



60th Anniversary Gala

Celebrating 60 Years of VIA!



VIA commemorated its 60th anniversary with a gala event in Palo Alto, California during Stanford's Homecoming Week in October. Over 80 attendees representing six decades of VIA's programs joined in the celebration, which featured a taiko drum performance, remarks from VIA Founder Dwight Clark and VIA Board Chair Steve Hope, and members of the alumni community sharing their experiences and fond memories of VIA with the audience.

"I had such a wonderful time speaking and connecting with the alumni at the gala. It was great to hear from folks all around the world about their journey with VIA!"



— Aylin Myat Thu
VIA ACCL 2023, ESI Fellow 2023



From the Executive Director, Kazutoh Ishida

As we celebrate our 60th anniversary, we have been reflecting on our identity and clarifying our purpose in today's world. With the guidance of a task force comprised of VIA staff and board members, we explored how to maintain VIA's core values while adapting to a changing world. After over a year of deep discussions and gathering perspectives from our community, the task force developed a vision statement and a renewed mission statement to guide VIA over the years to come. We are grateful for the support and feedback provided by alumni and partners during this process. I am proud to present our new vision and mission statements here:

VISION: We envision a global community of leaders collaborating across boundaries to build a more compassionate society and to address critical social challenges.

MISSION: Through Asia and US-based experiential learning opportunities that encompass self-reflection, creative problem-solving, and cross-cultural connection, VIA equips emerging social impact leaders with skill sets and mindsets to address complex human challenges.

Guided by these statements, all our activities and programs — whether short-term or long-term, or in-person or virtual — will focus on inspiring emerging social impact leaders who can balance tangible leadership skills needed to create actionable change in their communities with a mindset of humility, curiosity, and compassion.



THIS SUMMER *at* VIA!

It was a jam-packed summer at VIA! This year, VIA hosted seven programs in the US and Asia including our Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) and Exploring Health Care (EHC) programs, along with our custom programs in partnership with the Masason Foundation, Fukuoka Futaba High School, Curio School, and Rikkyo University. Over 60 participants had the opportunity to join VIA this summer for a unique and unforgettable experience of social impact and innovation training!

Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) Program

The ESI program welcomed participants from Hong Kong, China, Vietnam, Japan, Myanmar, and Thailand for a week of experiential learning through social innovation with visits to Google and Stanford and workshops by local leaders in social impact and social enterprises in the Bay Area.



Exploring Health Care (EHC) Program

The EHC program invited medical students from Japan, Korea, and Zambia to Silicon Valley for two weeks to explore a wide variety of health related topics, including organ transplantation and palliative care. Participants also joined visits and lectures at the Stanford Medical Center, volunteered at local community centers, and examined social and cultural challenges in health care through discussions and reflection activities.

Masason Foundation

The Masason Foundation in Tokyo supports youth with high aspirations and exceptional talents to develop their skills, and contribute to the future of humankind. This summer, young leaders from ages 8 - 19 joined VIA as part of their North America Summer Program to learn about Silicon Valley's hub of global innovation, highlighted with a guest lecture from Dr. Richard Dasher, Director of the US-Asia Technology Management Center at Stanford and a visit to UC Berkeley.



Fukuoka Futaba High School

We enjoyed our fifth year welcoming students from Fukuoka Futaba High School to Silicon Valley. Students joined the ESI program participants in an innovator's mindset scavenger hunt activity and a design-thinking workshop. They also met with a Japanese social innovator and visited social enterprises addressing critical social issues.



Curio School

We hosted six Japanese university students from Curio School, an educational company in Tokyo that promotes creativity through design-thinking, for a week-long exploratory program in Silicon Valley. The students had an opportunity to visit sites including Plug and Play Tech Center and the Intel Museum, and engaged in a conversation with an engineer at Apple. They also enjoyed an evening watching an exciting major league baseball game at Oracle Park in San Francisco.



Rikuzen Takata Project (Japan)

During this 8-day program facilitated with the Rikkyo University's Center for Global Human Resource Development, participants from Japan, Hong Kong, and the US learned from public and private sector leaders and community members as they visited Tokyo and Rikuzen Takata, a rural Japanese community that has been named an SDG model city for their efforts to bring their community together after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.



Let's Check in with our VIA Global Community Fellows!

VIA's Global Community Fellowship provides a unique experience for recent university graduates, as well as starting and experienced professionals, to work at NGOs, schools, universities, and social enterprises across Asia to support community development, capacity-building, and education. By working directly with communities, fellows get hands-on experience learning how organizations in Asia are using creative and innovative methods to address critical social challenges.

Sophie Brown

**BEAM Education Foundation
- Chiang Mai, Thailand**

Sophie grew up outside Philadelphia and attended Washington University in St. Louis, majoring in Anthropology and Biology, to better understand the evolution of human behavior by coupling ordinarily separate biological and cultural perspectives. Sophie has worked in healthcare in St. Louis and a medical clinic in Cusco, Peru providing the local population with personalized and quality care. Through these experiences, she began to understand the power of cross-cultural relationships and connecting with individuals despite language or cultural barriers.

This motivated her to seek further global connections in Asia, where she currently enjoys working as a Program Associate and GED Reasoning Through Language Arts Instructor at BEAM to gain a greater understanding of cultural identities in Thailand. Joining the Compulsory Education Program team, Sophie also supports their Community Youth Leadership Development (CYLD) program whose vision is to produce emotionally healthy, community-serving, and globally-minded young migrant leaders ready to pursue higher education opportunities.

Anny Lin

**Parami University
- Chiang Mai, Thailand**

Raised in China during her early years, Anny immigrated to Vermont at the age of five. She spent her childhood navigating the intricacies of being a daughter of immigrants, an ESL student, and a Chinese-American girl living in predominantly white, English-speaking spaces. These early experiences fostered her hopes for creating social change through cross-cultural learning and connection-building.

Anny received a BA in International Affairs from George Washington University (GWU), becoming the first university



graduate in her family. At GWU, Anny took a course on equitable development in Southeast Asia, which led her to complete her senior thesis focused on the well-being of Rohingya refugee teachers in Bangladesh. Anny was also involved with First Gen United, where she supported first-generation college students through mentorship and advocacy, while completing a fellowship with Global Campaign for Education-US, where she supported advocacy strategies to bolster support for international basic education programs.

As a Program Progression Advisor at Parami University, Anny provides support to university students regarding their academic plans, career goals, and assists students in meeting their graduation requirements, as well as provides tutoring service on an appointment basis. Through her VIA Fellowship, she is looking forward to expanding her understanding of Burmese and Thai languages, histories, and cultures.

Brooke Taffler

Parami University - Chiang Mai, Thailand

Brooke grew up in Connecticut and received her BA in Public Health from Syracuse University. During her studies, she found her passion for improving global health and well-being. At Syracuse, Brooke worked with local organizations that empower and engage with refugee communities. Brooke also studied in India, expanding her global health knowledge with first-hand experiences in new social contexts. She deeply values building connections and sharing experiences with others and hopes to continue exploring outside of her comfort zone.

At Parami, Brooke supports Burmese students seeking US-accredited bachelor's degrees and helps provide opportunities for Myanmar youth to develop the necessary skills to be change agents in their communities. She is excited to learn from the community as well as sharing her own knowledge. Brooke recognizes the importance of education in breaking generational cycles that are challenging to escape and is eager to empower students to explore their interests and acquire new skills to forge their own unique paths.



Tokyo Alumni Gatherings



“I had a great time at the reunion, being able to meet the participants again back in our country! I like how VIA is not just a once in a lifetime experience, but gives us opportunities to reconnect with our peers again.”

**—Saki Kida
- EHC 2023 Participant**



“It was fun to get to know the VIA family — I got to meet alumni who joined VIA a few years back, and even those from 10+ years ago. How interesting that people from different walks of life came together for a gathering on a cool Saturday afternoon!”

**— Annie Hoang
- ESI 2023 Participant**



“Since I joined ESI, I noticed that the experiences during the program have positively affected my decisions on many occasions, especially guiding my interests to trending topics. I really appreciate VIA for providing a lot of energy to my life.”

**—Daisuke Kanaizumi
- ESI 2014 Participant**

Seattle Alumni Reunion

The VIA alumni community gathered in Seattle earlier this fall to catch up with friends and share stories and memories. Past VIA participants joined from volunteer and fellowship posts in Indonesia and China, and from the American Language and Culture (ALC) program hosted at Stanford. VIA Strategic

Relationships Director Wallace Wong welcomed attendees and provided updates and news on VIA.

More alumni reunions will be organized this upcoming year in Japan and the US East Coast. Stay tuned!





In Memoriam

Isabel Stenzel Byrnes passed away in July 2023. She was a VIA volunteer in Japan in the mid-90s and taught English at a school in Kagawa Prefecture. For over a decade, Isabel actively supported VIA's Exploring Health Care (EHC) program, both in person and virtually.



Isa with the panel on organ transplantation for the EHC program

She moderated dozens of panels on palliative and hospice care at Mission Hospice where she worked as a bereavement social worker, and she participated in panels on organ donation where she shared her personal experiences. Many EHC participants were moved and inspired by her life story and dedication to her work, citing her panels as a major highlight of the program that offered new perspectives on what it means to be a health care professional. She will be greatly missed.

Via clips Updates by VIA Alumni

Steve and Tricia Trainer

Hong Kong Volunteers (1969)

We have retired and are spending more of our time on Orcas Island where we have a second home. But we are active grandparents with 4 grandkids living close to us. And we volunteer with organizations we have supported over the years.

Bob Schultz

Indonesia Volunteer (1972)

Bob Schultz retired from the Navy in 2005 after 30 years with the Navy SEALs then went on to direct The Masters of Science in Global Leadership program at the University of San Diego for six years, then did about 5 years of consulting and independent work. Currently very engaged in taking care of bucket list items, staying healthy and working for a number of nonprofits and volunteer projects.

Heather Danton

Indonesia Volunteer (1978)

Having led a global nutrition project over the past 4 1/2 years, the virtual isolation imposed by COVID 19 has created both opportunities and challenges. Having a chance to reconnect in person feels exhilarating. So I'm sure it is creating energy + excitement in the VIA office as well. Keep changing lives and building cross-cultural connections!

Jennifer Choate Dickinson

Indonesia Volunteer (1980)

After a long career in education for 31+ years I have retired. VIA was hugely instrumental in encouraging me to follow that path in my life. My time in Indonesia remains one of the most scintillating times of my life. Thanks Dwight!

William (Sandy) Craig

Indonesia Volunteer (1982)

Still doctoring full time in rural Vermont

Greg James

China Volunteer (1983)

Celebrated GGMC Chorus' 40th Anniversary (we sang). Really enjoying my job as Asst. Director at SFSU's Disability Resource Center. Andrew & I celebrated our 27th anniversary this year!

Sarah N. Hill

Indonesia Volunteer (1987)

My husband and I moved from Colorado to Alexandria, Virginia in June. We sold our cars and live in an apartment, where we can walk or take public transportation everywhere. It is a wonderful, very stress free life!

How To Support VIA



Our work is made possible through generous contributions from our alumni and friends in our community. Below are some ways that you can support VIA. A gift of any amount will support our work and elevate hope for the people and communities we serve. If you have any questions about making a gift to VIA, please contact info@viaprograms.org.

- Make a **one-time or a recurring monthly donation** online from www.viaprograms.org/donate.
- **Mail a check** made out to Volunteers in Asia to P.O. Box 1314, Palo Alto, CA 94302.
- Make a **stock donation** or a gift through a **donor-advised fund**.
- Have your company **match your charitable contribution**. You can check to see if your company offers matching from viaprograms.org/donation-match.
- Include VIA in your will and **leave a legacy gift** so that VIA can continue to provide rich cross-cultural experiential experiences in Asia and the US for future generations!