



MAI TAM CENTER

Mai Tam Center for mothers and children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, opened, in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), in 2005. This program is directed by Fr. John Toai, Director of AIDS Pastoral Care for the Catholic Archdiocese of HCMC and is sponsored by the Catholic Church in this same area. Since 2005, the Center has served 300 mothers and children and reunited 60 families.



Mai Tam staff include 4 nurses (on a 24/7 basis), 2 case managers, 4 caregivers, 4 teachers, 2 administrators and over 100 volunteers.

When staff learns of abandoned mothers and children on the streets, they bring them to the Center. They quickly visit the home in an effort to reunite women and their children with their families - some who fear they will “catch” the HIV virus.

The mothers receive medical care (including life-saving anti-retroviral medications) and, when possible, job training to integrate them back into society, while at the Mai Tam shelter. Children receive medicine, attend school or are tutored when they are too sick to go out to leave the home. Continuous effort is made to reunify mothers and children with their families. Where families are willing but cannot financially support their daughters and grandchildren, the Center offers cash support until it is no longer needed. It also provides transport to medical care as well as rent subsidies.

At any given time, the Center offers a family-like atmosphere for about 50 children and 25 mothers. The Center ensures that each child has a primary caregiver in a communal environment. In this way, each child has a “mother”. If a mother is too sick to care for her children, substitute parents are found. Mothers who are more independent and capable are asked to care for these “foster” children as well as their biological children. Older children help the younger ones. If a mother dies, adoptive families are sought.

If the children have behavior problems, the Center offers counseling and, if they are reunited with their extended families, Mai Tam monitors the “home-front”.

The problem is that Mai Tam has been told its building will be sold. During the first year of its operation, the Center was located in one building but it grew so rapidly from 2006-2007 that Mai Tam opened a second facility for the overflow. But in mid-2008, the owner of the first property decided to sell. Fr. Toai searched for other buildings to rent or buy, but none were appropriate. Thus, the best plan is to buy the property - a 4 storey building with enough space for child care space and classrooms, play and sleeping areas, as well as workshop space for and income-generating activities conducted by the women.

Thus Fr. Toai is seeking the money to buy the building, which is almost \$180,000. He thinks he can raise some but he still needs about \$100,000.

**If the funds are raised Mai Tam will continue its vital work.
If not, the women and children may find themselves back on
the streets – please do not allow that to happen!**



**Please help Father John
SAVE OUR HOME ... Mai Tam Center.**