



maisonchance

**MELODIES
OF HOPE**

**THE
GREEN
SPOUTS
RISE
IN
THE SUN**





Dear friends of Maison Chance,

I hope you are all well. As you may know, I founded Maison Chance 30 years ago, when I met an orphan boy on the brink of death in a mental institution. After this, I also took other street children under my wing, as well as disabled people who had no one else that took care of them. This blended family continued expanding, and today we fully support nearly 700 beneficiaries in 4 centers, in Saigon and Dak Nong Province, which is 300 km from Saigon. All this has been possible thanks to your precious support, and I am indebted to your support over the years. Thank you for always being here, some for almost 30 years.

To mark this anniversary, I wanted to organize an event at the end of the year in each country where we have a Maison Chance association representing us. However, these evenings have been rescheduled to take place in 2024. We will inform you of the dates and locations in due course.

To ensure the future of this organization, Maison Chance has developed many income-generating initiatives in the past few years. In addition to the different vocational trainings, we have also started the community tourism program, guestroom and restaurant services at the Maison Chance center in Dak Nong. At the beginning of December 2022, we also set up a vanilla cultivation project on a plot near our site.

This project is indeed a challenge because no one in Vietnam ever has been successful in obtaining a finished product, which is perfumed vanilla pods. We planted the first cuttings 9 months ago, during the cold season, then the warm season arrived and the cuttings started to grow faster. In May, the rainy season arrived and vanilla was very well supported by heavy showers.

So good news : vanilla acclimates very well to the region. However, we must be patient, because it will take 3 years before we make our first harvest. Obtaining the most valuable spice after saffron requires much effort and patience... in addition to passion and a touch of madness.

My deep wish is that one day, these projects will succeed and that with the revenues it generates, we will have funds to sustain our activities in the long term.

Fond regards,

Tim



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**NEWSLETTER MAISON CHANCE
AUGUST - 2023**

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THE AMBASSADOR OF NEW ZEALAND BRINGS SUPPORT TO MAISON CHANCE

The New Zealand Ambassador announced that in early July, in collaboration with the Consulate General of New Zealand in Ho Chi Minh City and New Zealand fruit import companies in Vietnam, they will send fruit such as apples and kiwis, as well as milk to Maison Chance as gifts for the Maison Chance beneficiaries. Additionally, the New Zealand Embassy also expressed its desire to collaborate with Maison Chance on upcoming projects.

Previously, in January 2023, together with the group of Ambassadors from embassies of Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Ambassador Tredene Dobson visited Maison Chance, bringing fruit baskets and participating in a basketball game with the disabled members. To gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by people with disabilities, the Ambassadors used wheelchairs to participate in the game.

On June 8th, representatives from Maison Chance Vietnam had a warm meeting with the New Zealand Embassy. During the meeting, New Zealand Ambassador, Ms. Tredene Dobson, expressed her deep sympathy and genuine concern for Maison Chance's contributions in caring for orphaned children, children in special challenging circumstances, and the disabled people in Vietnam.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR VISITS MAISON CHANCE

We had the pleasure of welcoming Mr. Nicolas Warnery, the French Ambassador in Vietnam, Ms. Emmanuelle Pavillon-Grosser, the French Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, and Ms. Frédérique Horn, the Director of the French Institute in Ho Chi Minh City, for a visit, and an opportunity for them to learn more about Maison Chance.

After touring the vocational training rooms and being introduced to the activities at Maison Chance's facilities in Ho Chi Minh City, the ambassadorial delegation highly appreciated Maison Chance's efforts in providing shelter, education, and healthcare to the beneficiaries. The delegation expressed their desire to engage in community support activities in the future, aiming for sustainable development and happiness.



This visit marks a significant step forward in the robust relationship between the French Embassy and Maison Chance. It showcased the deep concern and empathy of the French Embassy for Maison Chance, where no one is left behind.



Y Luy's painting "Two Elephants" has captivated the judges and has been awarded first prize.

At the end of May, Y Luy, a second grader from the Maison Chance Dak Nong primary school received the 2023 National Children's Drawing Competition and Exhibition Award in the capital Ha Noi, which was organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism.



Out of works from primary schools across Vietnam, Y Luy's painting "Two Elephants" impressed the judges and received the first prize. The painter, Y Luy, was born into a disadvantaged family with four other siblings. Y Luy's father has passed away and his mother struggles with illness. Y Luy's mother can not possibly take care of the children, so she sent them to stay with their grandparents, whose circumstances are also difficult.

All four of Y Luy's siblings, including Y Luy could not afford to attend school until they were taken in by Maison Chance in 2020. When Y Luy first came to Maison Chance, he could neither read or write, so he was enrolled in the pre-primary class. Eventually, Y Luy entered first grade, and now he is studying second grade. In school, Y Luy discovered a special love for Fine Arts. His passion and talent are encouraged under the guidance of drawing teachers at Dak Nong Maison Chance, who are also disabled members living and working here.



It has been said that every child is a gift bestowed upon life. That is why we celebrate International Children's Day on June 1st each year to honor and express gratitude for the presence of children in the world.

However, it is saddening to know that not all children are fortunate enough to be loved, cared for, and have a happy family. Maison Chance has been continuously welcoming new members during this time. Each child who comes and seeks shelter at Maison Chance brings a story that touches the hearts of those who know it.

Some are orphaned, deprived of care from their families since childhood. They long to utter the words "dad" or "mom" and yearn for simple things like a meal, a gentle hug, or what may seem ordinary and natural to others but remain distant dreams for these children. Some wander, befriend the dusty winds on the streets, finding sleep on the pavement or seeking shelter under the strangers' roofs. Each passing day becomes a battle for survival, facing hardships and pain without knowing whom to turn to. At such a tender age, they learn to navigate through a harsh environment, merciless to the weak and vulnerable. They have nowhere to stay, no home to call their own. And there are those who experience the agony of separation when their parents get entangled in legal issues. It's not just adults who pay the price for their mistakes; the darkness of tragedy continues to cast its shadow upon innocent children.

Sympathizing with the little children adrift, Ms. Tim opened her arms to greet them under the roof of Maison Chance. Tim doesn't just provide them with food and shelter, but also brings them joy, a new sense of family, and opportunities for education to acquire knowledge and skills, equipping them to overcome their circumstances. The love of this second mother partially soothes the wounds of their troubled soul, offering the children comfort and a spiritual pillar that they once lost or never experienced before. The young green sprouts no longer have to confront the storm alone but now have the chance to thrive under the sun's rays.

"Mommy, I shouldn't have been born in this world, right?" This question from a little boy brings tears to the eyes of readers from generation to generation, reflecting the pain of so many suffering children. And then Tim appears, embracing those fragile hearts, guiding them with resilience through deep valley and towering mountains.

**"WHOEVER HAS BEEN IN THE WORLD,
THAT PERSON DESERVES TO BE BORN.
YOU TOO!"**

Quoted in the book
"My Sweet Orange Tree"
- José Mauro de Vasconcelos

During the last days of May, Dak Nong Maison Chance Primary School held the closing ceremony for the 2022-2023 academic year. On a special note, we celebrated and wished farewell to our first student cohort who had been together for the last five years since the first day we came to Dak Nong province.

In 2018, Maison Chance was established in Dak Nong province along side our Primary School under the same name, where we opened the door to children with disabilities, orphans and those with disadvantaged backgrounds in this sunny and windy highland.

Our first grade included 32 students from different localities of the province. Having to live far away from home, at such a young age, many of the children struggled for a long period, often in tears. Our young teacher, Dang Thi Hoai Vi, wore several hats at the same time, teaching the students while also providing them with comfort and assurance through this difficult time. However, the greatest challenge soon proved to be the language barrier. Two-thirds of the children in Ms. Vi's classroom came from ethnic minorities. When they first arrived at Maison Chance, many of them did not know a single word of Vietnamese. The language obstacle brought many challenges as the teachers and students struggled to understand each other. However, through their own efforts, the students managed to follow the curriculum after a few months. Ms. Vi and her students have been together since, for the past 5 years. Their love and connection soon grew especially deep.

When it came to the graduation, both teachers and students felt sad at the thought of having to leave each other. However, there is one thing that cheers up Ms. Vi and Maison Chance all the children will continue to study further after leaving Maison Chance Primary School.



"To help the ethnic minority students grasp the lesson, I asked a teacher to translate. But then, for convenience, I had the students take turns interpreting for each other. Those who understood the lesson in both Vietnamese and the local language would explain it to their peers"
recalled Ms. Vi



Ms. Vi and her class have been with Maison Chance for 5 years

On June 1st, 50 students ranging from secondary school to college and university, gathered with family at Village Chance as alumni of Maison Chance primary school in Ho Chi Minh city. They were receiving their per-semester scholarship in support of their education. The scholarships are given twice a year sponsored by the Albatros Foundation and Maison Chance. This program has been active for the past several years.

Holding the final school report of **Le Van Thang*** in which he completed 8th grade with an excellent record, Mr. Le Van Toan, Thang's father spoke movingly that the family is poor but Thang is studious and well-behaved, having a good academic record and several sports achievements. Currently, Thang's father sells fruits as a street vendor, while his mother does manual construction labor to provide for their two children. Parking his fruit cart in front of the gate, Mr. Toan continued to work after attending Thang's scholarship ceremony. "Maison Chance has helped my children a lot since when they were little; I will do my best for them to continue studying", he confided.

Vo Hoang Duy, a senior at Cao Thang College who has received the scholarships since secondary school, excitedly shared that he was about to graduate with a degree in automobile mechanics. "I work in an internship at an automobile garage and have been offered a job to work there after graduation", the small-framed student with an optimistic expression replete with strength said.

Lai Le Thien Kieu, the incoming sophomore at Ton Duc Thang university studying Chemical Technologies, mentioned that her parents work as janitors. Always struggling financially, Kieu was taken in by Maison Chance at a young age to study, then she was sponsored by Albatros Foundation and Maison Chance until now. "Studying at Maison Chance is a lot of fun ; I can travel and go camping, people here love us a lot", Kieu told us.

Taking to heart that knowledge is the key to changing one's life, Maison Chance not only takes care of the children during their time studying at Maison Chance, but also accompanies them in the long run. By supporting them to the fullest, Maison Chance ensures that the children, who were not born under lucky stars, can still shine brightly through their incredible capabilities and perseverance.



Students from disadvantaged backgrounds continue to receive scholarships from Maison Chance after completing their primary education.

Hong Tu was born in 2010 as the youngest child in the family. He is gentle and obedient. However, fate played a cruel trick when, at only a few months old, he suffered from a severe fever. The family thought it was just a common illness that would pass, but as the condition persisted for a long time, by the time they managed to take him to the hospital, it was too late. Tu was left paralyzed on the left side of his body. The polio fever left him with the ability to move only by crawling, dragging himself, or leaning against the walls. Fortunately, he could still grasp objects with his hand, allowing him to take care of his own eating and personal hygiene without depending on his parents. Every day, while his parents went to work and his siblings went to school, Tu would be left alone, wandering around in solitude.

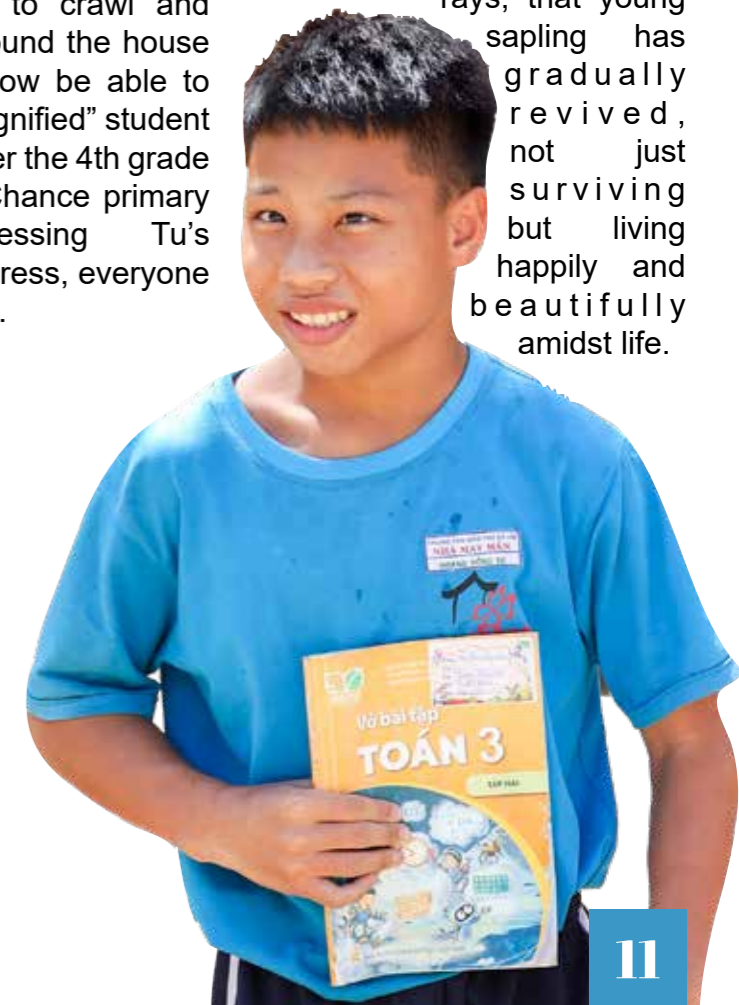


Despite living in poverty, the family always held onto the hope that someday, Tu would become healthier and be able to attend school like other children. When he turned 7 years old, the family received assistance from Maison Chance. After 6 years, his life has miraculously transformed.

Here, he not only receives healthcare and medical treatment but also has access to quality education and humanistic values. The dedicated teachers and staff at Maison Chance are always there to support and accompany him, making sure he never feels lonely or dejected. To help Tu overcome some of the difficulties in daily life, we provided him with a walking frame and assisted him in daily physical therapy. And believe it or not, he can now walk on his own without the need for the frame. His steps are still weak and slower than those of an average person, but it is an extraordinary miracle for this young student. Nobody could have imagined that the boy who used to crawl and drag himself around the house all day would now be able to walk and is a "dignified" student preparing to enter the 4th grade at the Maison Chance primary school. Witnessing Tu's remarkable progress, everyone is deeply moved.

In a small village deep in the remote area of Dak Glong district, the story of the circumstances of little boy Hoang Hong Tu is undoubtedly heartbreaking.

Fate had been unfair to him, but with the collective effort of society and timely support from Maison Chance, Hoang Hong Tu has become healthier. He has friends to play with, learns to read and write, and sees hope for the future. His story is a testament to the power of education and compassion. Supported and given opportunities, he has grown like a fragile sapling yearning for the sunlight. Thanks to the warm rays, that young sapling has gradually revived, not just surviving but living happily and beautifully amidst life.





Under the enthusiastic guidance of their teachers, the children are also inspired by the love for music shown by those who came before them. These predecessors have transcended their own boundaries and now share their love, knowledge, and musical talent with young hearts. Each lesson with disabled individuals becomes a vivid demonstration for the children, teaching them about patience, the spirit of courage in the face of adversity, the art of enjoying life, and spreading beauty to everyone around.

In this special course, children are free to explore and develop their abilities while embracing the colorful experiences of childhood.



In one of the rooms on the Village Chance campus, a special class has been opened. It is not just an ordinary music class, but rather a place where a passion for music is nurtured. This classroom is open to underprivileged students, and they attend free of charge.

With curiosity and interest, the students step into the music class. Their small hands learn to familiarize themselves with musical instruments such as the piano, guitar, ukulele, organ, and more. Even though they may feel confused and unsure of the keys, they refuse to give up.

Amidst the room, simple notes and tentative guitar strumming slowly give rise to joyful melodies. Even those who happen to pass by find their hearts softened amidst the worries of life. Music possesses a healing power and acts as a bridge to their dreams, helping them overcome their sorrows.



In our previous issue, we shared the story of Nguyen Thi Thuy Tien, a young girl who survived two near-death experiences and suffered severe burns due to epilepsy.

After 9 months of timidly pursuing her art education at Maison Chance Dak Nong (as she had never been to school before due to her family's difficult circumstances), a ray of hope shone upon Tien when she received full sponsorship for her surgery and functional restoration of the complications caused by her burns. "Upon learning about the Smile of Compassion project, which provides surgical support to burn victims, I contacted them and submitted Tien's application. I was thrilled when she was accepted," shared Ms. Ta Thi Nhu Y, Head of the Medical Department at Maison Chance Dak Nong.



Tien undergoing examination before the surgery by the Canadian medical team at Tam Tri Hospital

On May 18th, with the assistance of medical staff from Maison Chance, Tien and her mother embarked on a long journey from Maison Chance Dak Nong to Tam Tri Hospital in Da Nang. There, Tien underwent examinations and cosmetic surgery performed by Canadian doctors to partially restore the functions affected by her burn complications. This trip was also the farthest Tien and her mother have ever traveled.

Doctors informed us that Tien's condition was severe, and her overall health was not optimal due to her history of epilepsy. In this surgical procedure, the doctors planned to perform scar revision, open the angle of her right eye to reduce the coverage of the eye area, and improve Tien's visual acuity. Regarding her eyes, the surgeons would perform skin grafting and lift the lower eyelid muscles of both her left and right eyes, aiming to reduce sensitivity and improve the appearance of the eye area. As for her lips and other lingering sequelae from the burns, the medical team mentioned that they would address them in subsequent surgeries when Tien's health improves.

After nearly 2 weeks of hospitalization in Da Nang, Tien and her mother are currently back home in Dak Nong, allowing Tien some time to recover her health. We sincerely hope that this young girl, whose name is as beautiful as a flower, despite her immensely challenging fate, will achieve better health and maintain her resilient spirit. May she soon return to Maison Chance to continue painting her unfinished dreams.



As parents, the greatest desire is to see their children grow up healthy and strong like everyone else. However, fate seems to play tricks, which makes many families find themselves in distress. Among them is the family of Dam Thi Hong Gam, living in Buon Choah commune, Krong No district, Dak Nong province.

Gam is 17 years old, the eldest child in the family. Since birth, Gam has had congenital cerebral palsy. Although able to move, Gam is very weak and needs to cling to or lean on walls for support. The condition also affects communication as Gam cannot pronounce words clearly. To support the family, Gam's mother has to work as a manual laborer in Ho Chi Minh City, while the father stays at

home to take care of the three siblings and work as a hired laborer. Gam's world is limited to the four walls of their house.

Aware of Gam's situation, Maison Chance has taken Gam in to provide medical care and find a new path for her future. Not only Gam has improved her mobility significantly, but she has also joined the sewing class after four years of specialized education to improve her speech, dexterity, and letter recognition. Every day, Gam carefully and patiently learns how to hold a needle, thread it, and adjust the sewing machine. She also learns about color matching, fabric selection, and various sewing techniques. Focusing and performing each stitching task is a major challenge for Gam, as her hands are stiff and it is difficult for her to grasp and control things.



Ms Hong, who has been teaching sewing to Gam for the past year, shared, "At the beginning, Gam struggled with even simple sewing tasks. She often got injured and bled, which was heartbreaking to see. But she is very eager to learn and not afraid of difficulties. Now, she can design and sew her own shirt." As the teacher was speaking, Gam proudly showed everyone the white shirt she had created with her own hands, filled with indescribable joy. While it may seem like an ordinary product to others, for Gam, this shirt is a miraculous dream that she thought would never come true.

Becoming a skilled tailor and not being a burden to the family is the dream of this diligent little girl, and Gam is constantly striving to achieve that. Although aware that the path is not easy, with strong determination, resilience, and support from Maison Chance, she is gradually turning that dream into reality. Gam's family, friends, teachers, and the Maison Chance family are proud and eagerly await the wonderful stories that Gam will weave in the future, just as she has already started to realize her dream. We will always accompany and provide the best support for Gam to shine in the field she loves.

When it comes to tourism in Dak Nong, we can not fail to mention the majestic waterfall cascade of Dray Sap- Gia Long in Krong No district. Few people know that this district has another treasure, which is the geological highland recognized by UNESCO in July 2020. The most spectacular area of Dak Nong’s geological park is the system of natural caves dispersed around Dray Sap- Chu R’Luh area, which is certified by the Japan Association of Volcanology to set a record of scale, length, and particularity in Southeast Asia.

At the end of last December, Dr. Laurens Smets, a Dutch expert researcher of volcanology published the map of cave C7 (part of Krong No’s volcanic cave system) which stands at 1266m in length. With this length, cave C7 is recognized by the international scientific body as the longest volcanic cave in Southeast Asia today. These discoveries promise to develop the tourism potential of Dak Nong, with a particular focus on Dray Sap the Krong No district, to be a popular attraction for domestic and international travelers interested in exploring cultures and nature.



Situated on the doorstep leading to the cascade of Dray Sap Dak Nong and the system of volcanic caves of the geological highland, only 30-km away from Buon Ma Thuoc airport, Maison Chance is not only the home to orphaned children and the disabled, but we also provide tourist services from accomodation and meal services for visiting guests. On the large 3-hectare area of Maison Chance, dotted among the greenery of the vegetable garden are VIP rooms, a traditional local-style longhouse, and two dormitories, all with a total capacity of 44 persons, which are suitable to meet the needs of solo travelers, as well as small and large touring groups.



Maison Chance also has a restaurant specialized in local specialties with a commitment to hygiene and food safety for local people, tourists, and visiting guests. More specifically, we also have an organic vegetable garden, an animal farm of horses, chickens, rabbits, goats and geese... Guests who come here can participate in our planting and animal-caring activities to get close to nature, improving life skills and mental wellbeing. With these services, Maison Chance is confident in our role as an official partner with Dak Nong Global Geological Park for the period of 2023-2027, and as a reliable destination for tourists who travel to this mysterious rural province.

Providing tourist services is one of the paths of Maison Chance in Dak Nong that aims to contribute to the organization’s funding, creating jobs for our members and local people. We are working hard to further improve the quality of our service in order to bring the most incredible experiences for tourists visiting this “land of melodies”- the global geological highland of Dak Nong.



After years of research, in December of 2022, Maison Chance's vanilla tree garden has been planted in Dak Nong on an area of 1000m² with 816 vanilla trees. The exciting news is that all the vanilla trees have successfully taken root and are displaying healthy green buds, promising a positive period of growth ahead.



Why does Maison Chance work on the vanilla-planting project in Dak Nong?

If saffron is hailed as the King of all spices, then vanilla is truthfully the Queen.

Depending on the species, vanilla trees begin to flower after 3-4 years of planting. A vanilla flower consists of two petals, one male and one female, along with the stigma. The flowers cannot self-pollinate and rely on manual assistance from the gardeners. The optimal time for pollination is from 7 to 9 o'clock in the morning. If we fail to pollinate the flowers during their blooming period, they will close up and wither until the following year.

After pollinating and fertilizing, the vanilla beans need an additional 9 months to reach maturity. From the fresh vanilla beans, we have to ferment them, dry them in the sun and in the shade, and many other processing steps to reach the desired quality of the vanilla extract, which is the basic ingredient of scent. The total time from harvesting vanilla beans to producing the final product takes approximately 2 months. The professional complexity during the planting, harvesting, and fermenting the vanilla beans makes vanilla among the most highly-priced spices in the world.

According to experienced research, weather conditions of certain places in Vietnam are suitable for the growth of this tree. It is the growing areas of elevations under 1000 m above sea level, with not so cold a temperature. When it comes to soil, vanilla trees are often planted in growing media; the area should be shady such as under a tree or minimal greenhouse.



The cultivation of vanilla plants necessitates significant effort and meticulousness.

These are the positive signs and also immense motivation for Maison Chance to start the project of planting a vanilla garden in Dak Nong. Here, we also designed a system of chicken coops as a natural solution against slugs and pests affecting the vanilla plants. The chicken coops are built in the form of net-covered tube that protects the flock of chickens from domestic animals such as dogs and cats as well as natural predators, without sacrificing the space for them to live and forage.

Maison Chance is especially passionate about agricultural projects. It is because they do not only result in products, but also independent sources of funding for the organization's activities, creating jobs and incomes for local farmers and members of Maison Chance in Dak Nong.

We are very excited about this project. We will continue to update you about the progress of the garden of the "Queen of all spices" as well as other upcoming projects of Maison Chance.



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