

DECEMBER 2023

# ICO VIETNAM NEWSLETTER

## WELCOME TO THE NEWEST MEMBER OF OUR TEAM: MINH NGUYEN



Minh worked for Samaritan's Purse International Relief for more than 10 years, supporting disadvantaged students in education and vocational training to reduce poverty. It was a joy for her to see these students continue their studies, live independently, and even support their siblings in pursuing education.



Minh was deeply impacted by the marriage counseling she and her husband experienced, which inspired her to pursue a career in family counseling. Her journey began in 2017 and six years later, in June 2023, she finished the basic course of Christian Life and Marriage Counseling from Institut fur Christliche Lebens – und Eheberatung. She began providing counseling for students at a Secondary School in March 2023. She worked with 16 students per month.

She wished for opportunities to walk alongside people as they work through their challenges and transform their lives. That wish came true in August 2023, when she was asked to join the ICO Vietnam Education Initiative team. Minh loves spending time with students in this program. It is meaningful and rewarding.





# ACTIVITIES FROM OCTOBER TO DECEMBER

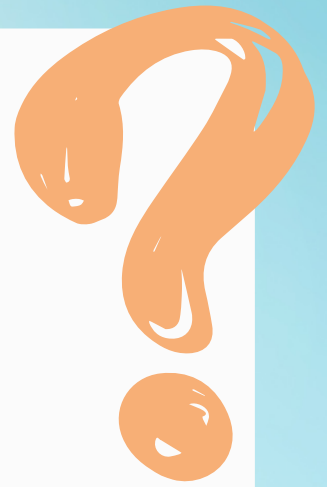
From October 2023 ICO Minh has had one to one meetings with five students per month to provide support & counseling. Students have opportunities to share about their uncomfortable feelings or their hurts. Minh helps students work through conflicts with roommates and direction for their future. Minh has notice their progress after each meeting.



Minh also organizes birthday celebrations; including food, games, presents, and cakes. Which makes each student feel special on their special day. As well, these celebrations have brought the group closer together.



# Q&A W/ INITIATIVE LEAD: THANH TAZUMI



Q: How long has the Vietnam Education Initiative (VEI) been in operation?

A: We began supporting 6 students in 2018.

Q: How many students are you supporting this year?

A: For this academic year 2023-2024, we are supporting 43 students.

Q: How many students have graduated and what kind programs were they in?

A: We have seen 18 students graduate between 2019 and 2023. Two students were in 3 and 6 month programs, one student completed her care aide certificate in 2 years, one student completed her masters in Food Science, two students completed 3-year programs (Electrical Engineering and Logistics), and the rest completed their 4-year bachelor degree in business, marketing, foreign languages, English, Law, Engineering, etc.

Q: Are they currently employed, and working in their field of study?

A: All 18 grads are employed, and only 2 are not working in their chosen fields. A student who was trained in a 6-month culinary program graduated at the start of COVID. Although he found employment at a reputable BBQ franchise, he was promptly laid off due to COVID restrictions. He found other employment opportunities, and is now married and doing well. The second student graduated with a law degree, also during COVID. He could not find a job with a law firm in Hanoi, and eventually moved back to his home province where he is now working as a legal consultant for a construction company.

Q: How do students hear about the VEI, and what is the referral and assessment process?

A: We are fortunate to work with some well connected volunteers who act as Field Leads for the program. All four Field Leads are connected with NGO's in Vietnam that focus on supporting orphans, foster children, and economically and culturally disadvantaged youth. Most of the students we support would have already been assessed by these NGO's previously, but we also have our own application process.

Some students are referred to our Field Leads by local groups like the Women's Committee (they focus on the social welfare of families in each commune), church leaders from remote villages, or through alumni of the program.



## Q&A CONT'D.

Q: You are supporting 43 students this year, do you plan to take on more students next year?

A: Our ideal number is 40, but this year we are so fortunate to have a significant number of new sponsors join us, and we have done well with other fundraising efforts, so we decided to support a few more students.

Although providing financial support is life changing for students and their families, we also want to be able to provide practical and emotional support to each student. We are grateful to have skilled and compassionate volunteers in Vietnam providing that support, and we do not want to stretch them too thin. Being able to build and nurture meaningful relationships takes time and energy, and we want to support volunteers to do this well.

Q: What would you say has been your biggest challenge to date?

A: We have certainly had our fair share of challenges in the last 6 years. One of the toughest parts of our work is seeing students struggle. Two years ago we had a student dropout of school during his final year of his Social Work program. We wanted so much to reach out and offer the support he needed, but he completely disconnected from us. It was hard for the field lead who was working closely with him. This past summer he initiated contact and let us know he wanted to take a 10 month intensive graphic design program, so now he is back on our roster.

We had two other students drop out of university in the last two years. Fortunately, one has found his way back and has decided he wants to become a Chef instead of a career in IT. The other student chose to return to his home province and he took a course to become a container truck driver. We know college and university are not for everyone, and we are glad to see students exploring different career paths that are better suited for them.

It is not all rosy for sure, but we are grateful for the privilege of entering these young people's lives for a brief period of time.







Overnight bus from HCMC to Phu Yen



Bonding over street food in HCMC



# SUMMER MEMORIES



A trip to the museum in Quy Nhon



A trip to the grocery store can be a team building activity (HCMC)



# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GRADUATES!



**Kieu's parents rode 4 hours on their scooter to attend our graduation.**

*"I would like to express my gratitude to Miss Cindy Evans, as well as to all the sponsors. Thanks to your assistance, I was able to pay my tuition fees on time, continue my education, and successfully complete my studies." - Kieu*

## **Mai graduated with distinction in Business Administration (Hanoi)**

*"I am what I am today thanks to your dedicated support both mentally and materially. The scholarship money I receive each semester is really meaningful and huge for a poor student like me. That is also the motivation to help me strive to achieve excellent student results in the 2022-2023 school year." - Mai*



**We enjoy celebrating students' successes (Thanh with Kieu and Toan in Phu Yen)**

*"Please accept my profound gratitude for your unwavering support, Mr. Seeman. Your belief in me has been a constant source of motivation and inspiration, and I will forever be grateful for the transformative impact you have had on my life." - Toan*





# CONGRATULATIONS



**Son (left) graduated with a 3 year degree in logistics**



**Dang (left) is in his 3rd year in IT, Toan (middle) graduated with a BA in marketing & Nguy (right) graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering**



**Trinh (middle) graduated with a BA in Business Management**



**Thao graduated with a BA in English**

*"I am truly grateful to you and all the help you gave to me and my family. Words cannot fully express the depths of my gratitude." - Thao*



DECEMBER 2023

**THANK YOU TO ALL V.E.I.  
SPONSORS, DONORS, &  
VOLUNTEERS!!**

**WISHING YOU PEACE & JOY. MAY  
2024 BRING YOU NEW  
ADVENTURES & HAPPY  
MEMORIES!!**

**OUR VISION**

ICO is founded on the premise that friends working together can harness the power of innovative ideas: Through the common goals of communities and volunteers around the world, ICO develops processes and community-led initiatives to advance education and alleviate poverty.

For regular updates you can check out our [webpage](#) or follow our [Facebook](#) page.

**Thanh Tazumi**

Vietnam Education Initiative Lead

Operations Group

InnovativeCommunities.Org Foundation

"...above all, we are friends working together..."