

VIETNAMESE

full of generosity and good will

by Helen Basili

Drugs and violence always seem to be the focus of the mainstream media when portraying the Vietnamese community. But what about the positive aspects of a community that has been thriving in Australia for more than 20 years?

The Vietnamese chapter of the Scout Association of Australia raised \$22,000 in an SBS radiothon held in September to generate funds for the expansion of Scout groups throughout NSW.

Requests for contributions to the Scout Association were broadcast throughout the day on the Vietnamese language program on SBS causing the switchboard to be inundated with calls. Scout leaders were overwhelmed by the success of the venture.

"I'm more than happy with the result. I only expected to raise \$7000. The support from the community is very big. Parents would like to prepare their children to have a good life in the future, make friends and maintain their culture. The Scout Movement provides an opportunity for their children to serve the community and become good citizens," said Thuat Van Nguyen, Vice-President of the International Vietnamese Scout Movement.

The radiothon money will be used to recruit more children to the Scout Movement, set up new groups and train more adults to become Scout leaders. A dance group, band and more sporting activities will also be established.

Currently there are two Vietnamese Scout Groups in Sydney, Bach Viet and Van Lang, which have a total of 150 members. The members meet regularly and engage in activities such as camping, swimming, picnics, sport and learning survival skills. According to Mr Nguyen, the emphasis is on "activities for children to help them

develop their full potential."

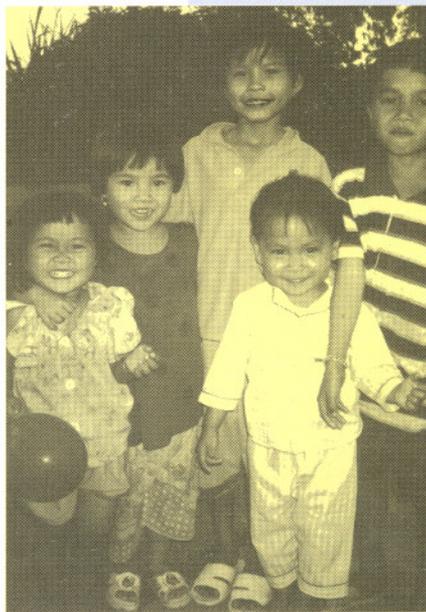
Mr Nguyen's involvement in the Scout Association stems from his desire to minimise the problems faced by young Vietnamese in Australia.

"I think we should do something to help the younger generation. We would like to have integration into Australian society. We know that it takes a period of time for the younger generation to become good citizens. Our community has some problems with teenagers. By involving them in good activities there are less problems," Mr Nguyen said.

Ms Ngoc Han, the coordinator of the SBS Vietnamese radio program holds a similar point of view:

"If children don't have a good place to learn or play it's easier for them to go to gangs," she remarked.

The radiothon is one of a spate of fundraising events launched by the Sydney Vietnamese community this year. When Ms Nhu Hoa, Chairperson of the Vietnamese-Australian Buddhist Women's Association, saw media footage of the Papua New Guinea tsunami survivors she was deeply moved. "It touched our hearts", Ms Hoa said.



She presented the issue to the next meeting of the Association and, after two weeks of advertising, held a fundraising luncheon to assist both the Papua New Guinea tsunami survivors and famine victims in the Sudan. The \$17000 they raised in August was divided equally between the two causes.

In June, a thirteen-seater bus was donated to Cabramatta Police by a Vietnamese community group.

Dr Tien Nguyen, a Cabramatta-based G.P who assisted with raising the \$24000 required for the bus, said "When you do something for others you get gratification that you have contributed to some unselfish cause."

A previous SBS radiothon held in May urged listeners of all language programs to donate money for the Refugee Council of Australia and AUSTCARE, another refugee agency. The Vietnamese were the largest contributors accounting for \$318000, almost half of the \$713000 raised.

The Director of SBS radio in Sydney and Melbourne, Mr Quang Luu believes Vietnamese Australians are prolific fundraisers due to their past traumatic experiences:

"Most Vietnamese Australians came here as refugees... They have personal experience of living in poverty and in politically difficult situations and can relate quite strongly and readily to other people in need."

Mr Luu sees no correlation between a person's financial status and their contributions to charity:

"Generosity doesn't depend on wealth, it depends on good will." ■

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