

RICE-ROOTS

HIGHLIGHTS:

Sapa O'Chau gains
"Independent Social
Enterprise Status"

Two students accepted
into the 'Streets
International' program in
Hoi An

Watch out for Sapa
O'Chau in Ian Wright's
new TV show
'Invite Mr. Wright'

Also in this issue:

Volunteer update

Cafe Update

Student Profile

2011 Highlights

Welcome to the first Sapa O'Chau Newsletter!

Welcome to the first edition of Rice-Roots, the Sapa O'Chau Newsletter. We will be sending this to you every quarter to keep you up to date with what is happening at Sapa O'Chau. It is fair to say that without the huge support of our global 'Friends and Family', Sapa O'Chau would not exist. We felt, therefore that it was time that we kept you informed on what we are doing. In each

edition we will also include a profile about one or two of our students so that you can see how they are progressing. We will also profile one or two of our supporters so you can see how widespread our family really is. From Australia to England, America to Asia, we have all joined together to help Sapa O'Chau. Over time you may not wish to receive this newsletter – please just send us an

email advising us of this and we will make sure we adjust our records. We will also keep you up to date with our other activities such as the trekking service, performing arts group and our café which we will open in early 2012. Finally, if there are other things you would like to see in coming editions please do not hesitate to contact us and we will endeavor to make it happen. We hope you enjoy the newsletter and if you like, please pass it on!

A message from Shu

Where did 2011 go? It seems only yesterday that the year began with so many hopes and dreams and now that it has gone... I wonder how we fit so much in! The school has expanded to 35 live in students, 35 day trekking class students and numerous other day students. The café is just about ready to be launched. The trekking service is going well and the homestay has many advance bookings. We also continue to see many people through our doors

as either volunteers, visitors interested in seeing our work, or people who just happen to come past and wander in. Whoever they are we welcome them and we are proud to be able to show them around. I am very aware that without my volunteers and supporters, Sapa O'Chau would not have survived and I want to take this opportunity to thank them all.

With 2012 now here we are looking at growing even more and those who

know me will not be surprised to learn that I want us to keep growing and growing and growing.

I believe that one person can make a difference but many people together can make an amazing difference! When I think back from the beginning to what we have now I know it is because of you – the friends and family of Sapa O'Chau. Without you my dream would not have come true.

On behalf of all our students -THANK YOU!! O'CHAU!! - Shu Tan





Sang & Ha say goodbye to their mothers



Linda, from Germany helping her Level 3 Students



Cheryl trekking with the students



Peter, Meei, Cheryl, Josie and Sho having a volunteer family dinner



The new Sapa O'Chau Café

Student News

We were all sad but also delighted to say *'au revoir'* to 2 great students, Sang and Ha in November. With the help of Sapa O'Chau both of these young ladies were successful candidates in an exciting project run by [STREETS International](#). The program is designed to assist disadvantaged youths who, once accepted, are given the opportunity to learn all aspects of the hospitality trade at their

modern, international standard facilities in Hoi An. Sang and Ha follow in the footsteps of 5 other students we have helped to place in programs in Lao Cai and Yen Bai, where they are currently studying courses in Accounting, Tourism and Music.

Our aim at Sapa O'Chau is to give our students the opportunity to "Reach For The Stars" and learn skills which are generally out of

reach of the ethnic minority youth of the region. The soon to be opened café is another example of ways we are helping our students obtain experience and qualifications not otherwise available, while also encouraging other local people to set up businesses for themselves. We are very proud of Sang and Ha and wish them all the best with their studies!

Peter's Volunteer Update

Enough cannot be said about how important volunteers are to Sapa O'Chau. Without their dedication the amazing growth of the project would not have been possible.

Currently we have volunteers helping us from all around the globe and since I arrived here in August, 2010 we have had almost 50 volunteers. - A day, a month! It all made a big difference.

Now in Sapa we have a business consultant from the UK implementing systems and processes to make the running of Sapa O'Chau more efficient and are soon to welcome a fully qualified UK teacher who will be setting up a curriculum and formal assessments for the students. In Germany we have an IT consultant developing our new-look website. In Hanoi we have 2 Australian administrative assistants helping with our

back office and all around the world - Amazing friends!

There are many ways to help us here at Sapa O'Chau. If you would like to offer any assistance we are sure we can find something for you to do. Please just get in touch and we will let you know what tasks are most essential at the moment.

Drop me a line at peter@sapaochau.org

Café update

By the time you read this the café will be due to open... We have had a few "false alarms" with opening as we decide exactly how it will work. We envision a meeting point for responsible travelers and would ideally like to have a catering

professional stay with us for a period of time to show us the 'right' way to go about this business. In the meantime we will open our doors so people can visit us and enjoy their choice of teas and juices from our locally inspired menu. Next time you're

here, let our students show you the skills they have learned so far, and allow them to learn even more with the experience of serving you. You can also purchase something from our students' craft shop. The café can be found at: **08 Thac Bac Street, Sapa Town.**

Student Profile – “You are a Star”



Cau, Kai, Chen, May, Me, Se, Sai and Dao – **You are Stars!!**

As in every classroom, levels differ between students. At Sapa O'Chau we have 3 levels, Level 1, the very beginner students with very little English skill, right through to Level 3 students whose levels of English are good in all areas.

Given the wide range of levels, a past volunteer,

Josie, devised a “You are a Star” recognition system for level 1 and 2 (level 3 have their own system) where students could choose to be tested in such things as “saying the alphabet, counting to 100, reading 100 Dolch/Sight words, knowing and writing the 12 basic colours” etc. There are about 12 such competencies to be achieved and the students from level 1 and 2 are given the opportunity of deciding if and when they want to be tested. Once all competencies are achieved the students are awarded a certificate.

We are therefore delighted to announce in this Rice-Roots that the first of our students achieved their “You are a Star” grade and were presented with their “You are a Star” certificates at morning assembly in early November.

For those who have visited Sapa O'Chau, we are sure you will agree that this is a great achievement for both the students and the volunteer teachers who not only helped them to learn these skills but also gave them the confidence to ‘Try’ and ‘Succeed’. Well done to May, Chen, Kai, Cau, Se, My and Sai



The O'Chau performing arts class celebrates 1 year of dedication



Students awarded their local tour guide licenses



Clean Up the World Weekend 2011



Topas Ecolodge Christmas Show



Dig for Victory!

The Highlights of 2011

Last year was a big one in the story of Sapa O'Chau. Working hard to continue and grow the project, we have been rewarded with some exciting visitors, including McGill University's [Prof. Jean Michaud](#), TV presenter [Ian Wright](#) & Lonely Planet writer [Brett Atkinson](#).

We also organized Vietnam's first ‘Clean Up the World Weekend’ cleanuptheworld.org focusing on litter picking around the villages of Cat Cat, Lao Chai & Ta Van.

Our students performed Christmas shows that combined traditional song and dance with seasonal and pop music. They performed Christmas Eve at [Victoria Hotel](#) and then twice at [Topas Ecolodge](#), including a VIP Boxing Day show for Facebook's [Mark Zuckerberg](#).

2011 saw some wonderful donations to improve our facilities: bunk beds, blankets, winter clothes, a computer, a camera, lockers, a rice cooker, 35 scholarships and a mass

of books and stationary!

We have been granted the use of a large fallow field to start organic fruit & veg production which will improve our students' diet while also reducing our food bill.

35 of our older students were awarded their local tour guide licenses and another 35 students gained their Vietnamese school certificate, which means that they can now continue their education.

Here's to 2012!

Do you want to support us?



Pledge a Donation to Sapa O'Chau!
Email: info@sapaochau.org

Or donate via PayPal
www.paypal.com

Do you want to Volunteer?



Find out more about our volunteer opportunities!
Email: peter@sapaochau.org

Do you want to find out more?

Visit us on Facebook
[Sapa-OChau](https://www.facebook.com/Sapa-OChau)

Visit our YouTube Channel
www.youtube.com/user/sapaochau

Follow Us on Twitter
www.twitter.com/sapaochau

Visit our Website
www.sapaochau.org

Coming soon.... "Letters to the Editor"

In future newsletters we would like to include stories from you, our friends and family. From the numerous contacts we have with you we know that many of you have started fundraising efforts in your countries, or you are setting up other ways to help Sapa O'Chau.

This space is dedicated to you. Let others know what you are doing! let others share in the amazing stories you often tell us. Or perhaps just let others know what you think about Rice-Roots. This space is yours ... it is now up to you to fill it!!

Send us an email to admin@sapaochau.org
"Attention: The Editor"

We will try to put as many of your messages in as we can, so please try to keep the word count down as much as possible without compromising your content 😊

Our Wish List

If you visit our website you will notice that we have a wish list which we update from time to time. For example, at this time we are asking for computers to set up a small IT lab to prepare our students for the 21st Century.

If you would like to donate these, or perhaps books or clothes, or something else on our wish list, it is better that you let us know first. It might be that we could source it here in Sapa where the cost is often less and it is easier

to get things fixed if anything goes wrong. If you wish, let us know what you would like to provide and we can organise the purchase and advise you of the cost. Importantly, it also saves on transport.

Think
Green!

It's OFFICIAL!!!

It's OFFICIAL!!! What is? Sapa O'Chau is!!! After much time spent looking for the right solution to our legal status, we have finally found it. We are proud to

introduce to you **Hop Tac Xa Sapa O'Chau** or the **Sapa O'Chau Cooperative** for those who cannot read Vietnamese. With this status we can run many of the activities that we have

been dreaming of, such as volunteering, vocational training, tourist services, and handicraft production. O'Chau means Thank You – thank you for supporting us to this success!

CONTACT US



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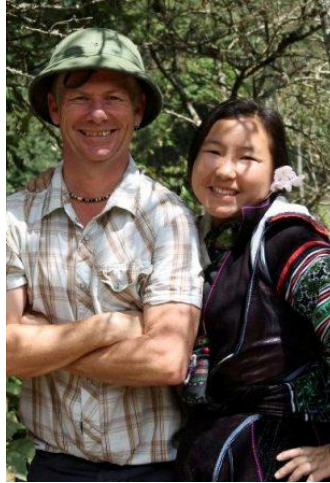
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RICE-ROOTS 2011 GALLERY



Mai & her new Bunk Bed!



Shu with Mr. Ian Wright



Peter in the Centre's Garden



New winter clothes from PetroVietnam



Chen jumping on our new winter blankets



Students gain their Viet School Certificates



Children's Artwork at the Cafe



Farewell Karaoke party for Ha & Sang



Shu with Miss Sue



"Yes Peter... you are quite funny!"



The children get lockers in the classroom!



Working Hard!