



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2015-2016





# From the Executive Director



## **A world without VIA is hard to imagine.**

Without VIA, I would not be where I am and who I am today. I believe the same could be said for most people who have gone through a VIA program. My VIA experience on the American Language & Culture (ALC) program was the core reason for me to pursue a graduate degree and a career in the U.S. Through conversations with our alumni, I have heard many of them share similar stories of how their VIA experiences opened new doors and shaped their career paths. It is also amazing to hear from many of them that their personal lives had been changed by meeting their life-long partners through a VIA program. I have had the honor to attend a few VIA weddings and look forward to more in the years to come.

The following pages illustrate our activities from July 2015 to June 2016 when we ran 17 programs in Asia and the U.S. and impacted the lives of over 400 individuals. As we are being increasingly intentional about how we align our program offerings in Asia and the U.S. to build an ecosystem of changemakers, we are hearing more stories in which people embark on a journey with VIA beyond their initial program experience. Some of these stories are introduced in this report including a former Japanese participant who returned to our social innovation program as a student coordinator to guide new students and build his leadership skills. There are also alumni who have returned to VIA to share their expertise as board members. We are also starting to see a growing number of VIA alumni who are passing the torch to their children to join VIA as second-generation fellows or participants.

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I am extremely humbled and privileged to steward VIA during a period of great opportunity to bring deeper impact to the people we serve and be a part of their VIA journeys. The VIA staff and board are also feeling greater importance in the work we do especially at a time with increasing tension and conflicts around the world. We are sincerely grateful to all our donors, funders, alumni, and friends who inspire, support, and enable us to continue our work. We are committed now more than ever to providing opportunities for people to nurture cross-cultural empathy and empowering them with the mindset and skills to become future changemakers to address local and global challenges.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kazutoh Ishida". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kazutoh Ishida, PhD  
Executive Director

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# VIA Journey Stories



## Kazuya Aoshima

(ESI 2015 participant, ESI 2017 coordinator)

Jumping into a new world is always stimulating for me. In July 2015, my VIA journey started and I continue to explore wonderful experiences with VIA. I first joined VIA's Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program as a participant that gave me

many opportunities to think about myself; "What kind of person do I want to be in the future?" Then I found that I have a desire to make good learning environments like ESI provided to the participants. In 2016, I returned to San Francisco as a program coordinator and also dedicated myself to the newly formed Next

Innovators Tokyo (NIT) group, which is organized by alumni of VIA's social innovation programs. Whenever I engage in VIA's community, I could see a new world and meet good friends. Now, I have a clear vision; "People in the world can share their dreams and encourage each other to take next steps, which could make a better world for everyone." I was very happy to be a coordinator for ESI and the president for NIT because it made me realize my passion. Currently, I have just begun my first career as a teacher at a junior high school in Japan. However, it is not the end of my relationship with VIA. On the contrary, I am very excited to keep contributing to this world from an educational aspect and continue to collaborate with the great team at VIA!!



## Stephanie Parker

(Coordinator for ALC 2008, 2009, 2010, SAC 2009, ESI 2011, 2012; Board member since 2015).

I was 14 when a classmate introduced me to Korean Pop music ("K-Pop"): I enjoyed it so much, that I made it my personal mission to travel to Korea during college. So when I noticed a poster in my Freshman dorm

asking, "Do you want to make new friends, exchange cultures, and go to Asia," I applied right away. That summer, I hosted students for the American Language & Culture program, and visited my students in Korea later that year. Mission accomplished! But as our founder, Dwight, likes to say with a smile, "Just when you think you're done, VIA finds a way to pull you back in."

I went on to be a coordinator for six Silicon Valley programs between 2008 and 2012. From ramen-fueled study sessions to tearful reflections on poverty and race, these programs pushed me to my limits as a leader, friend, and cross-cultural communicator. In my professional life, I have grown even closer to VIA: I regularly host program participants at Google where I work, and I have also joined the Board. I am incredibly privileged to have the opportunity to not only meet new, inspiring changemakers through the VIA programs every year, but also to help the organization step forward into the future. I'm excited to see how my relationship with VIA evolves!



Tim & Mia in Bogor in 1973 with one of Mia's students

## Tim & Mia Clark

(Indonesia 1972, former Board member, Interim Executive Director 2011)

Our VIA adventure started in 1972 with a wedding—ours. Four days later we were off to Indonesia for two years on what some called a honeymoon. After Asia came grad school, careers and kids, but by 1983 we were helping organize VIA's 20th anniversary. Two separate stints on VIA's board followed (for a total of 20-plus years), then organizing four VIA alumni trips to Myanmar and one to Vietnam-Cambodia. Among the more memorable VIA occasions at our from Indonesia, Myanmar, Japan, Taiwan and China. Stuck in there was a six-month term as VIA's interim executive director, a Last American Supper for outgoing fellows, and multiple efforts to explain Silicon Valley to VIA visitors to Stanford. Why? VIA just sticks with us and enriches our lives. It's not that we were with VIA, we still are and will always be. As a one-time VIA slogan holds, VIA changes lives, ours and thousands more.



Same trio as above in 2008 during VIA Alumni Tour

# Programs Overall

*In fiscal year 2016 VIA ran 17 programs and enrolled more than 400 participants*



## Programs in Asia



VIA expanded its portfolio of youth programs and brought 18 youth and three adult mentors to Hong Kong and Guangzhou for the inaugural American Youth Leadership Program (AYLP). The group spent three weeks learning about leadership, environmental issues, sustainable development, and Chinese language and culture.



*"VIA's AYLP trip provided me with a transformative and life-changing opportunity for me to grow as a leader and a responsible citizen of the world while surrounded in a group of like-minded peers, mentors, and friends we meet along the way. One major skill that I have learned during the trip is how to live in the moment, and how to be flexible to what life brings me."*

*—2015 participant Ben Blum*



## Programs in Asia (continued)

Seven Stanford students joined VIA in Yogyakarta, Indonesia during summer 2015 for internships at community development NGOs. The program was designed in partnership with the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford and matched American students with a cohort of Indonesian students. Graduating senior and trip leader Sanchay Gupta interned at the public health organization Griya Pemulihan Siloam (GPS).

*"My time at GPS was absolutely unforgettable. Having the opportunity to work closely with and be accepted amongst the patients there gave me a unique glimpse on how I see service fitting into my future career. As an aspiring physician, experiences like these inspire me to continue along that path."*

— 2015 participant Sanchay Gupta



## Programs in the United States



Har Khaw Dee

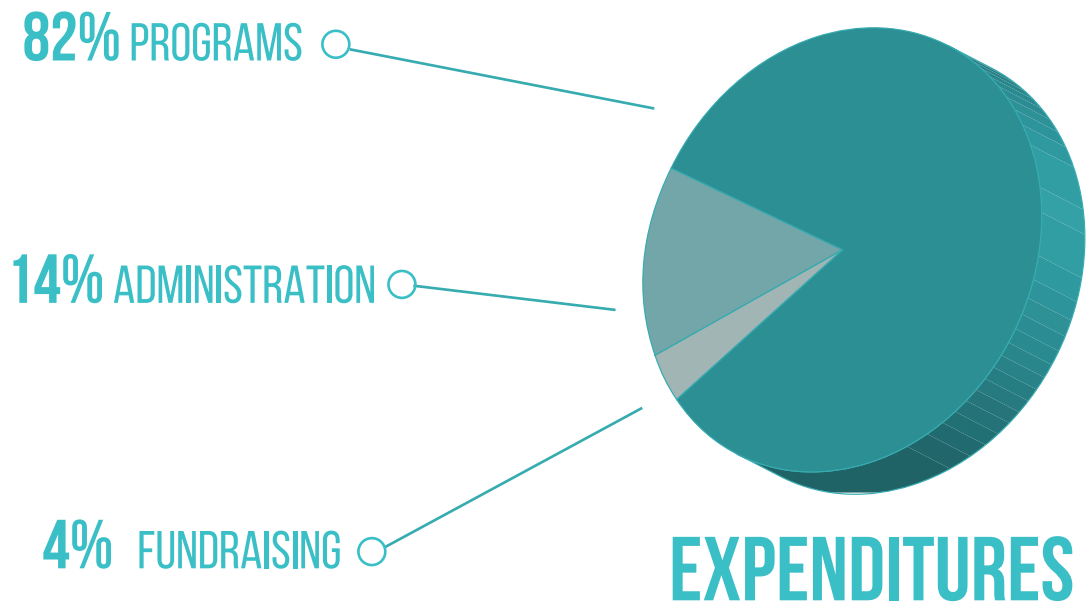
During summer 2015 VIA brought several participants to San Francisco from Myanmar to join our Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) Program. Har Khaw Dee shared her passion for education as a Warden at the Phaung Daw Oo Monastic School (PDO) where she supports 186 girls from different regions in Myanmar, some of them even coming from areas of civil war. Although many of these girls age 5-16 are struggling with poverty and loss of confidence, Khaw Dee sees their potential and is dedicated to seeing them grow fully into themselves and achieve all that they're capable of. During ESI, Khaw Dee shared her own story of why she chose her career path to the group of changemakers across Asia during the

ESI tradition event, V-talks--the V stands for VIA, and is originally inspired by the famed TED talks. She planned to reuse this V-Talk format to encourage her girls to share their stories with her and each other. She is calling this the "You & Me" program, which will start with her 9th grade girls, and be held every Sunday evening, where each girl will have a chance to share about their families, challenges, views and other aspects of themselves that they've been a bit shy to reveal so far.



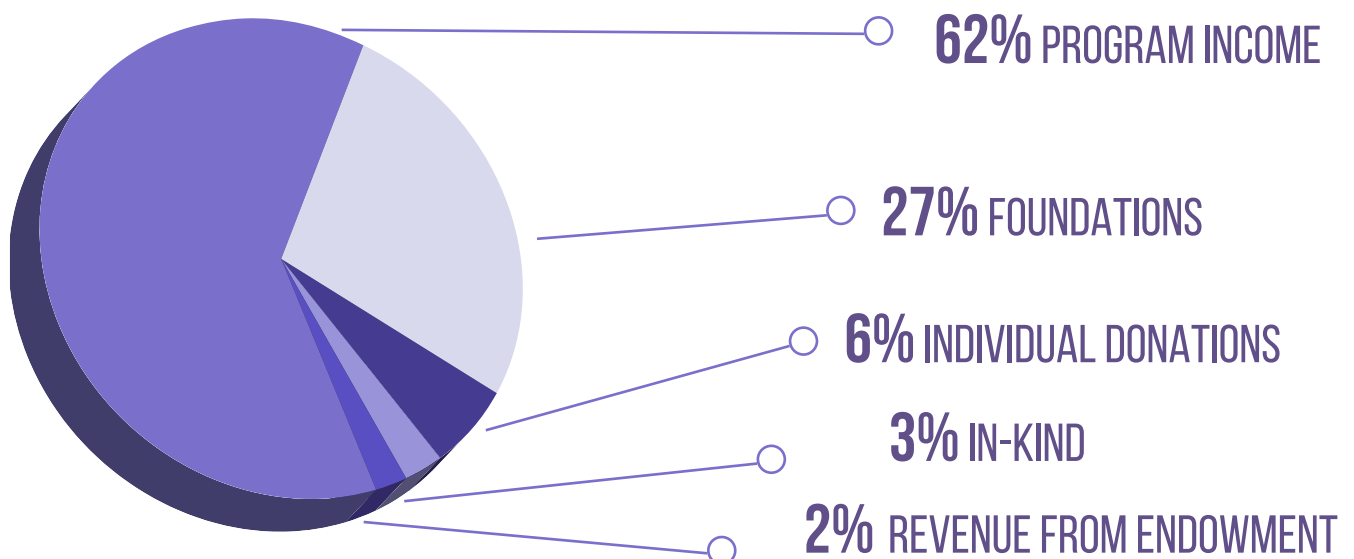
In September 2015, students from our U.S.-based exchange program reunited with our Stanford students in Tokyo through several social innovation activities before a 5-day trip to Tohoku in partnership with Rikkyo University to support the town of Rikuzentakata in their reconstruction process after the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. The group was thrilled to exchange lessons from both cultures and build new bridges across the Pacific.

# 2015-2016 VIA by the Numbers



**\$2,872,540**

## FUNDING SOURCES



# Contributors

*Your contributions add miles to each participant's journey. For that, we thank you.*

## Foundations, Corporations & Organizations

BelleJAR  
Dr. CJ Huang Foundation  
Enlight Foundation  
Henry Luce Foundation  
U.S. Department of State  
Robert Bayard Textor Research Fund  
Pacific Links

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Ron Herring & Tuckie Yirchott  
Jennifer Hubbert & Jay Crary  
Sukie Jackson & Bob Tanabe

*"Our daughter Mari's association with VIA as an ALC counselor (along with her talks over cups of tea with both Dwight and Cliff) have helped guide her career path to fundraising and development for non-profits."*

Joan Karlin & Paul Resnick  
Steve Miller & Pam Cowan  
Sam Schwartz  
John & Sherry Shoch

### Cherry Blossom (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Fumiko Arai & Kenneth Singleton  
Jeanne & Robert Blamey  
Ruth Brousseau  
H. Kirk Brown  
Phillip Chritton & Zhinong Zhang

*"VIA Beijing '84-86 changed my life; now version 2.0: daughter Monica heads to Myanmar as a VIA fellow."*

*"VIA made a huge impact in our lives with nonstop involvement since 1972. Now I hope our granddaughter will join a VIA high school trip"*

Tim & Mia Clark  
Patricia Clark  
Jane Clayton & John Petro  
Andy & Holly Cohen

Mike & Chris Connor  
*"The VIA alumni tours have reminded me that over its 50 years, VIA has developed contacts with the most innovative thinkers in Asia."*

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*"VIA opened the door for amazing life experiences and lasting friendships"*

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