



Education Foundation

8 Eu Tong Sen Street #14-94, The Central, Singapore 059818

Phat and Phước Thiện Primary School

Phat needs your help. He is a smart 12 year old boy and a great student from an extremely poor family living in Saigon. Though he just graduated from the non-profit primary school that AMA sponsors ("Phuoc Thien"), Phat may need to quit school and help the family make money to put food on the table. The family also cannot afford to pay for his upcoming school fees and expenses if he were to continue with his education in a public school. Estimated total expenses add up to \$600 per year (see calculation below).

Phat is the middle son in the family and has been studying for free of tuition at Phuoc Thien since birth, similar to his younger brother Dat in 5th grade and older brother Danh in 12th grade, whose educational costs are sponsored by Miss Thao (the principal of Phuoc Thien). Education is a growing burden that Phat's mother cannot bear alone for the 3 kids. His 56-year-old father got hurt badly in recent years and went blind in one eye due to an accident in construction site. His health is unstable and he cannot work to make money to support his family. As the only bread winner in the family, Phat's mother sells lottery tickets ("ve so") on the streets to make a tiny living in order to support the entire family. During summer months when school is closed and often in the afternoon after school, Phat also hits the streets to sell lottery tickets for his mom. In fact, he sells better and faster than his mom, partly because many customers think he offers good luck to them. For each journey, his total revenue is VND 500,000 or about USD 22, resulting with a net income of a few dollars for his mom. The family needs this money to survive, so this is another reason for taking Phat out of school now, in addition to not being able to afford his school fees and living expenses. One time, Phat got tricked by one female adult when she promised to buy all his lottery tickets but then disappear without paying. It was a big and costly learning lesson for him and his family. He has gotten smarter since and makes zero mistakes now. I can see his potential as a good businessman already because of his street smarts. Phat and his family do not have a home and live in the backyard of a pagoda in District 7 of Saigon.

We also learn from Miss Thao (the principal and founder of Phat Thien) that Phat is an excellent student with lots of potential. Phat is well-behaved at school, helpful to others around him, and full of filial piety for his family. He does not want to quit school, but he also doesn't want to see his family suffer because of his educational pursuit. Phat's situation got more desperate recently and Miss Thao just approached AMA to support him if possible.

It was an emotional visit at Phuoc Thien for me when I met up with Phat and Miss Thao at the school. Phuoc Thien's good work for all the kids over the past 25 years through Miss Thao always touches my heart, but Phat's case is even more touching. Like Phat, I also sold lottery tickets as a kid growing up in Saigon when my family was poor and my father was the only bread winner. I used to run all over the streets of District 5 on bare foot to generate sales, stepping on small rocks and getting cut by glass at times. I had no choice due to poverty and difficult times in the post-war era of Vietnam. The 1970s and 1980s were really tough years for most people in Vietnam. Unlike Phat, I did not attend school and grew up without a formal education until the age of 12, when I left for the USA as a refugee in 1984. I became a good student like Phat and enjoy success today because of my education and the people who have

supported me along the way, which is why I started AMA five years ago to give back to society in the field of education. I was at the cross roads in 1984 when I arrived at the USA, and thank God that I got help from angel-like teachers such as Mrs. Fowler and Miss Livingston at Public School 86 in the Bronx. Today, Phat is also at the crossroads at the age of 12, and can make use of the same support and fighting chance to get himself an education and improve his life.

I share Phat's story with you to see if you want to donate money to AMA to support him. At the same time, AMA also needs to raise money to continue to support the school Phuoc Thien, which continues to help students and families like Phat's. Miss Thao is a version of mother Teresa to me, having founded this non-profit school 25 years ago by converting her own home into a school that offers a free education to kids who come from poor and distressed families. There are many untold stories like Phat's at this school. There is a teacher named Miss Hoa at Phuoc Thien who went onto university and returned to Phuoc Thien to be a teacher by choice, presently making only \$50-60 per month while trying to support her family (see her photos). During the summer months when she doesn't need to teach, she goes to a construction site to find work to make a little extra income for her family. I actually saw her driving herself on a motorbike to a construction site during my meeting with Miss Thao and Phat recently. It broke my heart to see this kind of suffering and life struggle from such good and hardworking people. It is simply unfair. But I am so proud of her and have the utmost respect for her. She teaches the kids with love at Phuoc Thien, and you can feel that love in the air when you visit and see the 70 students from grade 1 to 5. You see hope in their eyes, and we at AMA together with your support can turn that hope into new possibilities and opportunities for these kids and their families. Education is their bridge to opportunities, so we hope to build and maintain that bridge for these kids with your help.

AMA is out of funds to continue to support Phuoc Thien. I previously raised 15,000 USD to support the school for 2 years (giving them \$600 per month to meet their expenses), and that money is fully deployed now. AMA needs your support to keep Phuoc Thien afloat. I hope you find it in your heart to donate some money to AMA to help the school and the 70 amazing kids. I will ensure that 100% of your donation goes to the school. We thank you for your consideration.

Below is an estimated breakdown of Phat's educational expenses per annum (Total is about USD 600):

- * School cost: $1,500,000 \times 2$ semesters = 3,000,000 VND
- * Tuition: $300,000 \times 9$ months = 2,700,000 VND
- * Computer & English classes (he never learn them at Phuoc Thien): $800,000 \times 9$ months = 7,200,000 VND
- * Additional costs (pens, books, notebooks, uniform,): Miss Thao will pay for Phat



Phat is in the middle. His mother and younger brother Dat are by his side on graduation day. His mom cried.



Peter, Miss Thao, Kim Chau of AMA, Phat, teachers Miss Hoa and Miss Trang in the back.



The young girl on the left side of the 2nd row was a student at Phuoc Thien many years ago. She went onto higher education and then chose to come back to teach at the school later. She is the teacher Miss Hoa today. Isn't that amazing and inspirational?!



This is the experienced and loving teacher Miss Hoa today at Phuoc Thien. She also does construction work during summer months to generate extra income to support her family. She is also a mother now.