



# FONDATION YANN VERDINA POUR LES ENFANTS DEFAVORISES

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Dear friends,

We haven't given you any news of the Yann Verdina trust recently, but we have been very active in setting up various projects in the memory of Yann. We would also like to take this opportunity of saying how touched we both were by your generosity last September. It was a wonderful day, tinged by some sadness of course, but we felt very encouraged to continue our action and very grateful to you all, with a special thankyou to Patrick and Debbie and all their organiser friends for making it all possible. We have been helped by regular donations but also spontaneous actions, such as that undertaken by the children in Yann's class, who wrote a book in his memory and sold copies of it to raise funds.

### **Some news of our family :**

Our two other children, Bastian and Melody are well. They often speak of Yann and he is a very present part of our daily lives. A year after Yann's death, we were also delighted to learn of the arrival in our family of Jasmine, a four-month old little girl we have adopted from Vietnam. We all went to fetch her at Christmas and she is a ray of sunshine. We had spoken about this adoption with Yann before he left us and he encouraged us to go ahead with it. He knew that it could never replace him, just as Melody had never replaced Tanya, our daughter who died of cot death five years ago. But he knew that this little person who would blossom in our family would help us to continue the path that is now ours.

### **The Trust's activities**

We choose the projects we undertake with the following criteria in mind:

- They must be in aid of children, whether children with serious health problems, family difficulties or disfavoured in any way.
- For foreign projects, as we cannot carry them out personally, we rely on local personnel that we know personally, and grant aid after a visit to the country.
- Every penny goes to the children - all administrative costs (secretariat, expenses etc), are borne by ourselves.
- The project must bear Yann's name in some form.

### **The projects carried out in 1996**

#### *Centre for street children in Tarma Pasco, Peru*

This project took some time to start, mainly because the parish in Peru who represent us locally, changed their objectives. We are now paying for the premises, salaries of 4 members of staff for the centre, the schooling and general equipment for over 40 street children, who can now hope for a better future than was open to them before.

#### *Support of three centres for street children in Saigon, Vietnam*

During Jasmine's adoption procedure, we met some wonderful people who are doing amazing work in the field, and especially with the children. This is the case of Father John Houlmann, a Swiss Catholic priest, who after having worked in the Vietnamese refugee camps in Thailand, now works incessantly to help this courageous people who for the most part live in incredible poverty. We now sponsor his three centres for street children. We visited one of the centres on December 24th and the children put on a little show for us and gave us a great meal. Bastian said it was one of the best Christmas eves he had had.

#### *The Thu Duc orphanage in Vietnam*

During his first trip to Saigon, Robert also met Sister Mary-Peter and Sister Hai. They have dedicated their lives to children and give a lot of affection to the babies and children in their orphanage. Three of the young boys were there because their father had died and their mother could no longer feed them. We gave the sisters a sum of money to buy the mother a plot of land and a small house so that she could take her children back with her. The house bears the name of Yann. If you can believe it, this cost the sum of £1000 ! We have promised the sisters further help within our means.

#### *Education for Development, Sebastian Barmaz*

Also in Saigon, we met this young Swiss man, who together with a small team of volunteers, teaches children English and other subjects in the street. They thus try also to place them in a centre so that they have a better chance of earning a decent living. They have little financial backing, so we have been helping this project, which we feel is very worth while.

#### *Actions in Switzerland*

We were donated a sum of money with the obligation to use for projects in Geneva. We thus undertook the following:

- We wished to do something for the cancer ward where Yann was looked after and where we saw so many children suffering. On their request, we thus bought the ward a laptop computer for the children who are bedridden.
- We also bought a Supernintendo game with lots of cassettes. The days pass slowly in hospital for the children, as we know only too well. To have some form of distraction also helps to forget one's fears and pain.
- Financial support for several disfavoured families, through the charity Caritas, who present us cases on a regular basis. We simply ask them to inform the families the origin and goals of the Yann Verdina Trust.

#### **Projects in 1997**

Apart from the continuation of the above-mentioned projects, we have undertaken a major project in Vietnam, with the collaboration of Father John and the University of Agriculture of Saison. In Vietnam there are over 50 different ethnic minorities, who are amongst the poorest inhabitants in the country. Father John has already built four villages for these communities - houses, wells, schools, crops, cattle, all with private international funds. He gets some help from the government and Unicef, mainly for the land and the teachers. Last autumn, we discussed the possibility of building a fifth village, which would bear the name of Yann.

When we saw how generous you had all been, we talked with Patrick about using the golf day funds for this village project - the whole project will cost about \$ 30'000 - and it meant we were already able to finance close on \$20'000 of it. In December, we visited one of the four villages already established and were very impressed by the work and also how happy the villagers were. For the children (over 200 in the village we visited), they at long last had access to a decent education as well as regular meals.

We have pleasure in saying that thanks to you all, the project has now started. It will take about a year to complete and we hope to go to Vietnam at the end of the year to see it all and inaugurate the village.

The smiles of all these children and the donations and words of encouragement are a considerable source of energy to us and show the marvellous heritage Yann left us all. We hope to see you all again soon. Until then, we send you all our best wishes.

Lynn and Robert Verdina-Henchoz