

MEKONG DELTA FLOOD RELIEF DINNER DANCE FUND RAISER

A Sense of Pride – Community Bonding - and a true Success Story

The Mekong Delta Flood Relief Dinner/Dance Fundraiser held on December 9, 2000 was a tremendous success. With less than five weeks from conception to realization, it was well attended, well participated, and the final results exceeded expectations.

Advance ticket sales were poor—only about 100 tickets were sold just one week prior to the event. The committee worked extremely hard that last week to promote and advertise the event. This effort resulted in an additional 300 tickets being sold. The idea for this fundraising event was initiated during a conversation between Reverend Hoai Chuong and a youth group revolving around the recent flood that occurred in Central Vietnam. The seed was planted, questions were posed: “How can we help? What can we do?”

Inspired by strong and positive responses from the discussion, a Flood Relief Committee (FRC) was immediately formed. This charitable endeavor instantly attracted the support of many committees and organizations across New Jersey including:

- ◆ American Vietnamese Association Community of NJ
- ◆ Camp II7 Youth Group
- ◆ Vietnamese Catholic Community Diocese of Metuchen
- ◆ Lua Viet Youth Association
- ◆ Rutgers University Vietnamese Student Association
- ◆ Andre Vietnamese Catholic Diocese of Newark

- ◆ NJ, NY, and CT Vietnamese Medical Organization
- ◆ Asian American Heritage Association
- ◆ and several other local business and organizations.

Some members of the newly established FRC had prior experience organizing various cultural, international, and fundraising events. Most agreed that this particular fundraiser was the most effectively managed, gratifying, and rewarding event they've participated in. Realizing that immediate funds were needed to ease the suffering, every one recognized the urgency to raise the funds



needed in an expedited fashion. With a small window of time at hand, each member of the committee was put to work immediately. With family and work obligations, FRC members relied on the internet, email, and conference calls to discuss and plan the activities. Some members graciously offered their homes and provided dinners for the few face to face meetings that were necessary to facilitate our discussions and planning activities, which often ran late into the night, as we had to move quickly to resolve any obstacles.

This effort successfully achieved its primary goal: collect flood relief funds to aid the victims. A bonus outcome that emerged from closely and diligently working together was the personal gratification each of





us felt as a result of the wonderful cooperation between the various associations and organizations.

This was a rare and golden opportunity for members of different Vietnamese organizations to come together and work hand-in-hand for a worthy humanitarian effort. We also received valuable support from local churches, communities, and businesses.

St. Francis Cathedral in Metuchen, under the leadership of Monsignor Behl, provided St. Francis Hall, a critical element in the success of the event, for free. The Monsignor also presented the committee with a donation of \$500 from the St. Francis Social Concern Committee of Metuchen, an unexpected but much appreciated surprise.

The dancing program was hosted free of charge by the famous New Jersey band, S.O.S., who has provided local musical entertainment for many years. Enhancing the colorful dancing evening was Don Ho, a famous young Vietnamese singer, who came all the way from California to contribute his talent. He reportedly canceled a previous engagement to take part in this worthwhile fundraising event.

The Vietnamese Medical Organization, “Hoi Y Nha Duoc” of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut also provided support by attending the event and presented the Flood Relief Committee with an \$850 donation.

The president of the Asian American Heritage Association and many of their members attended the dinner dance and also presented a donation. This

particular effort was facilitated by Mrs. Nhu Hong Simon from the attorney office of Simon and Lupo.

Vu Dinh Lam, a well-known Vietnamese artist, donated four of his famous watercolors for the auction, which generated an additional \$1,800.

Many local businesses and vendors showed their support through supportive messages or advertising in the Flood Relief program, which was provided to each attendee. The printed program was the result of a massive undertaking by members of Lua Viet Youth Association, who designed and produced the 4-color glossy program just days prior to the event, and hand assembled them just minutes before the event.

The program consisted of three parts. The evening entertainment opened with a mini cultural collaboration by the Rutgers Vietnamese Student Association and the Vietnamese Fashion Show Group from the Bronx, NY. The Rutgers VSA played a major role in organizing and hosting the cultural show. The flower dance was lovely and well-received, as was the fashion show.

The second portion was an informative slide show presentation of photographs of the once beautiful Vietnamese rivers that serve as the major livelihood for many local people. It was followed by somber images of the Mekong Delta flooding tragedy which devastated thousands of families and killed over 500 children. These photographs had been taken by Vietnamese-American volunteers who sacrificed their time, money, and effort



to travel to Vietnam and join the flood relief efforts that were underway. Next, the committee acknowledged the many benefactors and volunteers who supported and contributed to the success of the event.

To wrap up the evening, Don Ho and the S.O.S. band stole the rest of the night away with their great musical talent. Don Ho's warm and distinctive vocals, combined with the band's rhythmic beats, offered the crowd a great music and dancing experience, leaving us with lasting memories. Even those we knew had two left feet were moved to get up and dance.

The committee has since received many compliments from the attendees. Many did not expect the formal and romantic "wedding reception" atmosphere and were wonderfully surprised to discover beautifully decorated tables accented by candlelit flower arrangements. The tables were arranged circularly to maximize the view of

the stage and the dance floor, where a tri-color half-moon balloon arrangement floated across and above the stage, and colorful balloons crowded the ceiling, enhancing the magical atmosphere of a candlelight dining experience.

This event was attended by approximately 400 guests and supporters and more than 50 volunteers who provided service during the dinner dance.

All our hard work raised over \$15,000. For the flood victims, there's surely no Christmas or New Year celebration this coming holiday season—but in their hearts, and ours, we have given them a little special Christmas.

May the wonders of the season fill the victims with renewed hopes and dreams, and may each of us continue working together to lessen the pain of those in need and are less fortunate than us.

Hoàng Nga
Edison, NJ

The *Rice Bowl of Love and Friendship*
is a humanitarian project of
Lua Viet Youth Association

The project focuses on three areas:

Health, Social Service, and Education

Your tax-deductible contribution
will be distributed fairly and efficiently
to the poor, orphanages, children of lepers, and the
minority communities in Vietnam.

URL: WWW.LUAVIET.ORG

