

# HELLO FROM VIETNAM!



**February 2014**

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## My experience at Thuy An placement



My experience at Thuy An Rehabilitation Centre was a refreshing and unique one. In Australia I recently graduated Occupational Therapist, working in early intervention with children. My focus for my two weeks at Thuy An were to educate the staff about Occupational Therapy (as they only have Physiotherapists working there) and to provide them with some therapy strategies. I predicted that being at a rural placement there would be some lifestyle differences (food, language barrier, and isolation) which I was nervous about to begin with, however with an open mind, the challenges could soon be overcome.

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## VOLUNTEER UPDATES

### February Departures

1. Annelinde Gorter, Netherlands, Community Village, 3 weeks
2. Sophie Burns, Australia, Teaching, 6 weeks
3. Aurora Elgesem, Australia, Care, 2 weeks
4. Sandra Pollet, Belgium, Psychology, 8 weeks
5. Eliza Bell, Australia, OT, 4 weeks
6. Emma Virtue, Australia, OT, 4 weeks

### February and March New Arrivals

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Martine Dardane, France               | 18. Reneé Sijmkens, Netherlands       |
| 2. Halldor Juliusson, Iceland            | 19. Marco Palleroni, Italy            |
| 3. Annelinde Gorter, Netherlands         | 20. Alessandra Benabbi, Italy         |
| 4. Kirsten Vang, Denmark                 | 21. Judith Emery, Australia           |
| 5. Anne-Priska Duvillié, France          | 22. Marie Jakobsen, Denmark           |
| 6. Olivia Hepsworth, UK                  | 23. Elisabeth Klostergaard, Denmark   |
| 7. Anthony Van Gastel, Belgium           | 24. Chantal O'Neil, Canada            |
| 8. Emma Cats, Netherlands                | 25. Christine Asselin, Canada         |
| 9. Astrid De Champs, France              | 26. Bas van der Spiegel, Netherlands  |
| 10. Benjamin Smith, Australia            | 27. Brian Musgrove, UK                |
| 11. Louise Stougaard, Denmark            | 28. Rosemary Musgrove, UK             |
| 12. Ida Thomsen, Denmark                 | 29. William Bell, UK                  |
| 13. Indra Bout, Netherlands              | 30. Kyrie Phillips, UK                |
| 14. Aurora Elgesem, Norway               | 31. Madelief Heesterbeek, Netherlands |
| 15. Anna Katharina Vokinger, Switzerland |                                       |
| 16. Kristian Samuelsen, Denmark          | 32. Sophie de Regt, Netherlands       |
| 17. Christina Aaling, Denmark            | 33. Carla Kassab, Australia           |
| 34. Max Balke, Germany                   |                                       |

## My experience at Thuy An placement

*(continued from page 1)*

Projects Abroad provided me with a translator who was a retired teacher from the centre, who lived nearby. She could speak English very well, however occasionally she had difficulty understanding. It was evident that she is very passionate about helping the children at the centre, as well as assisting the volunteers. She helped me to translate the children's medical history profiles and translated some basic sentences to the local staff. Whilst in my free time, she showed me around the town, I helped her teach English, and had meals at her house. She helped me greatly and made my placement very enjoyable; because of her I did not feel so isolated and I consider her to be a good friend.

The children at the centre have a variety of disabilities and vary in ages, which made my work there diverse. A typical day for me consisted of: taking the children in wheelchairs for a walk and providing them with as much sensory stimulation as possible, completing therapy in the 'Life



skills' room, assisting to feed the children during mealtimes, and creating some recommendation documents for the centre. In between activities (particularly at night time), I would find great joy in playing with the children. I was mindful that most of the children there do not see their family regularly or are orphanages, and therefore do not get as much adult love and affection compared to a child within normal family circumstances. By providing the children with this, was just as important as completing the therapy.

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## My experience at Thuy An placement

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I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to spend some time at Thuy An Rehabilitation Centre. It is a very unique placement that challenged me in ways that I did not expect. It made me a more resilient person. It's the people that make a place – and this is definitely the case for Thuy An. The local staff was appreciative for my assistance and they seemed willing to make changes to their therapy in order to incorporate the strategies I recommended. Because of this – I highly encourage other volunteers to consider spending time at Thuy An. It's a completely different adventure compared to working in Hanoi. Given that the centre is relatively new for Projects Abroad and it is a rural placement, they do not receive as many volunteers as placements located in Hanoi city. Thuy An needs and appreciates volunteers greatly and it was definitely an experience that I will never forget.



**Lori Roberts, Occupational Therapy volunteer, Australia**

## A Help...Learn...Explore journey of a care volunteer in Vietnam

Caitlin Jutsum (24 from Australia), is a recent Psychology graduate of the Curtin University of Technology when she came to Vietnam to volunteer in a care project with Projects Abroad. She finds herself “very lucky to have met such amazing people and leave with so many fantastic memories” after her 4-week volunteer journey.



The idea of being a volunteer in a developing country like Vietnam was nurtured in Caitlin's mind when she was researching about public reception of people with disabilities in her fourth year at university: “I found during my research that there wasn't very good public reception of individuals with disabilities. I realized how lucky I am to have a fully-functioned mind, body and I just felt like giving back and helping people who are not as lucky as I am.” With an educational background in Psychology, Caitlin was able to effectively contribute her knowledge and experience when helping out at her placement: a rehabilitation and education centre for children with disabilities like Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy and Autism. Caitlin worked from Monday to Friday, starting at 8:00 and finishing at 16:30 with a long break in between. Her main role was being a caregiver who gave an extra pair of helping hands in the activities at the center; aside from that, her work was highly appreciated since Caitlin went beyond her responsibilities to contribute in the psychology aspect: she came up with useful recommendations, suggested a new schedule and wrote a comprehensive report. Caitlin talked about the impacts that volunteers can make in the placement: “I know that mental illness is something very recently been talked about in Vietnam, so traditional ways of thinking is quite hard to change without outside opinions. Working with children, this placement always needs volunteers. Especially children with autism, they need a lot of one-on-one time and a lot of support so that they can constantly be helped out with social interactions.”

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## A Help...Learn...Explore journey of a care volunteer in Vietnam

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When commencing the project, Caitlin was assigned to care for and follow up with one specific child in the class in the hopes that the special care will bring positive improvements to him. After four weeks, Caitlin happily shared about the improvements she noticed: "I notice he seemed to be a little more aware of the surroundings. When he screamed, I tried to take him outside to calm him down and it worked well. I noticed that he has never been aware of his surroundings, but one day when a chair in the class fell out of its line, he went to pick up the chair and put it back into its place; this being something that he has never done before. The following days he didn't want to eat his snacks and instead of throwing it on the floor, he gave it to the girl next to him. He didn't like to be touched but now he came up to me and hugged me. To me they all seem like improvements: he seems to be much more aware of things and people around him."



Caitlin was among the first volunteers who chose to stay with a host family instead of living in a volunteer apartment. Let's hear about her reflection: "I really enjoyed being in the host family because I got the insight into the culture and the traditions. My host family was very kind, they showed me all the cool local places, they educated me about street food, cooked good food for me every day, cared if I felt cold in this weather and if I had enough blanket, even bought a strawberry-scented bottle of hand

sanitizer when they knew I worked with children, which was really sweet! I also had a lot of chances to meet up with other volunteers due to Projects Abroad having so many different social activities. Everyone is so friendly and easy to catch up with!"

"Doing this project makes me appreciate the little things. Australia is a materialistic country and coming here, I see things are so different. I feel happy about the simple things like the smiles of the children!" "I am happy being here because Vietnam has not been spoiled with tourism yet, while having a very rich culture and the people are so lovely." "My most memorable experience is going to Sapa. It was so incredible and beautiful. There is no word to describe it!" – these happy experiences all made Caitlin's volunteer journey in Vietnam a rewarding one, which hopefully will stay in her heart and mind in the future.

**Duong Pham, Information manager**

## Fun Corner: Hanoi's Traffic in my eyes

After 1 week, I thought I had figured it all out when it comes to traffic rules in Hanoi, and that being that there are no rules.

BUT, now after 1 month of being here I have to admit I was completely wrong.



So this is how it actually works:

- #1: First one comes, first one goes ... All the other ones, move out of the way
  - #2: Recommended number of passengers on 1 motorbike: the more the merrier
  - #3: Recommended amount of loads on 1 motorbike: the more the merrier
  - #4: Please use your mobile phone while driving, if possible text instead of making a phone call
  - #5: If there is not enough space on the road, drive on the footpath
  - #6: Please, 'beep' at all times
  - #7: Do not queue during traffic jam, just drive on the wrong side of the road, Kamikaze-style
  - #8: a) Red light = go
  - #8: b) Green light = go
  - #8: c) In case someone actually does stop at a red light, just tell him to get lost
  - #9: Do not wear a safety helmet, wear a fashionable plastic one so you do look cool on your motorbike
- And last but not least ...
- #10: If you are a pedestrian, you are screwed!!

**Sandra Pollet, Psychologist volunteer, Belgium**



## Global Shark Campaign Update: An interesting English and Art Camp on the theme of Shark and Ocean lives

February marks the second time Projects Abroad Vietnam has campaigned to raise people's awareness for sharks and ocean's conservation. Last time in the first campaign we had the active participation of two volunteers and 20 kindergarten children with lots of fun and colourful activities. As said by Milad Popalzay, the volunteer who led that campaign, "The initiative - shark campaign - was really good because it is definitely an issue that needs to be addressed.", the second campaign was organized by 18 foreign volunteers and 12 local volunteers on Thursday (February 20th) afternoon at Yen Hoa secondary school for the local teachers, interns and more than 200 students of grade 6 and 7. The event featured a range of activities like singing and dancing, drawing, face-painting, iced-biscuit decorating, physical outdoors games, presentation, craft and online petition. It was three hours full of fun and meaningful moments. Let's join in the campaign vibe by enjoying the photos below:



The previous evening, volunteers Sandra and Indra prepare the biscuits and coloured icing for the children to decorate



230 students were all eager before the event started!



Teaching volunteer Ida and local volunteer Yen introduced the campaign and its activities on stage. They were wearing sea animals paper crowns!



## Global Shark Campaign Update: An interesting English and Art Camp on the theme of Shark and Ocean lives

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Everyone joined the warm-up dance. Can you spot our sea ambassadors wearing our recognizable green t-shirts among the local students?

Some  
photos  
of  
the  
activities



## Global Shark Campaign Update: An interesting English and Art Camp on the theme of Shark and Ocean lives

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## What's On: March 2014

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
					1	2 Judith arrives
3	4 Ida's birthday	5 Marie and Elisabeth arrive	6 Street Photo tour 11.30AM	7 Chantal and Christine arrive	8	9
10	11 Alessandra's birthday	12	13 Bas arrives Monthly Outreach	14	15	16 Brian and Rosemary arrive
17 William and Kyrie arrive	18 Madelief arrives	19	20 Water Puppet Show 7.40PM	21	22	23
24	25	26 Social Dinner 6.30PM	27	28 Carla arrives	29 Brian's birthday	30

**Mar 6— Street photo tour:** In order to celebrate the International Women Day, a photo contest on the theme of Vietnamese Women will bring good fun!

Meet at: Old Quarter

Time: 11:30AM

**Mar 13 - Monthly Outreach.** More information to come!

**Mar 20 - Water Puppetry Show.** A very interesting traditional performance to experience when you are in Vietnam. Don't miss it!

Meet at: Tourist Information center Time: 9:00PM Ticket: 100,000VND/person

**Mar 26 - Social Dinner.** This month's specialty dish to try is the delicious Grilled Fish Pie. Foodies must love this!

Meet at: Projects Abroad Office Time: 6:00PM Cost: 120,000VND/person





Community village volunteer Annelinde brought her fashion passion to a volunteer project with disabled ethnic minority women and their handicraft products



Beautiful moment of care volunteer Aurora and a child with Down syndrome in her placement. Beautiful smiles, aren't they?



Occupational therapy volunteers Eliza and Emma bid farewell to the orphaned children they worked with during 4 weeks. There were a lot of hugs, kisses, smiles and also goodbye tears!

Care volunteer Martine had a great time taking care of the orphaned babies. Everyone will love watching her with these lovely little creatures :)



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*Projects Abroad is the leading global organizer of overseas voluntary work placements. Our wide range of projects, including Teaching, Care, Conservation & Environment, Medicine & Healthcare, Sports, Culture & Community projects and Journalism, are designed specifically for the needs of the communities in which we work, whilst giving our volunteers the very best experience of volunteering abroad.*

*Based in Hanoi, Vietnam, volunteers can work on a variety of projects, including care work with disabled and orphaned children, physical therapy at local hospitals, and teaching either English or French in both primary and secondary schools. The latest projects to be opened is Nursing and Medical—Surgery projects. If you are interested in volunteering in Vietnam with Projects Abroad then please log on to [www.projects-abroad.net](http://www.projects-abroad.net) for more information.*

*Follow us on [Instagram](#) for the inspiring and thought-provoking photos and stories: [Projectsabroad\\_Vietnam](#) :)*



**Shark Campaign February 2014 at Yen Hoa secondary school**