

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

3 December 2007

### **LIFESTART TO ASSIST DISABLED IN VIETNAM**

The **Lifestart Foundation** has announced its next project in Vietnam is to assist a group of disabled people achieve independence and economic self-sufficiency.

Lifestart's founder, Melbourne's **Karen Leonard**, became aware that for those living with a disability in Vietnam life is extremely difficult. She has identified a group of 65 disabled people from Hoi An in the Quang Nam Province which the Foundation will assist. They range in age from late teens to late thirties, are from extremely poor families and many have never seen a doctor.

In addition, most cannot obtain employment as they are considered "bad luck"; live with ageing parents and face an uncertain future; do not have sufficient food and battle to get around in antiquated wheel chairs.

Lifestart will assist this group by:

- providing free medical assessments by U.S. physician, Dr Josh Solomon in January 2008
- setting up a free physiotherapy clinic
- getting those who need it on to food allowances
- offering a range of training options so they can be employed
- organising motorised transport, such as three-wheeled motorbikes
- relocating those living in sub-standard conditions to better accommodation

Lifestart's current fundraising target is A\$10,000 to set up the physiotherapy clinic with further funds to roll out the purchase and conversion of Honda motorbikes (each costing \$1,500).

Says Karen Leonard, "I would hope that in the future the clinic could expand to offer other treatments and that overseas volunteer medical practitioners would be able to assist with training locals to staff it."

Leonard, a former music teacher, commenced the Lifestart Foundation in 2004 after a backpacking trip to Vietnam. Since then Lifestart has provided education scholarships for street children, micro-business grants to families, installed basic services in homes, built houses for families without shelter, boats to provide a source of income, renovated a local orphanage and paid the medical expenses of children with severe illnesses. In 2006 the Foundation opened a Free School.

Lifestart Foundation is a non-profit charity registered in Victoria.

<http://www.lifestartfoundation.org.au/events>

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