

KARDINIA INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE SCHOOL TRIPS by Jonathan Chapman

After 4 years of global disruption we finally managed to have not one, but two student trips to Viqueque in Timor-Leste. I learnt that the Viqueque community values our friendship and our connection more than ever. It is demonstrated in many ways, whether through the daily greetings, the fist bumps and high fives or through the expression of appreciation from educators at all levels. We all have a shared value in education and so it was a delight to see our students and the Viqueque students teaching and interacting with each other.

Connections were spontaneous and many, both formal and informal. On both trips we were treated as guests of honour in specifically designated school assemblies at VQQ1 school and Cabira Oan School – with a flag raising ceremony, national anthem and presentation of Tais Scarves by school staff to all KIC staff and students. The first group was also honoured with a second ceremony at 4 September school, which is being developed as a Science and Technology hub. Students at 4 September school demonstrated numerous Science projects with equipment donated the previous year by GVFS. Students at Cabira and VQQ1 greeted our students with enthusiasm and happiness.

Our itinerary was full and we were pleased to re-establish the community connection, strengthen the friendship between the Geelong and Viqueque communities and support education in Viqueque while providing an opportunity for the students to develop an appreciation of global issues through personal connection.

CHRISTIAN COLLEGE TRIVIA NIGHT - a huge success by Graham Barton

A packed room, keen competition, fun, laughter, silent and not so silent - auctions and \$10,000 raised for a great cause in support of Christian College Geelong's (CCG) work in East Timor! A special shout out to CCG prefects for their great effort before, and on the night; to comperes Ethan and Mia; and to the table of excited Bellarine staff who took the trivia honours on the night. The funds will be used for maintenance at Uma Maun Alin (Friendship House) in Viqueque to repair roof leaks and create ventilation in one of the rooms. This vital community facility hosts four kindergarten classes, Basic and Level 1 English classes, computer, dancing, music and sewing classes. Anyone interested in supporting CCG's long standing friendship with the Viqueque community and our work there can contact the Middle School - Highton campus on 52411899.



THANKS FOR Tri-UMPH T-SHIRTS FROM HOME WEAVERS

Carmel Brown, Clonard College teacher, has been contacted by Inge Ruth Lempp, Head of Misereor Dialogue and Partnership Services (DPS) Timor Leste, who was delighted to receive and distribute Geelong Tri-UMPH t-shirts to weavers in Baucau.

The Tri-UMPH Festival is a concert of 8,000 students run in Geelong every 3 years for students, by students, and raises funds of over \$60,000 for scholarships in Timor. The Timorese people create the Tais for entry tickets each year. The T-shirts were designed by Clonard students to sell as merchandise on the day of the event. Despite Covid, the concert still went ahead in a modified form.

Ruth wrote

Greetings from Baucau, Timor-Leste! I hope this letter finds you well.

I just want to share with you, that I was visiting Home village last Friday and was able to give the weavers the Triumph T-Shirts you shared with us for them during your visit in April. The joy was great!!! They loved receiving the T-Shirts and feeling connected to you and the schools in Geelong...knowing the friendship bands they had woven were for the event on the T-Shirts.

I love it when the circle comes round like that! This is really wonderful. Thank you again. See attached photos of some of the weavers wearing the T-Shirts they had just received (front and back) and holding up a friendship band that reads "TRIUMPH".



SCHOOL GARDEN UPDATE by Patrice Hall

In June 2023 a pilot project for a school garden was initiated at Uamori school in Viqueque led by Jaime de Jesus. On Friday August 11 I met Jaime in Dili and we went to the Permatil office in Dili intending to buy the latest Permatil handbooks which have just been released in Tetum. On entering the office we waited briefly and were shown into a room where to our surprise we met Ego Lemos, founding Director of Permatil and famous musician/composer, and James Palmer from Geelong who is doing a 2 year Australian Volunteers International placement with Permatil.

After the initial excitement of seeing familiar faces we settled down to a very positive meeting. Ego stressed how many school gardens have failed and how important training is to maintain sustainability as well as support from the school and a coordinator/supervisor and access to a water supply.

The result of the meeting was that Jaime and five volunteers from Viqueque who have been involved with the Uamori school garden project have headed off to Oecusse to attend a week of training at a Permatil Youth camp.

The garden is growing so well. There is a small seed raising bed and the plants seem to be growing while you watch! A rock painting session was held and the Uamori students are involved with regular watering and weeding the beds. Harvesting of the first crop is not far away and will be used in the school lunches. We are hoping that the success of this garden can be replicated at other schools in Viqueque.



PERMATIL YOUTH CAMP IN OECUSSE by Patrice Hall

Jaime and five other volunteers from Viqueque who have been working with the Uamori school garden project have just returned from the Permatil Youth Camp in Oecusse. It was attended by over 400 from all parts of Timor-Leste. As well as learning about the principles of permaculture involving water conservation, composting etc there was networking as well as music and dancing. They are returning to Viqueque with enthusiasm to continue the work of developing school gardens in the village which will benefit the school children by providing education about permaculture principles as well as good nutrition.



DAYS FOR GIRLS (DFG) UPDATE by Patrice Hall

In the second week of August I collected 150 DFG kits from Dili to be distributed among the female students at schools in Viqueque. Also available was the DFG flipchart in Tetum which made the presentations so much easier with the visual material. I also had the DFG flyers in Tetum which went into each kit. Three sessions were conducted, the first to a small group of 10 students while the second session involved 92 students from St Estavao and Cabira Oan. The education was given in Tetum with the kits handed out and a demonstration of their use. The three teachers attending were all very positive about the education and the kits. "Diak loos!" More teachers kept arriving and the students were all very interested!

The third session was held at Calixa school on Friday morning with 47 students as that was all the kits we had left! Once again, all very positive with kits distributed and a request for 500 more! From little things big things grow. The teachers all received kits as well.

Chris Hansen used his links with three amazing teachers, Melli, Marina and Natalina who were all involved in the presentations. Lots of photos were taken by students and staff and I hope that this will be an ongoing project between Geelong and Viqueque.

Thanks to Janet Taylor and Soroptomists for initiating this project and to Deb Thompson and her Waurm Ponds DFG team for their support. The DFG kits had been made in Australia with Iluka and Boonah labels on the boxes! Comments included, 'how lucky are we to have something so special' and 'thank you so much for this gift'.

Following the education and distribution of the kits we realised the lack of good sanitation facilities at many of the schools, another reason why girls may not go to school when they have their periods. Calixa have recently renovated their toilet block which means that the girls do have a clean facility (see before and after photos). We can only hope that other schools will follow and we may be able to provide some support for better facilities. Lack of access to water seems to play a huge part.





THE TWINNING CUP

The Twinning Cup was initially a small football (soccer) competition for under 20's from schools, church and other groups in the Viqueque town. It was initiated by Mary Immaculate Parish in Viqueque and sponsored by St Mary's Parish in Geelong. Over the years it has increased in size and now includes hundreds in teams from all over the Viqueque district including Uatalari, Luca, Uamori and others. The GVFS has contributed to the sponsorship over the years which provides money for footballs, uniforms, trophies, t-shirts, umpires and water. The first post COVID competition is planned for December 2023/January 2024.

VIQUEQUE COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Chris Hansen, GVFS committee member, was recently appointed to the Board of Viqueque Community Empowerment. Membership is for 5 years.

The Board's Mission is the protection of women and children from domestic violence, building the capacity of young people for the future, developing strategies for disaster risk reduction and promoting and modelling sustainable agriculture.

Members of the Board are required to consult and network widely on all topics and participate in the development of policies, guidelines and programs.



ST MARY'S REPORT by Chris Hansen

St Mary of the Angels Parish Geelong in partnership with Mary Immaculate Parish Viqueque

Our parish partnership is now in its 14th year. Fr Divo Sarmento and Fr Kevin Dillon signed the original MOU in Geelong in December 2009.

It has been my privilege to visit East Timor and regularly participate in the life of the Viqueque parish. The partnership is built on shared faith, friendship, love and respect.

There have been many times over the years when the parish partnership between Geelong and Viqueque has overlapped with my work as a member of the GVFS committee. Examples of this have been presenting students with GVFS scholarships for secondary and tertiary education and supporting the Viqueque parish schools who have partner schools in Geelong. Recently, I was able to work with Patrice Hall and a team of local teachers to deliver the Days for Girls kits to 150 girls in Viqueque schools. Regular attendance at school is a crucial ingredient for successful learning and an important part of the rationale behind Days for Girls.

Two young Viqueque men will be ordained priests in the Viqueque church later this year. Both men received ongoing financial support from Geelong to achieve their dreams. The Wetali chapel will be officially opened in December. St Mary's Geelong provided the money to build this chapel and, as an expression of gratitude from the local village, the Wetali chapel will be called St Mary of the Angels after our own Geelong Basilica.



OCTAVIANO UPDATE by Chris Hansen

Octaviano, a Civil Engineer graduate from Viqueque and supported by Geelong, is now in the fifth month of his contract with Greenview Farm in the Northern Territory where he has been picking watermelons. Although the work is very challenging, he loves Australia and is determined to see out his contract.

I recently called in to visit Octaviano's parents in Beloi. He had sent me some of his hard-earned money to pass on to them, and to say they were proud of him is the understatement of the century! Octaviano is the first of their eight children to work overseas. They see it as an opportunity for him to build a better future for himself and his siblings.

There are currently 6,000 East Timorese working in Australia and thousands more with their names on a list waiting to come. We are a Lucky Country but we must ensure all overseas seasonal workers are treated with dignity, respect and justice.

