

# LO-ANH projects help needy kids

Luong Thu Hương

The LO-ANH Foundation has offered help to nearly 300 children of Xin Cái Secondary School, located in one of the most remote districts in the northern province of Hà Giang.

The foundation has provided the school children with new shoes, clothes, blankets, mattresses and mats to keep them warm in the freezing cold that has engulfed the province since early this year.

Established in May 2016, LO-ANH Foundation has undertaken 12 educational projects to date, including the construction and extension of many kindergartens, schools and boarding houses as well as providing financial care to poor ethnic children in the remotest areas in Hà Giang and Cao Bằng provinces.

The foundation was founded by Isabelle Muller, a German woman with Vietnamese roots.

"LO-ANH Foundation (Loan Stiftung) is the brainchild of two very different life experiences: my own and my mother's," Muller says.

"In the 1930s, my mother Loan (Lo-Anh) was not allowed to attend school because she was a girl. Inquisitive and determined, and in search of freedom and happiness, she risked her life for an education.

In 1955, she left her war-torn country (Việt Nam). But even in France, her new home, she was subject to discrimination and hostility because of the colour of her skin. Despite living in abject poverty, she raised her five children, always emphasising education was a great privilege."

As Loan's youngest child, Muller had strong memories of those tough times when they had no beds and were treated cold-heartedly by other people because they were poor. She remembered it being difficult for them to maintain what little dignity they had left and battle the loneliness that had settled in their hearts.

"Yet, we came across strangers who changed us forever with their willingness to help. Their warmth gave us strength and nourished our hope that one day we would be in a position to give back the kindness we had been shown and to help others in need," says Muller.

In the 1990s, Muller travelled a lot with her mother back to Việt Nam,



**Youth:** Isabelle Muller poses with children in Hà Giang Province who have benefited from the LO-ANH Foundation.



**In the books:** Isabelle Muller presents Trương Mỹ Hoa, former vice president of Việt Nam and president of the Vũ A Dinh Foundation with her mother's biography, *Lo-Anh - From the Life of a Phoenix*. — Photos courtesy of LO-ANH Foundation

a mysterious country that her mother used to tell her about as a child, to help her learn more about her roots. It was then that Muller came face to face with the poverty of the northern areas.

"My mother came from northern Việt Nam, which is why I wanted to focus the charity work in this area. Our ancestors belonged to ethnic minorities. Some 90 per cent of all Vietnamese minorities live in north Việt Nam. I see it as a duty of all of us to keep the cultures of the minorities in the world alive, so that their knowledge and identity do not get lost," Muller says.

"Infrastructure here is almost nil, and the network of roads is underdeveloped," she adds. "I want to start charity projects where no one wants to go. I think accepting this challenge was a part of my Vietnamese character."

According to Muller, getting donations is hard work.

"First, you have to believe in what you do and in the cause you defend.

Then you have to convince others through authenticity to come along with you for the same goal," she says.

The first big donation came from Muller's husband. Other donations are raised from events that she organises, such as lectures of her new books or presentations of the foundation. She achieves this through networking and with the help of the press.

"I must emphasise that each donation to LO-ANH Foundation is 100 per cent used for project realisation. I finance all separate fees, including travel expenses or telephone bills, personally so that the donation money only goes to the poorest of children," says Muller.

Before accepting any project, Muller and other volunteers at the foundation have to gain an accurate picture of the current situation on-site to help them make well-founded, independent decisions. They also aim for a constructive collaboration of all parties involved and demand a transparent cost calculation.

## The LO-ANH Foundation was founded by Isabelle Muller, a German woman with Vietnamese roots.

"The gratitude in the eyes of the children and their families upon the completion of a project to better their lives is a great motivation for me," Mullersays.

The final donation comes from the royalties she gets from the sales of her mother's biography, *Lo-Anh - From the Life of a Phoenix* which has just been released in German.

In the book, Muller tells the story of how her mother found freedom for herself. A determined and rebellious girl from Việt Nam, Lo-Anh escaped an arranged marriage at just 12 to set out on a long and often dangerous odyssey through Việt Nam, France and Algeria to make a life for herself.

Muller says the Vietnamese version of the book will be published by Trẻ (Youth) Publishing House and presented at a press conference in HCM City in March, while its English version is finished and is waiting for a suitable publisher.

"As the founder of LO-ANH Foundation, I would like to consciously help shape our world and contribute my strengths where they are needed.

"I help children in need so that one day they might have the opportunity to take their lives into their own hands. I work for the disadvantaged children of today who are perhaps the founders of tomorrow. This fills me with immense joy," Muller says. — VNS

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### HÀ NỘI

#### A night of jazz and blues at Cool Cats Club

From its roots in the traditional music of West Africa, to the golden era of the electric Chicago sound and beyond, blues has been a fixture of the world's music scene for more than a century. Come to enjoy a night filled with those beautiful tunes at Cool Cats Jazz Club – JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi on Saturday.

The Cool Cats Club's art director, Joshua Lebotsky – a talented Canadian composer, producer and multi-instrumentalist who has performed at numerous international music and jazz festivals – and the band will play the best of blues during the night.

The night will last from 7pm until midnight. JW Marriott Hotel Hanoi is at 8 Đỗ Đức Dục Road, Mỹ Trì, South Từ Liêm District.

#### FVH to screen 'Lost and Found'

The Friends of Vietnam Heritage will host a film night on January 25, presenting the movie *Cửa Rời* (Lost and Found) by director Vương Đức.

The film is one of the few features exploring the topic of the aspirations and hopes of youth in the early days of Việt Nam's development.

Released in 2002, the story centres on a mathematics teacher – a kind and helpful man whose naivete causes him many troubles in life. With humour and bitterness, the film raises big questions about the role and behaviour of intellectuals in society.

The movie won the Silver Kite Award given by the Việt Nam Cinematography Association in 2002.

The screening on January 25 will take place at the Việt Nam Feature Films Studio (VFS), 4 Thụy Khuê Street, Tây Hồ District, from 7.30-9pm. The movie will be presented in Vietnamese with English subtitle.

Donation: VND150,000. Limit: 50 people. Register by emailing to [filmteam.fvh@gmail.com](mailto:filmteam.fvh@gmail.com).

#### Exhibition on famous children's book

An exhibition honouring the most well-known Vietnamese children's book *Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký* (Adventures of a Cricket) by late writer Tô Hoài (1920-2014) will open to the public from Saturday evening.

Tô Hoài, winner of the Hồ Chí Minh Prize for Literature in 1996, wrote the first version of *Đế Mèn Phiêu Lưu Ký* in 1941 when he was 18. One year later, it was released after the author created more fictional characters.

The 195-page children's book is about the adventures of a cricket that leaves his nest to travel and discover the world. He learns new things and experiences with the help of many insects and animals.

The book has been translated into 37 languages, including English, French, Thai and Russian.

After the launch on Saturday, the exhibition will open from Tuesday through Sunday, from 10am-8pm, until March 25. The VCCA is at Level B1, Block R3, Vincom Megamall Royal City, 72 Nguyễn Trãi Road, Thanh Xuân District.

### HCM CITY

#### Saigon Outcast to hold Tết market

The Outcast Tết Market will be held at Saigon Outcast on January 27-28. The market will offer a wide range of art works, accessories, clothes, flowers, plants and ornaments. Homemade food, snacks and healthy products will be included.

The World Outcast has been borrowed from the name of a well known bar.

The market will feature craft workshops and activities for families and live entertainment performances.

The venue is at 188/1 Nguyễn Văn Hưởng Street in District 2. Entrance fee is VND20,000.

#### Chicago DJ comes to Lighthouse

Chicago-based techno DJ Karsten Sollors will perform at The Lighthouse on January 27.

Sollors has released several singles and extended plays (EP), and performed at several festivals in North America. The show will feature resident DJs B.A.X and 1DAN.

The event begins at 9pm at 104 Nam Kỳ Khởi Nghĩa Street in District 1. Entrance is free before 10pm and VND100,000 after 10pm.

#### RMIT hosts Australia Day

The Australian Consulate General in HCM City will host its annual Australia Day community event on January 28 at the RMIT Saigon South Campus in District 7.

The event will include popular Australian sports and games, such as Zorb-ball soccer, rugby, a bouncy castle, face painting for adults and kids, and musical performances by students from the Australian International School, International School HCM City and RMIT.

Local leading restaurants and Australian chefs will serve classic Aussie dishes for visitors

The event will run from 1pm-6pm at 702 Nguyễn Văn Linh Street in District 7.

Tickets, costing VND250,000 for adults and VND150,000 for children under 12, can be purchased at Caravelle Saigon Hotel in District 1, Mekong Merchant in District 2, and Meatworks Butchery in District 7. — VNS

*Expats Corner is a space where expats can share their experiences of Việt Nam or events for the calendar and reach out to one another in the thriving expat community, so please email your stories or listings to [life@vnsmail.com](mailto:life@vnsmail.com) by Wednesday. The stories will run every Thursday.*