, we thank our hole sponsors:



[diamondsdirectmn.com](http://diamondsdirectmn.com)



In the fall of 2023, the Holiday Wine Tasting moved to a new venue, that is the event space at the new South Lyndale Liquors store. Owners, Dan and Kate Campo, donated their space, time, and talents to the successful event. Joe Kotnik from Rootstock Wine Co. donated wine and his expertise, and brought in owners from

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two Italian Wineries to share theirs as well. In addition, Joe, Dan and Kate donated the profits of the wine sales to support the kids.

We had a full house and enjoyed delicious charcuterie and banh mi, along with a variety of extraordinary wines. Silent auction bidding was lively. Overall, the event raised over \$13,700, surpassing the 2022 event by nearly \$3,000.



### Financial Statement

2023 financials reflect the ongoing sustainment and rebuilding in 2022. We hosted the 4th Annual Golf Tournament in 2023, raising over \$21,000 and also held a wine tasting event, which raised over \$13,700. Throughout the year, we received additional donations and sponsorships as well. In total, Bridges to Learning raised, or received, a total of \$83,122.

In 2023, there was a total of \$58,333 in expenses, including a total of \$25,366 which was sent to the schools as sponsorships, general funds, and the breakfast funds. Program services expenses totaled \$8,477, and the remainder was fundraising and operating expenses.

We began the fiscal year with just over \$76,640 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 \$24,789. We ended 2023 with reserves of \$101,429.

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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 77.2% as Bridges to Learning keeps overhead low, and relies heavily on the helpfulness of talented volunteers. The Charity Review Council recommends that "at least 65% of the organization's 3-year average annual expenses are used to directly support programming... with the ideal range between 70-90%." 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.

You can find the formal financial documents in Appendix I Balance Sheet and Appendix II Statement of Activities. In addition, you will find additional documents on our website at: [Public Documents](#) | [Ratings](#) | [Bridges to Learning](#) .

### Looking Ahead to 2024

What to look forward to? The future looks bright for the schools and Bridges to Learning.

We are 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 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!

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## Appendix I - Balance Sheet

**BRIDGES TO LEARNING, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**DECEMBER 31, 2023**

**ASSETS**

Current Assets		
Cash - Operations	\$	95,058
Cash - Savings	\$	7,019
Total Current Assets		<u>102,077</u>
Total Assets	\$	<u>102,077</u>

**LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS**

Current Liabilities		
Credit Cards Payable	\$	50
Other Current Liabilities	\$	598
Total Current Liabilities		<u>648</u>
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	\$	101,429
Total Net Assets	\$	<u>101,429</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$	<u>102,077</u>

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## Appendix II - Statement of Activities

**BRIDGES TO LEARNING, INC.**  
**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023**

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Temporary Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Revenues and Support</b>			
Contributions and Grants			
Contributions	64,995	18,116	83,111
Total Contributions	<u>64,995</u>	<u>18,116</u>	<u>83,111</u>
Investment Income	11	-	11
Total Revenue and Support	<u>65,005</u>	<u>18,116</u>	<u>83,121</u>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Program Services			
Direct Assistance			
Sponsors	-	18,116	18,116
Anh Viet School	3,500	-	3,500
Children's Breakfast Fund	3,750	-	3,750
	<u>7,250</u>	<u>18,116</u>	<u>25,366</u>
Bank Charges/Credit Card fees	1,405	-	1,405
Business Insurance	550	-	550
Business License	75	-	75
Contract Service	2,189	-	2,189
Dues & Subscription	1,971	-	1,971
Office Supplies	733	-	733
Postage	124	-	124
Web Maintenance	1,430	-	1,430
Total Program Services	<u>15,727</u>	<u>18,116</u>	<u>33,843</u>
Supporting Services			
Fund-Raising	9,943	-	9,943
Management and General	14,547	-	14,547
Total Expenses	<u>40,217</u>	<u>18,116</u>	<u>58,333</u>
Change in net Assets (Deficit)	24,788	-	24,788
Nets Assets, Beginning of the Year	76,641	-	76,641
Nets Assets, End of the Year	<u>101,429</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>101,429</u>