

Greetings from FIRST YEARS!

by Kathryn Wilson, M.A., CCC-SLP, LSLC Cert. AVT (kathryn_wilson@med.unc.edu)

FIRST YEARS [Program Director](#)

As last year - year two for me - I joined several FIRST YEARS graduates and mentors, who participated in this year's teacher training program at [Thuan An Center](#) in South Vietnam. Here, we include some of our "golden memories" from this extraordinary experience.



L-R: **Ann Baumann** (class of 2007), **Becky Clem** (mentor), **Kathryn Wilson** (director), **Kim Hamren** (mentor), **Helen Zuganelis** (class of 2005).
Missing from photo: **Lillian Henderson** (mentor)

Paying it forward: FIRST YEARS in South Vietnam

"If it is true that certain events change your life, I had full expectation that training professionals in Vietnam would be one of them. I knew training in a foreign country with a different culture and language than my own would be a challenge, but I didn't know how life-giving it would be for me as a professional." (**Lillian Henderson** (mentor), email, 9/7/12)

Lillian's sentiments of her Vietnam experience as "life-giving" were echoed by all of this year's FIRST YEARS professionals participating in the summer-training programs sponsored by the [Global Foundation for Children with Hearing Loss](#). Lillian, with 5 others from FIRST YEARS, joined a [team of 18 professionals](#) in "year three" at the [Thuan An Center](#) in South Vietnam, July 9 - August 5, 2012.

The foundation's stats are impressive, as reported by the foundation's Executive Director (and founder) Paige Stringer: "Since summer 2010, we ... have trained over 190 teachers, 220 families, and 120 medical and other professionals. We have fit 246 hearing aids on young children." (from Paige's [summary of accomplishments](#)).



Paige's 4-minute [video summary](#) elaborates this year's training impact.

Needless to say, training was intense! **Becky Clem** (mentor) provided a snapshot: "Between Wednesday and Friday, there were 72 therapy sessions held by 24 teachers-in-training. Hillary and I coached 36 therapy sessions each between the hours of 8-11 a.m. Wednesday-Friday (and YES, we were tired.... a good kind of tired)." ([Becky's blog](#), 7/17/12)



And new this year, *Talk Vietnam*, a television program based in Hanoi, brought a camera crew to the school to film a day of therapy sessions, classroom activities, audiology sessions, children listening and talking. In the video below (broadcast August 3), you will see interviews with **Ann Baumann** (class of 2007), **Kim Hamren** (mentor), Kathryn and Paige, who does an excellent job of describing the listening and spoken language/LSL approach.



Paige Stringer: [Talk Vietnam](#) (45 minutes)

Below we share some faces behind the impressive stats - some "golden memories."

Lillian Henderson (mentor)

From last year's group, we learned that the Ling sounds we use in English may not be appropriate for other cultures. As **Ann Baumann** brainstormed with others in emails: "[I don't think the Ling sounds are the same](#) ... or at least, the /s/ for instance, isn't one they'd use in 'polite company' because it is the sound they make to indicate someone is going to the bathroom!" (3/25/11) The mystery of what Ling sounds to use in Vietnam - the "rose by another name" - was [ultimately resolved](#).

Lillian Henderson discovered quite a few other cultural differences. As she described "several surprises" in an email (9/7/12):

One afternoon when the afternoon storms moved in, half of the class abruptly left. I was told that it was not anything I said, but that they had to bring in their wash from the clothesline. The Vietnamese also have a love of singing. Anytime an example was given with music, the whole class joined in on singing the song entirely through. Another time, as I was teaching the importance of expectations and rules for the classroom, I was promptly educated that "Uncle Ho" (Ho Chi Minh) had already written the expectations and they were posted at every school. Needless to say, I didn't ask them to write other expectations in place of Ho Chi Minh's!

My main responsibility in Vietnam was to teach the [Auditory Learning Guide/ALG](#). I was given approximately three hours to do this with another two hours the following day to get the Vietnamese professionals to practice. Teaching a four-year listening hierarchy that usually takes three days in the States to present was a daunting task within itself. As I went over my talk with my extremely bright interpreter, I realized I had to do some adapting. First, the Vietnamese language consists of one syllable for each word, so certain goals would not even apply. Then I had to also think about the six different tones that are in the language which added time to the suprasegmental portion of speech babble. No one in the group had any background in speech pathology, so teaching speech babble as I normally teach it was not possible. Not to mention, I usually talk in metaphors and those generally do not translate well, especially if you are talking about American football! However with the help of my translator, we were able to cover the basics in the first day along with video samples from my own therapy in the States.

The next day the Vietnamese were given toys and a goal from the ALG. They were asked to practice implementing the goal with a partner and show the class. After the class, several of them asked if they could have more time practicing. I told them I could stay the following evening and we could work on the goals then. Fully anticipating only ten people to come back after a long day of training, I was surprised to see all 38 participants arrive that evening. We worked through all the goals on the Discourse Level, Sentence Level and Learning to Listen Sound objectives during that time. I have no words to explain the energy in the room that night!



Lillian presenting at the US Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City.
L-R: Maura Berndsen (from Listen and Talk), Lillian, and Paige.

Becky Clem (mentor)

In [her last blog entry](#) - "Packing up....and leaving my heart" - Becky described her final day in Vietnam as "bittersweet:"

My heart is full with love and wonder for what this program has done and continues to do in 3 short years. I've fallen in love with the people of Vietnam and the children and teachers in this program.

I'm amazed at what the parents and teachers do with so few resources. One teacher told us today that their residential school for the deaf doesn't have clean drinking water - yet this teacher doesn't gripe or complain - she is thirsty for knowledge to help her students learn to listen and talk and function in their world.

Another family shared that they want to read to their child - but they don't have any books - and cannot afford books. There isn't a library at their school for the deaf. Teachers and families draw pictures and tell stories with their own words¹ - and children are enthralled to hear them.²

In the school program, over 7 weekdays, 24 children attended 120 therapy sessions with only 2 absences. When a parent could not attend the session - an aunt, uncle, sister, or grandparent attended. If that wasn't possible, another teacher substituted as the parent. Many parents drove daily, by motorbike or rode by bus, 2 or more hours to bring their children to audiology consults and/or therapy sessions. (blog, 7/19/12)

Becky's blog is full of photos and remembrances. Her entry on how the translators and teachers interact - to accomplish so much! - is especially informative.



Beck Clem (7/21/12): [You say what I say and what did they say?](#)

Ann Baumann (class of 2007)

This summer was a packed two weeks for the Vietnamese teachers. They were learning more about language, speech and listening skill development and strategies to encourage it, assessment, data keeping, one to one intervention and more - and putting it all into practice. One of the goals for the teachers in the classrooms involved developing and implementing detailed plans that integrated all aspects of a child's development in a hands-on, language-rich environment. Using a thematic approach, one of the three classrooms developed lessons around flowers. The children learned a song about flowers and to help bring that song even more meaning, the teaching team decided to make flower crowns. But where to get a large supply of flowers?? One of the Sisters knew of the plumeria trees up the street at the cemetery. Early that morning, before school started, she confessed she harvested the flowers on the sly. The result? Beautiful children made even more beautiful and a room filled with delicious scent! Now that's something to talk about! (email, 9/16/12)



The impact of the program on the Vietnamese teachers?

Helen Zuganelis (class of 2005)

It is never a surprise I want to return to Vietnam each year to work ... Today in a teacher consult session one of the teachers thanked me for everything I taught her last year. She said that she changed so much in her teaching and now she is a better teacher! (9/19/12)

Kim Hamren, [FIRST YEARS mentor](#)

At the end of the program, Kathryn and I met separately with each team of teachers to reflect on their experiences and to guide them in planning for implementing their newly-acquired skills into their practice. These were teachers who had just completed their 3rd year of the program. One team of teachers expressed their feelings of gratitude that now they can confidently share HOPE with families who have children with hearing loss. They now feel that they can support families in developing listening and spoken language skills in their child and that their child has the potential to become a productive citizen of Vietnam. The teachers explained that having this hope is very powerful and will change the future of the children and their families. We all had tears in our eyes. (9/18/12)

Speaking of hope for the future ...

Not only will the team return to Vietnam for year four, there are plans in the works for extending the services to other countries. Check out Paige's blog for some interesting reading.



Paige Stringer. Global Foundation for Children with Hearing Loss. [Vietnam Blog](#)

If you are interested in participating in next year's project and are a trained professional in pediatric audiology, speech pathology, auditory-verbal education, and/or early intervention, email Paige Stringer, Executive Director, at paige@childrenwithhearingloss.org

Notes:

¹... in other words, they created "Language Experience Books/LEB," which we have highlighted in several *fji* editions. The first was [Spring, 2010](#).

²Literacy ideas for handling language diversity? In a forum posting (10/31/11), **Kristine Ratcliff** (class of 2012) introduced the class to *wordless books*, in which parents or kids can write their own text. As she wrote: "These work especially well with families who do not speak English: they seem to be less intimidated because they do not feel they have to read the words they can't read anyway!" Reading A-Z ([http://www.readinga-z.com/!](http://www.readinga-z.com/)) is an excellent resource for books, both wordless and word-full. <wordless book example: [The Mitten](#) (Not exactly one for Vietnam, but there are many others at the site.) - [example lesson plan - The Mitten](#)>.