

North Carolina Vietnam Veterans, Inc. Bridge Back Foundation

Bob Matthews



North Carolina Vietnam Veterans, Inc. is a State Chartered Tax Free Non Profit Veterans Organization. The organization is composed of men and women who served in Vietnam that formed NCVVI for comradeship, support Veterans and their families and education. Fifteen years ago Bob Matthews a Vietnam Veteran and teacher established in Wake County Schools a full curriculum course called "The Lessons of Vietnam." The course is now taught in all Wake County Schools and Nationwide in 700 schools and still growing and thanks to your support now international. Several years ago NCVVI founded the NCVVI Scholarship program that gives up to 4 scholarships for college and trade schools each year to Veterans their families and students involved with the LOV course.

NCVVI established "The Bridge Back Foundation To Teach a Nation" as a consulting arm to aid Veterans and educators. In October 12 men and women Vietnam Veterans returned to Vietnam and served as ambassadors of our supporters, Wake County, North Carolina and the United States. The trip was a phenomenal success in all aspects. A lot of closure for the returning Veterans. The Humanitarian aspects of the trip was very rewarding to "The Bridge Back" as well as the children, their teachers and families in Vietnam. As one of our supporters you can be as overwhelmed and proud, as we the Veterans who made the trip are, of your financial and emotional support. You made a very positive impact on a lot of young lives and in international relations.

Members of the Foundation raise their own individual funds for the trip as well as contributed funds to the humanitarian efforts. Dalat Vietnamese restaurant in Raleigh on Western Blvd. furnished the restaurant, the food and labor for a fund raising luncheon which was strongly supported by Rolling Thunder and the Blue Star Mothers, gave us the initial start of \$2,000. With the additional and greatly appreciated support from you and many individuals, companies and local schools, great media coverage from the News and Observer and WRAL, it was very much a community involved trip.

All of your tax deductible contributions went to the young people of Vietnam. The "Bridge Back Foundation" with the efforts of the students of Cary High School, Athens High School and Eastern Alamance High School and others, the Foundation collected many overloaded suitcases of school and medical supplies, toys and special envelopes. Cary and Athens High School students put together manila envelopes containing a letter of introduction, a book, family pictures all kinds of memorabilia and their email addresses. The "Bridge Back" traveled to Le Qui Don Secondary School in Dong Ha which is located in Quang Tri Providence.

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At the school Bob Matthews taught a class, and the Vietnam Veterans distributed the envelopes to the Vietnamese Students. It was like Christmas with all the students enthralled with their new friends in the United States. Most of the local students have already received an email from their new Vietnamese friends. Along with the envelopes, school and medical supplies and visiting everyone had a great time playing an indoor game of softball.

Another great experience was visiting the Quang Tri Providence Home for the blind. Thanks to the efforts of Jo Dixon and the monies and supplies she raised the "Bridge Back" was able to present to the students much needed and appreciated items to allow the blind to learn and adapt to their environment. These items along with the toys will have a positive affect the lives of these students for many years to come.

In Phu Loc the Nuoc Ngot Orphanage and day care run by Catholic Nuns gave everyone a very memorable heart warming experience. The center cares for more than 400 children, healthy children, Autistic, Deaf, Birth Defects and special needs children. All of the "Bridge Back" members were very moved as they visited with and were entertained by the children of this special place. The "Bridge Back" had inquired before the trip what was most needed by the orphanage and learned that there were many students who had to walk miles to school. They asked if bicycles could be supplied. Thanks to the generous efforts of all of our supporters of the "Bridge Back" and extra contributions from the Veterans on the trip, 40 bikes complete with baskets were purchased. The Mother Superior had selected 40 of the students with the greatest needs to receive the bikes. These children joined the Veterans on the bus and rode up the road a short distance where the bikes were held. One at a time each student got off the bus, picked their bike and with wide grins on their faces rode the bikes back to the orphanage. Along with the bikes, school supplies, medical supplies, books and toys were also given to the orphanage. The orphanage still has a great deal of needs. Additional bikes are needed as well as some playground equipment is badly needed. One of the "Bridge Back's" on going missions (they have a worn volleyball net in a rice paddy) is to continue with support. Thanks to all of the generous support of many people and organizations the "Bridge Back Foundation" touched many young lives. Any additional contributions would be greatly appreciated and will be used to further enhance the lives of the children of the orphanage and home for the blind.

Thanks to you our supporters, The Foundation is continuously expanding its mission "to Teach a Nation." The Foundation has been asked to assist Kinston, NC and Kansas City Mo. with implementing the Lessons of Vietnam course. Talks are ongoing with other locations. The Foundation has also been asked to take part in symposiums in Maryland and Texas. With your efforts, the Foundation is making a positive statement to students and educators world wide.

With our sincere gratitude,

Bob Matthews

