



Maison Chance

Maison Chance USA - June 2012 E-Newsletter

Clara Ribeiro Returns to Maison Chance

Clara Ribeiro, President of the International Federation Maison Chance, recently spent ten days in Vietnam after a seven year absence. Her return visit brought back many warm memories, as well as hope for what the future might bring. She shares some memories as well as her vision for the future of Maison Chance:

I have been involved with the NGO Maison Chance for a number of years, first at the Association Maison Chance France. I participated in the Take Wing Center project; I saw the blueprints, I participated in fundraising ...but I was not able to attend the inauguration.

I then joined the Federation in 2010. We worked with Tim Aline to build the Village Chance. I followed the project, the different stages of construction, all long distance through telephone conferences and e-mail exchanges. My work once again prevented me from attending the inauguration.

A Great Sense of Pride

My initial emotion upon arrival this spring was great pride at seeing what has been accomplished. It made me feel so proud to know I have worked with Tim Aline on this project for over 10 years, from our first meeting back in 2002. I was touched by the smiles and the noise amidst the children who can finally run around in a real schoolyard and play soccer just as in any school in France. It was wonderful to see the close relationships amongst the people with disabilities and the children.

Reunions

I was also able to reunite with old friends. Hien and Lan are alumni of the first Maison Chance, now have a second daughter; Lien and Hung who

are both in wheel chairs, now live as a couple.

I was able to see Little Binh, who despite his bad leg, lives with his wife, who is bound to a wheelchair, build a life with their two children. I also saw Nguyen in his wheelchair, with his pretty wife and his dog, playing "une



Clara with Tim and Cuong

maison bleu" on his guitar.

I have known these people for over ten years and they have become so dear to me. I am so impressed to see my friends get on with their lives, give birth to able-bodied child, and see them witness their children grow up and build a future for themselves. What makes it particularly impressive is that despite their physical pain, or their emotional hardships, their determination has given them strength.

It's really a love story

I believe this has been like a love story. Maison Chance is not just an

NGO working for the betterment of orphans, street children, people with disabilities, it is a beautiful love story, the story of a reconstituted family with its joys and its painful moments. Life did not spare them, but Maison Chance, the Take Wing Center and Village Chance are giving these people the opportunity to live, to learn, to work, to make a life for themselves and be happy.

With Tim, Cuong (a former street child now employed by the Projects' office), and Mc Freddy, our reporter, I was able to visit other projects in the works, such as the two orphanages near Dak Lak, a psychiatric institute and a shelter for the physically handicapped and the elderly. And I think we still have a lot more to do to care for the mentally disabled and the elderly. As a result, new projects will come up, deepening our commitment to go even further in helping these people.

I reaffirm my confidence in Tim, in the 68 employees, and in the volunteers who work on site to help this organization move forward. I wholeheartedly believe in their competence, their professionalism and their devotion. I invite each of you, benefactors, active members of the national associations, members of the assembly of delegates, members of the Federation, supporters, visitors to one day come and visit so they can see, and experience for themselves the fruit of their contributions. We get here together and we should continue to work hard together to ensure new projects will come together in the future.

Clara Ribeiro

A Writing Workshop for our Children

For six months Francine Crettaz directed a writing workshop at Maison Chance with the help of a Vietnamese journalist. The stories from the workshop will form a book to be published next year to mark the 20th anniversary of Maison Chance.

Francine gives an account of her experience:

I would like to tell you about an adventure which unfolded over nine months. It began with an idea, and it took off because of the confidence Tim Aline and the International Federation of Maison Chance had in the project. At the center of this plot were ten individuals who became writers in the process of telling their stories. We ended up with many poignant personal stories. The stories will be published in a book to mark the 20th anniversary of Maison Chance.

The Inspiration behind the Workshops

The idea of having a book written for the 20th year of Maison Chance by its beneficiaries was inspired by the American film of Richard La Gravenese. The film is based on a true story and book "The Freedom Writers Diary" by Erin Gruwell and her students. The book was awarded the Humanitas Prize at its premiere in 2007. As a result of this book, after a brief visit to Vietnam in May of 2011, I proposed the project to Tim Aline, who received the proposal with interest and trusted me to bring the project to fruition.

On August 8, the Maison Chance community gathered at the Village to hear about the launching of a writing

workshop. That evening, after all the festivities, I returned to the volunteers' quarters with a handful of blue butterflies on which were written the names of the individuals ready to take part in this adventure. With his mastery of French, Duy, the Webmaster for the NGO, became my ears and my mouthpiece. He translated documents and became an interpreter for the project. He helped me find leaders for the workshop.

We were lucky enough to find Huang, a journalist in her thirties, who knew Maison Chance from her work as a producer. This wonderful woman, dynamic and always smiling, fell in love with the idea and agreed to moderate the workshop on a volunteer basis. The workshop was designed to gather a wide range of writings reflecting on Vietnam, the daily life of a period, and a culture.

The circle of writers at Maison Chance

On September 12, after having met one on one with each participant, we gathered the team to set the rules for the workshop. The idea was accepted that not all the writings will necessarily be published. Of the fifteen people who signed up, ten told their stories from September 20 to December 10: They were Tùng, Trúc, Lộc, Duy, Liên, Bông, Hân, Tiên, Lâm and Ngan.

They each began by explaining their given name, and sharing their childhood memories, and their backgrounds. They related the events that led them to Maison Chance, and closed with an account of their life there. Once a week, everyone would gather in the afternoon to see the new writings. Huang suggested improvements and made some corrections.

Each participant learned on the job and gained inspiration from each other. Because I could not speak



Francine Crettaz with Bich Lien

Vietnamese, I didn't understand what was being said, but what I saw were smiles, sometimes tears, and even

applause. At the midway point, we shared a meal to encourage each other. The written evaluation at the end of this marathon revealed that everyone enjoyed it and felt that they learned from the experience. Six participants said that they would like to continue with this activity.

Poignant accounts to be shared

At the end of January, shortly before my return from VietNam, I discover and read the first pages translated into French. I finally saw the smiles and the tears in the writings; I applauded. Those women and men have done a good job of remembering. Today, the writings are being edited for publication. I hope to realize Duy's dream who had confided to me one morning with a big smile "Just think of one day, I will hold in my hands the book which bears my name ..."

Francine Crettaz Décosterd



At the writing workshop: Thanh Truc, Huu Tien, and Phuoc Ngan

Apprentices in Cooking and Baking

Over time, Maison Chance realized that the former street children faced problems with their professional reintegration. To help them learn new skills, in 2011 Maison Chance set up two new vocation training workshops: catering and baking.

The program was able to train six former street children and orphans, two of which are finishing their training in a professional catering school. The four remaining chef's apprentices provide daily breakfast and lunches for 119 students and 6 teachers for the Village Chance. The beneficiaries of this free lunch are the most disadvantaged children amounting to 150 pupils enrolled on our premises. The children are selected through surveys conducted twice of year of the children's families.

The seven apprentices are taught by a baker who trained in Belgium for six years. Now back to his country, he has chosen to help youths who come from difficult situations, as he himself has once experienced.

The students are learning the basics of making bread and pastries.

They hope to be able to sell these items to major downtown hotels.

The training began on December 2011 and should last nine months. During this period, several training modules will allow the students to learn how to make different kinds of bread, cakes, pastries, pastes, cookies, and ice creams.



Children's lunch at the Village Chance



Phuoc, (former street children) and Bang Lang (wife of a disabled man) in the kitchen



Tuyen, apprentice at the baking workshop

First Aid Class

Since the opening of the Village Chance, the children and the people with disabilities use the physical therapy pool to learn how to swim or to receive therapy sessions. This new service also includes new risks. To help prevent accidents, Maison Chance decided to train the security guards and the medical staff how to provide CPR.

Thanks to Maison Chance USA, we received a defibrillator and a mannequin. Van, a volunteer Norwegian nurse, is teaching the basis CPR. Each student has four training sessions with Van. After the initial training, weekly maintenance sessions are held every week. Participants are called, without notice, to revive the mannequin, so that everyone will be ready for an emergency.



Huong, a patient helper, practicing CPR

Thank you to the Masikini Foundation

In early February, 2012, an Executive Committee member of the Masikini Foundation visited Maison Chance. Although the Masikini Foundation has been a longtime partner of Maison Chance, this is the first time that one of its representatives visited our facilities.

Since 2006, the Masikini Foundation has regularly helped Maison Chance with generous donations. These funds were initially allocated to the operation costs of the Take Wing Center, then to purchase the land on which the Village Chance was built, and finally allocated to the acquisition of the

therapeutic equipment for the Village Chance.

The Village Chance is wholly dedicated for people with disabilities who need to use a wheelchair. The help of the Masikini Foundation represents approximately 70% of the equipment budget. Thanks to their generous donations, we were able to outfit out the physical therapy pool with heating and will eventually be able to add an aqua seat in the near future. We also will be able to build a bus suitable to transport people with disabilities – an innovation in Vietnam. In addition, a music room has been built and a group of people with

disabilities have been rehearsing there with hopes to be able to perform in public soon.

All donors are important to Maison Chance, but we especially want to thank the commitment of longtime donors, such as the Masikini Foundation. Because of them, we can confidently consider the future

On behalf of all at Maison Chance, we wholehearted want to say to the Masikini Foundation, a big THANK YOU for your help!

Tim Aline

Maison Chance USA upcoming events

- MC USA Annual Golf Outing will take place on August 9th 2012 , at a premier golf course of Washington DC Metropolitan, <http://www.renditionsqolf.com>.
- MC USA Annual Event with Tim Aline will be on October 20th. Event agenda and location will be announced soon.
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Please contact usa@maison-chance.org for more information, if you would like to participate or to help organizing the events.

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