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| **Solar Lights** |

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| **Solar Lights for Reading***By Tina Lam* |

LATEST MRD305The idea of giving solar powered lights to poor students in Vietnam began under the bright sunlight of Houston, Texas. Hao, my engineer husband, who had long been interested in solar technologies, installed a small solar panel for a light bulb in our backyard shed. With a full sun along with a larger panel, why not a brighter light for reading after sunset? I vividly remember not being able to study my schoolbooks at night in my village when lights were out and now we can give students in Vietnam the opportunity to do so. How exciting! That was 3 years ago when we moved to Texas from Michigan. We set our goal to provide 2 solar lights per household in rural villages of Vietnam. This would allow the children to extend their study time and help them improve their academic achievements. We wanted to identify a non-profit organization that had built schools in Vietnam and who would help us to ensure the solar lights reach those in need. Being a former trustee of the D.O.V.E. Fund, I was excited to present our project idea to its Board of Trustees. “The D.O.V.E. Fund is happy to work with you.” said Fred Grimm, Vice Chairman of Vietnam Projects. This email response made my day! I knew at that moment my dream of giving lights to poor students would soon become a reality. Through the lengthy research and testing of various models, we were able to purchase a reliable unit with lights bright enough for reading. Since Hao and I decided to fully fund the project, we were happy with the D.O.V.E. Fund’s assistance in the logistics and distribution process - including finding suitable recipients. We were excited when we met the Bui Thi Tam high school students and their families who would receive the solar lights. We knew the timing was right for them so the lights could help them study for their upcoming college entrance exams. Well, after the first unit was installed, the owner was so excited he went with us from home to home and helped install the rest of the systems! Before long we had about 100 villagers following us to each home to see the lights being installed. It was an exciting day in the rural village of Hai Lang. It was wonderful to see the smiles and reactions of the villagers when the lights began to glow. We left the village that day knowing there were 50 homes lighted - surrounded by the darkness of the rural rice fields. We learned the next day that the village had lost power that night - which is a common occurrence – except, there were 50 homes that did have power – “solar lights for reading” power! One light, one book, and one child at a time, the future of these children will be “brighter” and more hopeful because of our teamwork. |

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