



SMOL TOKTOK BLONG ViVa



April 2013

Quarterly Newsletter of the Victoria-Vanuatu Physician Project

The First Edition

Welcome to the first edition of “Smol Toktok Blong ViVa”. We are sending this quarterly newsletter to ViVa members, past and present, and also to our friends and supporters to let them know what ViVa is doing and what is happening on Tanna. If you have any comments or suggestions, letters to the editor, or just don't want to receive this, please contact info@ViVaProject.ca

Yes you can!

ViVa Doctors are needed from August 2014 onwards.

This is only 15 months from now, but you still have time to do the planning and training necessary to undertake what could be the best experience of your professional and personal family life. If you have considered working in a developing country but doubted your capabilities, you can take heart in the fact that more than 30 doctors with the same doubts have successfully served on Tanna and never regretted it. The ViVa organization will help train, guide, and support you. The people of Tanna and the hospital staff will show their appreciation for your efforts. Your family will feel welcome, and after 6 months, they may not want to leave!

ViVa prefers doctors from the South Island because meeting attendance is important to the sustainability of our Project. However, as the deadline approaches (within 6 months), other Canadian applicants will be welcome to apply.

Tanna update

In late January, Dr. Mike Pilgrim and his wife Lorna Way, left their frozen, snow-bound home in Dawson Creek, BC and arrived on the tropical shores of Tanna. At the last minute, they offered to fill in the empty slot from February to July 2013. Mike and Lorna attended an intensive 1-day orientation session in Victoria then plunged into the ni-Van culture and health scene. They have been doing an amazing job. They are raising chickens, enjoying the harvest from the garden planted by Dr. Don and Rebecca Fockler, and getting right into Tanna life.



Photo: Dr. Mike's kava initiation in front of Ol Frens Guesthouse

Before handing over to Mike and Lorna, Don and Rebecca made major improvements to Ol Frens Guesthouse and got permission for the ViVa doctor to take over its financial management. This should keep it in good shape for visiting health workers. It will be rented for a year at 20,000 Vatu per month to an AusAid-sponsored pharmacist.

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Ni-Van rural doctor

One exciting development, something we have been encouraging for a long time, is the placement of ni-Van registrars and doctors at Lenakel Hospital. This was finally achieved late last year with the arrival of Dr. Annette. She is required to work on Tanna for at least one year in a rural area in return of service. Mike has enjoyed working with her and is grateful for her help. Hopefully, she will be the first of many ni-Van doctors spending time on Tanna and even more hopefully, someday to return as a permanent Tanna doctor.



Photo: Lorna and Dr. Annette making Tanna nachos



Photo: Zoey, the doctor's dog with her 5 new puppies

Fundraising success

The Fundraising dinner last fall with guest speaker, Sir Richard Feachem, and silent auction was a great success. It raised over \$14,000 and helped ViVa buy a new truck, a Nissan diesel 4WD.



Photo: The new ViVa Doctors' truck

Fundraising challenge

Since the retirement of Mark Vukobrat from Glaxo-Smith-Kline Pharmaceuticals 2 years ago and changes in drug company policies, ViVa has been struggling to fill a void in its fundraising efforts. For many years, Mark was a champion of ViVa and not only managed to secure generous funding from GSK, but personally did most of the organizing and promotion for the Annual Respiratory Conference, from which all proceeds were given to ViVa. As a group, ViVa has decided it does not have the time nor the budget to take on the work of organizing and underwriting a major conference every year. We are looking for alternatives and would welcome new fundraising ideas.

Next ViVa Meeting

The next regular ViVa meeting is 2pm Sunday May 26th at Ken Smith's house. Please contact Ken for directions.

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