

Bridges to Learning Annual Report 2019

Mission Statement:

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

2019 has been a good year with regards to board members. While we miss the board members who served in the past, we are pleased there are several who have stayed some time. Our board is a solid mix of one long term member, those who have been with the organization about three years, and a few newer members. Two members moved to the United States from Vietnam, one when very young, and another a little older. We continue to strive to add more board members. We are also adjusting to Jerri Hirsch's retirement as she volunteered many hours, along with lots of ideas and energy, to the organization. Support for Anh Linh School and Viet Anh School continued without a hiccup.

Current Board members and our Administrator are listed below:

- Donny Chau
- Joe Hellman
- Robert A. Mac Murdo
- John Nesheim
- Linh Phan
- Pooja Shah
- Stacy Phan, Administrator

15 Year Anniversary

As we celebrated B2L's 15th anniversary this fall at the Annual Wine Tasting, Bob Mac Murdo dug into the records and found the following remarkable achievements:

- \$1.5 million raised;
- 2 Schools built -- a middle school AND an elementary school;
- 1,000 years of education sponsored for impoverished kids in Vietnam.

To date, we have had 408 Individual donors (or couples) and 160 sponsors. Fifteen of the sponsors have been with B2L since the beginning.

B2L has also been supported in other invaluable ways:

- Spreading the word to others, and encouraging their involvement;
- Words of encouragement to B2L founders, staff, volunteers, and board members;
- Attending events, and fundraisers such as Jerri and Bob's garage sale, the golf tournament, wine tastings, galas, chef and founders dinners;
- Sponsors sending notes, and maybe a small gift to their child;
- Donating goods and services, or soliciting donations from others for our events;
- Applying for company matching gifts;
- Informing us of grant opportunities.

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Exceeded Fundraising Goals in 2019

The First Annual B2L Golf Tournament, the Vietnamese Gala, and the annual Wine Tasting tipped the scales of fundraising in 2019. We exceeded our goals in the number of fundraisers, and the amount of funds raised for the year. A whopping total of \$36,037 was raised in all three events with the hard work and dedication of our board members and volunteers.

We can not thank the attendees, the donors and event sponsors enough for their generosity! Of special note is John Sorich, from Diamonds Direct in Edina, donation of a gorgeous diamond pendant for the Vietnamese gala raffle worth \$10,000.



Community Served

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.

Major Programs

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

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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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 2019, B2L provided \$7,543 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 61 students in 2019-2020. That amounts to approximately \$30,000 annually for the 61 children. The total support to Anh Linh for sponsorships was \$29,383 in 2019.

Anh Linh Library Funds



In 2018 Bridges to Learning received a grant from the Resource Capital Funds Foundation for \$21,000 to provide a bus to transport children at the Viet Anh school safely to and from school through the rural area, over difficult roads. In 2019 we had another opportunity with Resource Capital Funds Foundation to submit a grant request to support the schools. We requested, and received, \$4,500 to add much needed books, educational toys and furnishings to the new library at the Anh Linh

School. As the principal of the school stated, books provide a window to the world and possibilities the children would not know otherwise. The library is an important resource to the teachers and students as they learn, grow, dream, and work towards a bright future.

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Goals for 2020

- Build the number of sponsored children at Anh Linh back to 70.
- Add at least two more board members to bring the total to eight.
- Host two fundraising events: Golf Tournament and Wine Tasting.
- Improve processes and relationships with 4 major stakeholders: sponsors, donors, board members, and the school.

Financial Statement

The 2019 financials reflect the ongoing sustainment and rebuilding in 2017 and 2018. We had three major events in 2019, raising a total of \$36,037, and received a grant for library materials for the Anh Linh School from the RCF Foundation. We began the fiscal year with just over \$54,184 in reserves and a forecast revenue for the year at \$67,101 against an Expense forecast of \$77,815.

It was an excellent year as we conservatively budgeted a net decrease for 2019 since we were still rebuilding. But through hard work, and helpful volunteers and donors, we ended the year with a net increase of \$20,697 bringing our reserves to \$74,881. You can find the formal documents at www.bridges2learning.org by clicking on “Public Documents” at the bottom of the page.

2020

What to look forward to? At the time of this writing we are well into 2020, and are in the midst of a pandemic and global economic uncertainty. The board is adjusting to on-line meetings, and the impact on in-person fundraising. While fundraising nationally is up, most funds are going to local nonprofits that focus on immediate needs for food, shelter and supporting the medical community. Plans for fundraising events (e.g. Golf Tournament and Wine Tasting) are put on hold until 2021. However, B2L is in the fortunate position to have some cash reserves to continue support to the schools for the near future. Vietnam has been fairly successful in managing the pandemic, allowing for schools to complete the 2019-2020 year after shutting down for a couple of months. School has resumed in person for the 2020-2021 school year. Supporting the well-being and education of the children is our primary focus and motivates our work.