

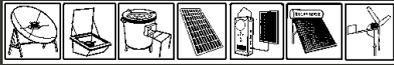
Solar Serve News



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Charity
Social Enterprise
Training



Dear friends,

As you can see our name has not been changed. The new name is officially approved but we are still waiting for the papers. It should be better to share our new name in our next letter. Please know that it will not change any transactions. The new name will be more relevant to what we are doing today. Because of our name, even students from the USA were confused in thinking that our clean cookers were empowered by solar energy. Therefore our new name will cover the variety of all our green products!



Fast growing



We are still excited about cooking with the sun. The box cookers were a great tool to get us started. But after more than 20 years this kind of cooker is not so popular anymore in Vietnam. Our country is growing fast and there is not so much time for slow cooking. The parabolic cooker is still a great option. Every day we are using a big one in front of our center and it is still working well after five years. It's a new design with the shape of a satellite dish antenna. It would be so nice if we could have a pressure machine to shape the parts into the model we are using now.



Last container

During the end of July we filled our last container and one small truck with the last cooking stoves. Finally we finished our project in helping the poor in the north. In 9 months we were able to make 30,000 ovens. We worked 6 days a week and about 140 cooking ovens were made every day. So there was a lot of hard work accomplished by the 11 mountain workers and 3 Vietnamese. After that we had a time of thanksgiving and a wonderful barbeque on our roof. Everyone enjoyed it and the next days we all took off for more than 10 days. Our workers returned to the mountains or to their homes with lots of stories to tell.





Repairing and cleaning

After a short holiday our workers returned. Not all of them came back but that was not necessary. First of all we needed some skilled workers to replace the sliding door of our warehouse, which is about a 5-minute walk from our center. This place had also been used in the past to accommodate the minority workers. The sliding door was old and not working well anymore. So our workers designed their own new door and finally fixed it in the front wall. It was a good start to fix broken things there and also in our center in order to focus on a new project.

New project

For several years people in Holland have been organizing several events in order to support our work. They are all volunteers and they love to do this. They organized jumble sales, walk and run events, picking pears (photo), selling syrup waffles, cards and mobile toys and for the kids there was always something to grab in a bag. Although the profits were sometimes small, but adding it up there was enough money for making 2500 new clean cooking stoves for minorities in the mountains. This is our new task for the coming months. Although we have fewer workers, we can spread it over a reasonable time without any pressure.



Giving advice

In the past we had investors and organizations contacting us to ask for help in starting a business or project. We told them that we had our limitations and they had to carry it through. We were able to advise them but that was all. We do not want to be involved in all kinds of official procedures and paperwork. That will take away our own purpose. Lately we were asked to help a Korean investor to install solar panels for a water pump at a preschool in the north; a great idea and we fully supported it. We were able to introduce the investor to officials and the local preschool. That was great and now it's up to him to work it out.

A dream came true

Mr. Thanh was a very good electromechanical engineer, but in a weak moment he fell for drugs. His life changed due to this addiction and illnesses. The impossible became reality after he attended a rehabilitation center and was completely set free from his addiction. He wanted to return to his family to start a business in building roofs. He didn't know how to start, but heard about our FBT course and enrolled in it. He was a very serious student. The training helped him so much. He opened a family business with ... (next story).



First FBT wedding

Binh was raised by her sister in a poor family. She was trained to do wedding makeup and became skillful. She worked very hard but she was underpaid. When she attended a FBT seminar at a rehabilitation center, she met Thanh (story above). He was already completely healed and became an excellent staff member. He attended the same FBT seminar as Binh. He fell in love with Binh and married her. They decided, as our first FBT married couple, to start their own business in wedding make-up and photography. In the first month there was an encouraging sign of customer interest!

Official program

Phuong (photo) has been addicted for 15 years. He only weighed 45 kilos and also suffered from HIV. His healing came after joining one of the rehabilitation centers. He is now very successful in helping others to be free from drugs. He realized that most people were worried about their future. Last year he heard about the FBT course and asked us to train his people. Phuong now wants everyone to take this course before they leave a rehabilitation center. He felt that the course should become an official program in the whole country.



Visitors from America

Around 25 American students from different universities came to visit us. They were all studying environmental subjects and wanted to know what we were doing. It was a nice group of young people. We showed them our parabolic cooker on arrival. It was already late in the afternoon but there was still enough sun to boil water. After showing a short video, we answered several questions and told them that protecting the environment was not just the responsibility of the government, but it must work through all spheres of social life. Later they visited our factory and were very interested in what we did. Although it was sometimes very simple, it turned out to be something very new for the students.



Finally

In our charity, social enterprise and training we often have to evaluate our motives. We want to finish this letter with a thought of our FBT staff. They have been thinking of holding FBT seminars for people in the city. The participants could pay a higher training fee and the training could be held in a nicer atmosphere. But immediately they recognized that they were called to provide useful seminars to those in rural areas so they could fight poverty through their own business. Great thinking and it helped them to be more motivated in their training and it helped us to stay focused! Therefore we are so thankful for all the years that you have been standing with us and keeping us excited about what we are doing. Again a great thank you!



Greetings,
Solar Serve team

Called to Serve

For more information write to: solarserve@yahoo.com

