



### **Dear Donors and Friends of AMA,**

2014 was the busiest year for AMA since its founding. Your generous donations allowed us to expand our scholarship programs to the cities of Danang and Hue in Central Vietnam, in addition to maintaining our momentum in Ho Chi Minh City. In all 3 cities, our good partner remains as the local University of Education as they have been very helpful. As of the end of 2014, AMA is now supporting a total of 123 scholarships across 3 cities in Vietnam.

In Ho Chi Minh City, we sponsored another 38 scholarships for the class of 2014 recipients (34 Bachelor's, 1 Master's, 3 PhD's). This brings our cumulative total number of recipients at the university to 91 students and teachers (79 BA's, 6 MA's, 6 PhD's), which equates to a commitment of USD 255,600 for the full life of all the scholarships at this headquarter location. Again, the BA's receive 4-yr scholarships, MA's for 2 years, and PhD's for 3 years.

In Danang, AMA in its augural year sponsored 10 scholarships for Bachelor students to kick start our presence at the university in central Vietnam. We conducted our interviews in December and were happy to see so many high calibre candidates who are also financially needy. Please see photos with captions in this newsletter.

In Hue, we supported a total of 18 Bachelor recipients in our first year. Similar to Danang, students at the university in Hue are excellent but face extremely difficult financial and family circumstances. For example, after the region was hit by a massive typhoon a few years ago, over 30% of the students had to leave the school for home for various reasons (e.g. lack of money at home). Unemployment rate is also very high. We saw many heart-breaking and sad cases. For both Hue and Danang, we hope to grow our program in 2015 to support more students in need.

At our partner non-profit primary school Phước Thiện in Ho Chi Minh City, we also decided to give scholarships to the 4 existing teachers there, in addition to supporting the school's expenses each month. For the 3 full-time teachers, we give \$600 per year to each teacher, whereas the part-time teacher receives \$300 per year. They are already dedicated teachers who are underpaid at ~\$60-70 per month, so they can use the extra help and encouragement from AMA. We want to make sure that the school can continue to operate at a sustainable level with high morale in place under the leadership of the founder Miss Thảo. As you will see from the photos in this newsletter, our team members at AMA have also dedicated time and resources to enhance the quality of the school in the last 6 months. For example, we organized a 3-day program for 11 high school senior students from St. Joseph International in Singapore to do community service at Phước Thiện, where it involved arts and crafts activities with the kids as well as a field trip to a local amusement park. The program turned out to be a big success per feedback from all attendees (over 70 people in total). Separately, we surprised the students and teachers during Halloween and Christmas with celebrations to lift up their spirits while promoting their cross-cultural understandings. These kids have never heard of Halloween before, nor seen Santa Claus in person up until this point. We also involved BreadTalk to give free same-day left-over bakery goods to the school. We thank all the AMA members and friends for their extra efforts and contributions.

**Ho Chi Minh City Award Ceremony – University of Education**



Vice Rector Nguyen Thi Minh Hong spoke about the university's growing partnership with AMA since late 2011 until present. We thank her and other administrators for their support and professionalism.



Our keynote speaker Dr. Henry Nguyen told a touching story about the influence his high school Latin teacher had on his upbringing in order to highlight the important role of teachers in society.



2013 recipient Hoang Anh touched our hearts when she told us about the meaning and significance of the AMA scholarship to her and her family (see her speech on last page).



Our PhD recipient Manh Thang was passionate and genuine in his speech about teaching and what AMA has done for him. AMA supported him during his MA years and now PhD for the next 3 years.



Peter was presented with a gift by our PhD recipient Manh Thang. It is a painting of Ben Thanh Market made out of rice.



Congratulations to the class of 2014 scholarship recipients. There were 38 in total (similar to 2013) – 34 BA's, 1 MA, 3 PhD's. We are proud of you all.

**Ho Chi Minh City Award Ceremony – University of Education, page 2**



We thank our friends, guests, and donors for spending their precious time with us and the students on this special day. We also appreciate all the hard work of everyone involved – AMA members, university staff, friends, volunteers, etc.



Many past scholarship recipients from the classes of 2012 and 2013 also attended our ceremony. We were happy to see them and to give continuing support.

*“The HCM University of Pedagogy and AMA have helped me tremendously for completing my MA program and moving on to a PhD program at Ha Noi University. Additionally, I am trying to contribute in small ways to the high school educational environment by teaching soft skills, giving career orientation at Nguyen Khuyen High School – Tan Binh District, giving research guidance on how to use flyers of people in District 5 to Practical High School 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders, and participating in a program for abused children in some areas in District 8.”* Excerpt from recipient Manh Thang’s speech



AMA member Vy delivered a speech to encourage the students to work hard in order to realize their dreams and become a good teacher. Vy coming from a humble background in Central Vietnam is a great role model for our recipients.



2014 BA recipient Thach Thao sang “Someone Like You” with the voice of Adele and her musical talent. Some of us broke down in tears listening to this beautiful song and her silky voice.



We always appreciate the genuine support and friendship of Vice Rector Dang Chinh Nghia of the university, who has been working with AMA since late 2011. Natalie and I thank you for the flowers.

**Danang Award Ceremony – University of Education**



Vice Rector Thay Trang gave the opening speech to welcome the AMA program to the University of Education in Danang in its augural year.



In our augural year in Danang in 2014, AMA supported a total of 10 BA scholarships for the next 4 years. We conducted our interviews back in December of 2014 and held the ceremony in early January of 2015. Congrats everyone!



Miss Dung, the Student Affairs officer, provided logistical support and acted as the MC during our ceremony.



Sylvie, Vy, Peter, Jenny, and Natalie presented a certificate to the student speaker and recipient named Khanh Quynh.



Vy and Peter presented certificates to 4 recipients. Le Minh Quan is the only male recipient in central Vietnam this year and he is a brilliant mathematician who wants to teach.



Natalie enjoyed a moment with her 3 recipients after the ceremony.

## Hue Award Ceremony – University of Education



AMA sponsored a total of 18 BA scholarships in Hue this year, thanks to our generous donors. We also thank the university staff for their cooperation, as well as our guests, including Andrew who flew in from Dubai to attend this event.



Thay Luyen presented Peter with a beautiful painting that depicts the University of Education of Hue. We thank him and the rest of the team for their support in hosting an excellent event.



2014 recipient Ngoc Mai spoke on behalf of all 18 scholars about how grateful they are and what they will do to be deserving scholarship recipients.



Our recipients wore traditional dresses (Ao Dai) and enjoyed their time at the ceremony.



Natalie also delivered an interactive lecture in Vietnamese on "Classroom Management" to a large group of 700+ students for more than two hours. It was a wonderful way for the students to gain from her practical experience in effective teaching methodologies.



The students were listening intently to Natalie's teachings in this big auditorium at the university. We are all very proud of Natalie for her good work.

**Interview Day – University of Education, Danang and Hue, 19 December 2014**



Our interview team (Jenny, Natalie, Chau, Vy) battled through bad weather conditions to conduct interviews in Danang and Hue. Thank you!



Our team heard many heart-breaking stories from candidates. The serious need in central Vietnam was beyond AMA's budget for 2014. We found one institutional donor who stepped in last minute to support an additional 8 scholarships. It was a very emotional trip for our team. Let's do more in 2015.



Candidates in Danang were waiting eagerly to be interviewed by our team.



Our central Vietnam coordinator Vy was absorbed by this interview. Natalie is interviewing in the back.



We appreciate our friend Jenny for volunteering her time to interview many candidates in Hue and Danang. She also attended our award ceremonies.



Central Vietnam retains its traditional heritage well. We also admire the people for their positive attitude and resilience despite facing natural disasters annually and tough economic circumstances.

**Photos from 3-day Event with Phước Thiện Non-Profit Primary School**



Natalie + her 2 daughters with Ms.Thảo and the group of 11 high school students from Singapore had a group photo taken with 3<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at Phước Thiện school. It was a fantastic 3-day exchange for everyone involved.



One of the 11 Singaporean students named Sabrina Tay was demonstrating a game to the kids at Phước Thiện. A few months ago, AMA also donated a small sum of money to help reduce the unbearable heat of the second floor due to its open area.



Lợi and Phát showed their drawings. On the other side of the drawings, they wrote down their wishes.



Another student volunteer named Joanne was showing the kids how to fold paper into a ball.



Two AMA scholarship recipients named Mai Thi and Khánh Vân helped out with this event. It was a great way for us to create synergy between our university program and Phước Thiện.



The kids are getting ready to see their first ever dolphin show now!



One Phước Thiện student was chosen as a volunteer to meet the dolphin and enjoyed an unforgettable experience.



They also visited a crocodile farm within the amusement park. Thanks to Sylvie the chaperon here!



Their last stop was a massive playground inside the park. Everyone had a great time (be it exhausting!).



The kids voluntarily made these bracelets out of rubber bands for the student volunteers as gifts from "their hearts." The Singaporean volunteers were emotionally touched when they found out later.



AMA thanks Miss Thao for her collaboration, as well as Kim Chau and Natalie for their teamwork and dedications to Phước Thiện.



And the children want to thank all the donors for their financial support to Phước Thiện via AMA.

**Phước Thiện School: Halloween and Santa Claus!**



Top Left: Natalie and her children gave the kids at Phước Thiện a surprise Halloween party. Her friend also donated lots of cookies to the school, while Natalie dressed up as a witch and distributed many bags of sweet biscuits to the students. The founder of the school Miss Thao and all the teachers and students were very happy on that day.

Top Right: Natalie and her friends plus relatives threw a Christmas party for the children at Phước Thiện. They got to meet Santa Claus (our friend Dane), who fought the heat with smiles (though he forgot to whiten his moustache! 😊)



Left: Natalie got BreadTalk to agree to donate same-day, left-over bakery goods to Phước Thiện. On the left, her friend Charles helped us in the process and met with Miss Thao and the children at the school.



It has been fun and productive helping Phước Thiện in various ways in 2014. We look forward to another fruitful year in 2015 together. As Tet (Lunar New Year) is approaching in the middle of Feb, we aim to put in some effort to make it a little more special for the children at the school this year.

**Progress Reports and Letters written by AMA recipients in HCM City to our donors:**

By: Đặng Thị Thu Trang, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“The amount I receive every summer helps me a lot in my studying and my life. I use it to buy books, materials and to pay for daily expenses, bus tickets... When I did not have this amount of money, my father had to borrow from the factory which he stops doing now as the interest is pretty high. In other words, not only it helps me, but also my father. To other people, this amount may be not much, but to me, it is a dream. I stayed with my brother in district 9 in the first year as I was not used to city life. It was really far from 3 campuses, it did affect my studying. At the beginning of the second year, there were vacancies at the dorm, therefore I registered and have been staying there since. Everything is more convenient now. With 6 million, I try to spend around 1 million a month. My father does not have to borrow money and send it to Sai Gon for me. Because borrowing money in my hometown is not easy and it takes a long time to do. That is what AMA has been helping me in financial aspect. AMA has been helping me in spiritual aspect as well. There are times I feel despondent with the worries of money and results at school, but I am chosen to receive AMA scholarship, I have to study harder in order not to fail my benefactors and to become a teacher. Maybe someday, I can do something to help my students who have difficulties. Moreover, there is a fact that I could lose this scholarship if I get low GPA. My father would have more burdens because he still has to take care of my brother.”

By: Nguyen Ky Phong, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“My dearest sisters and brothers, you are like my second family, and one year has gone by since I have officially become a part of this family. Why I say this is my family, because I can feel the love from you, you always support us in studying as well as share your life experience with us. Since I have known this foundation, I gain more power to study harder and live better. From you, I have learned about the confidence and the willing not to give up. I still remember one thing that you shared with us before and probably I will never forget it: we only have one life to live, that’s why we have to live significantly and worthily.”

By: Mai Thị Mỹ Hương, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“I feel so lucky being one of AMA family members. I still remember the interview day, I was surprised and touched meeting you. Although you were busy, you saved time to come and interview us. Your friendliness and your love helped me to stay calm to answer the interview questions. Also, the luncheon with AMA family was cozy, we had more time with you. I personally had a chance to talk to Ms. Sylvie about helpful life and work experiences and how to learn English well. Secondly, my results were good last year. I was ranked Distinction in the first semester, and only was ranked Credit in the second semester. I will not give up and try much harder to get higher result. Thanks to your support, I can totally focus on my studying and I’m not distracted by thinking about the expenses.”

By: Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hương, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“Thanks to your support, I have been doing well at the university and having enough time to take part in all the courses required and other activities. Also, it helps reducing the work and the stress for my parents. On top of that, what I have been receiving is your sympathy and that is a big spiritual gift. You – the donors – have been giving me more confidence so that I can keep walking on the path that I have chosen. I have had a great motivation to keep moving on. The previous academic year, I completed all the subjects and my results were ranked Credit in the last two semesters. I will never stop studying hard as you have put your trust in me, given me a chance to prove myself and study at this university.”

By: Bùi Thị Thanh Phương, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“There was one time when we took part in Green Summer activity, I went to the village of disabled children in Thuan An, Binh Duong, I saw young kids having disabilities but they would not ever give up, I learnt from them a strong will. That was a very memorable moment. I knew that I was lucky. I receive the help from all of you. I promise I will study better, then I will be like you some day – be able to bring happiness and hope to children like that.”

By: Trần Thị Kim Huệ, 2013 AMA scholarship recipient:

“My parents got divorced when I was a little child and they both have their own families. My grandparents have brought me up since. Every day, they have to farm to earn money to send me to school. There are many times, my grandmother is really sad but she always tries to hide it and pretends to be happy and optimistic in front of me. Therefore, I always talk to myself that I have to study hard so that later I can take care of her when she gets older. When she knew I got the scholarship, she cried a lot because she was happy to know that I could continue to study. My family was really excited, happy and grateful to you for your help. About my result, it was ranked Credit last semester. It is my self-effort and also your support. And not just that, I will never stop pushing myself to get better in order not to fail my family’s expectation and what you have given to me. I determine to study well and will become a good teacher, a model for my students so that they can be useful for the society.”

### Speech by Hoang Anh, 2013 recipient in Ho Chi Minh City

“My name is Hoang Anh, I am a second-year student of Mathematics Faculty. I am proudly representing all 2012 and 2013 AMA scholars to share something about me. Last year, I was extremely happy and proud when I received the HCMUE Admission announcement. Besides, I was worried about all the expenses for a student studying far from home.

Three years ago, my father had a serious personal trauma and it made him mentally ill. My family comes from agriculture background and my father was the main labourer making money for the whole family. All those days of trying to give my father a proper treatment caused financial difficulties for my family. Therefore, my mother had to borrow money from other people so that I could go to the city and start my first couple days at the university. I wondered whether I could finish 4 years at this school.

However, I was lucky and happy when I was chosen for the AMA scholarship. The amount of 600 USD per year helps me a lot in my studying and my personal life. I used a small part of it to get the job as tutor for an 11th grader. I have learned a lot by teaching him. I learned how to care for other people, how to teach, and what to teach. From that, I now understand the nature of being a teacher and I love doing it even more. Also, AMA has given the great motivation to push myself further. My GPA in the first semester was Average, but I tried hard and I got Distinction for the second semester. That required a lot of effort and determination. Without AMA’s help and care, I could have not achieved all of those results. I am getting closer to my dream, and that is to become a teacher who can help our students.

I believe that all the scholars here today have been working and studying hard to be deserving of our family expectation and of what AMA has given us. And I would like to express my most sincere gratefulness to the school and AMA. I wish all of you happiness and success.”

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