



March 2021 Newsletter

Today, March 26, marks a virtual day of action to [#StopAsianHate](#). To learn more about the rise in anti-Asian hate incidents and download a toolkit with action items, we encourage you to visit the [National Council of Asian Pacific Americans' Day of Action](#).

We are outraged and deeply saddened by the rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans across the US, including the mass shootings in Atlanta that took the lives of eight people, six of whom were Asian American women. There can be no doubt that members of Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities—particularly elders, women, and the working class—are being targeted and harassed.

PeaceTrees Vietnam grieves for those affected by these recent acts of violence and stands in solidarity with AAPI communities against all forms of racism, violence, and xenophobia. We must all educate ourselves, take action, and show up for our AAPI friends and family. [Lean more here.](#)

PeaceTrees Teams Respond to Report of 500 lb. Aircraft Bomb

On March 24th, one of PeaceTrees' newly operational Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams in Quang Binh Province responded to a report of a 500 lb. aircraft bomb found in a dried-up water channel by a local resident. Within one hour of receiving the call, the PeaceTrees team had safely moved and disposed of the bomb at an appropriate demolition site. Incidents like this one remind us of the importance of this expansion of our work and continued efforts in Quang Binh!



PeaceTrees EOD team in Quang Binh safely lifting the 500lb. aircraft bomb out of the dried-up water channel- March 24, 2021



A pair of PeaceTrees EOD team members measuring the large aircraft bomb before lifting it out of the ground- March 24, 2021

Kindergarten Updates:

Ooc Kindergarten Construction

The Ooc Kindergarten has hit an exciting milestone in its construction, the school building is now 50% complete! Construction is projected to finish by the end of April, and PeaceTrees is excited to welcome the 29 school age children of the Ooc Village to school later this spring. We are grateful for the support this project received!



The Ooc Kindergarten Construction site in Quang Binh Province- March 2020



The roof of the Ooc Kindergarten under construction- March 2020

A Xing 2/Jesse Griego Kindergarten Rebuild

In our November newsletter, we shared that the A Xing 2 Kindergarten, named after Jesse Griego, needed to be completely rebuilt after the horrific October flooding in central Vietnam. We are excited to share that the funding for this rebuild is complete! This amazing effort was led by the school's original sponsor and dear PeaceTrees friend, **Jim Lewis**, who reflects on what this journey has meant to him:

*"Receiving the news about the destructive typhoon that destroyed Jesse's kindergarten was heartbreaking. For 12 years it stood and helped provide education and opportunity to the children of A Xing Village. Jesse would have loved knowing that he had helped the children...which he may know. **Once the shock wore off it was obvious to all, the school had to be rebuilt.** So we made a plan, which matured into exceeding our fundraising goals! Next is a groundbreaking, rebuilding the school and then a dedication. I detect a smile from Jesse, as he was often prone to do."*



A pair of students enjoying the first day of school at the A Xing 2/Jesse Griego Kindergarten- September 2020



Students in front of the A Xing 2/Jesse Griego Kindergarten wearing their face masks delivered by PeaceTrees- 2020

Samuel Spinuzzi, a supporter of the rebuild, wrote a poem to celebrate the recent achievement:

*A mighty storm passed through one day and
destroyed Jesses school as it went on its way!*

*But Peace Trees with her friends had a different plan.
They decided, like Viet Nam, to make a stand,
we will rebuild the school in this beautiful land!*

*Long ago, from twelve thousand miles away, Jesse had
come as a Marine one day.*

*He gave his life, but his memory will stay, his best friend with Peace Trees led the
way. They built this school to bring peace to this land.*

For the children's sake, this school still stands!

Combining Jim's tireless fundraising efforts and generous support from the local government in Quang Tri Province, the new A Xing 2/Jesse Griego Kindergarten will also be able to supply healthy meals to its students for the next five years. We are grateful for the leadership from Jim Lewis, and for the outpouring of support for this project!



Jim Lewis in front of the A Xing 2/Jesse Griego Kindergarten at the original dedication ceremony in A Xing Village- March 2009

PeaceTrees Vietnam Travel Stories

Until we resume our citizen diplomacy trips in 2022, we are excited to bring you a series of stories about traveling with PeaceTrees! This month we hear from Lynda Martin, a friend of PeaceTrees and frequent Citizen Diplomat.

Lynda Martin's Story:

Vietnam has been in my mind since I was a teenager protesting the war, then watching my brother go off to fight in that war as an army infantryman. After meeting a couple of board members of PeaceTrees several years ago, I became interested again upon hearing of their experiences traveling there in support of Peace Trees. It sounded like a fascinating place. My husband Harris and I had recently spent time in Thailand and Cambodia and we were interested in exploring another Southeast Asian country. And it was hard to pass up an opportunity to travel with our friends.

But, lurking in the back of my mind were thoughts of my brother. Scott had returned from his tour of duty somewhat broken - he suffered from paranoia, anxiety, and alcoholism, what we now call PTSD. Twenty or so years ago he suffered a catastrophic aortic aneurism, a condition the US government now recognizes as a potential result of exposure to Agent Orange. After several months in hospital he returned home as a semi-invalid. He always refused to discuss his combat experience and we, as a family, respected his wishes. But once I knew I was going to Vietnam I hoped I could find an appropriate opportunity (and the courage) to tell him about my upcoming trip. I thought he might be willing to tell me where in the country he had been. Sadly, before I could make that happen... he died of a second aneurism not long before we set out for our first trip to Vietnam in January 2015.

My impressions of the building? Amazing! The history! The jam-packed cities! The green countryside! The markets! The temples! The traffic! I am a bit of a textiles geek, so I thoroughly enjoyed visiting the Ethnology Museum in Hanoi and patronizing the shops that sell antique fabric and garments. Traveling as a citizen diplomat is such a privilege. I felt honored to be invited into the homes and villages of some of the people who have been impacted by the war. It was a joy to spend time in the kindergartens PeaceTrees has built, meeting the children who seem to be thriving. Getting to know the staff in Dong Ha City has been a heartwarming experience and after three trips I feel like we are truly friends.

Another aspect of the trip which I didn't expect was the camaraderie of the groups I have traveled with. It's been a pleasure to meet such interesting and informed people. Listening to the Vets tell their stories has been priceless, as is witnessing the overwhelming impact of their returning after so many years. Our groups had hilarious meals together, fun on the buses, bonding again and again throughout the trips.

Over the course of three trips it's been interesting to witness the growth and progress throughout the country in terms of new building infrastructure. I have appreciated the many opportunities to learn about Vietnam's history, ancient and current. As I have traveled the country from north to south, I've revisited favorite places and been introduced to new experiences. Vietnam is in my blood and I know that I'll be taking another trip one of these days.

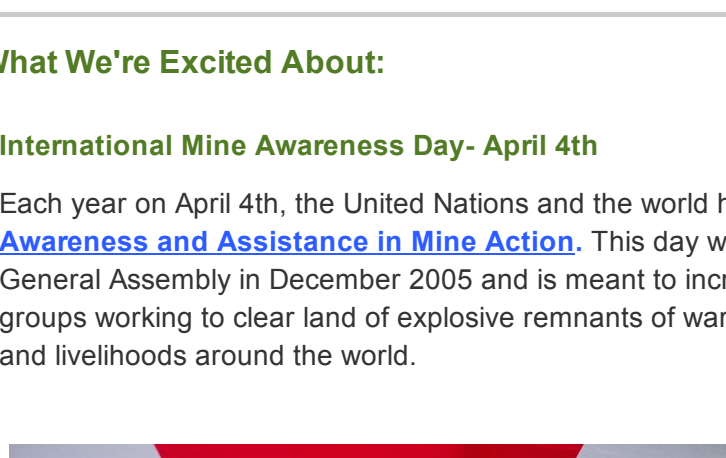
And, as I travel there, I will continue to hold my brother in my heart saying, "Were you there? Were you here?"

Do you have a story about traveling to Vietnam that you would like to share? Please contact Natalie at natalie@peacetreesvietnam.org to be featured in a future newsletter and on our website.

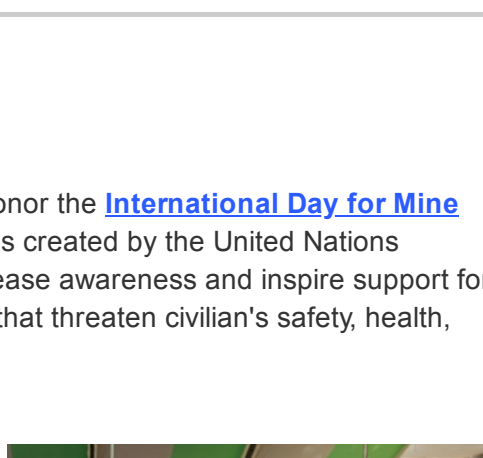
What We're Excited About:

International Mine Awareness Day- April 4th

Each year on April 4th, the United Nations and the world honor the [International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action](#). This day was created by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2005 and is meant to increase awareness and inspire support for groups working to clear land of explosive remnants of war that threaten civilian's safety, health, and livelihoods around the world.



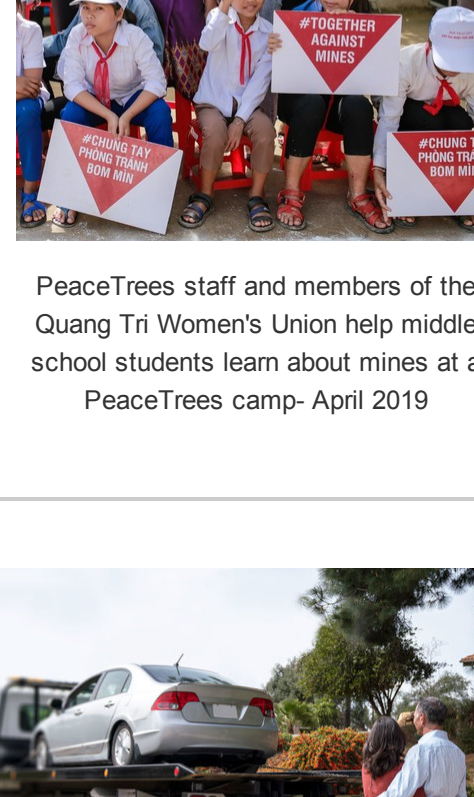
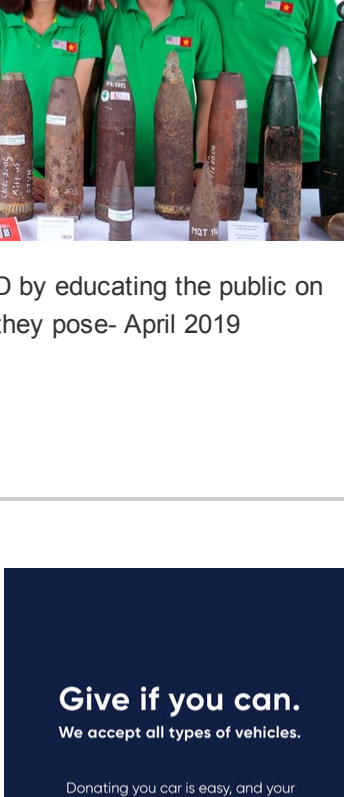
PeaceTrees staff honor IMAD by educating the public on mines and the threat they pose- April 2019



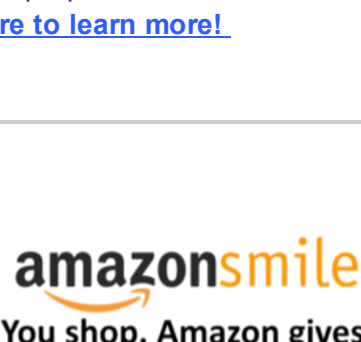
PeaceTrees staff and members of the Quang Tri Women's Union help middle school students learn about mines at a PeaceTrees camp- April 2019

Vehicle Donations

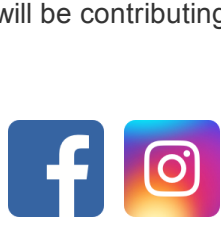
PeaceTrees is now accepting vehicle donations! We have partnered with non-profit organization CARS to facilitate a vehicle donation program. All vehicles are eligible for donation – even if they are not running. This includes cars, trucks, SUV's, motorcycles, boats, farm equipment, and even airplanes. CARS has extensive experience with all steps of the vehicle donation process from pick-up to sale. This is both a wonderful way to donate and give new purpose to a vehicle that might be collecting dust. Call **855-500-7433** to get started or [click here to learn more!](#)



Looking for a creative way to support PeaceTrees Vietnam from home?

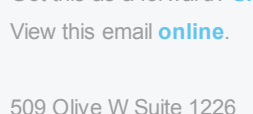


When you are online shopping, consider Amazon Smile and set PeaceTrees as your beneficiary! AmazonSmile is a program that donates 0.5% of your eligible purchases on Amazon to a charity of your choice. All you need to do is start your shopping at smile.amazon.com. The donation will be made at no extra cost to you and you will be contributing to PeaceTrees Vietnam's lifesaving work while you shop!



For more information contact us at 206-441-6136 or info@peacetreesvietnam.org

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