



Friends of Venilale e-Newsletter October 2023

<http://venilale.com>
facebook.com/groups/friendsofvenilale



Update

Again Venilale was able to welcome visitors from Mansfield this year. David and Anne Foster were greeted enthusiastically by everyone and it was really special to reconnect with old friends. This was tinged by sadness at the passing of Senor Manual Castro, chairperson of Friends of Mansfield and Mestri Alcino dos Santos, the Principal of Luga Oli since 2002. A meeting was arranged with the Sub District Administrator, Senor Miguel Mendes Manso Guterres who happily signed the new Memorandum of Understanding which had been accepted and signed by the Mansfield Mayor, Mr James Tehan. Fundraising activities had to be cancelled due to the incessant rain but our committee was not idle. They continued to support seasonal workers, run bush market stalls and organise a Mega Garage Sale. The highlight was the enormous effort involved in staging the Mad Hatters Tea Party in the beautiful gardens of Helen and Andrew Crockett. Following on from a conversation between Ann Eldred and Tom Tully, the Marsh Foundation have agreed to fund Health Scholarships to the value of A\$5000 next year.

Buy your coffee at
'Oakbank
Produce' or
contact Ann
Eldred—
0419950724

<http://www.wildtimorcoffee.com/>

Wild Timor Coffee is a coffee importing company founded by four Australian Peacekeepers after returning from service in East Timor. FOV supports 'Wild Timor' because it is a new business and they pay their farmers even better than fair trade companies.



Fundraising



Unfortunately the Ridge Line Walk had to be cancelled again as were most of our scholarship fundraising events. Coffee sales, donations, and a Mega Garage Sale at the Fosters' shed which raised \$2321.30 were the lifelines for the Scholarship programme.

A particularly huge effort was made by Ann Eldred and Karen Lewis to make this event a great success. Lots of bargains walked out the door with happy customers. Members and supporters of FoV volunteered to set up, sell and clean up in order to raise funds for this worthy cause.



Andrew Mahar, Honorary Consul for Timor-Leste to Victoria, addressed the party goers.



Dashing figures Ann Eldred and Ken Hall modelled fabulous hats



The irrepressible Karen Lewis looked stunning as she served afternoon tea



Mad Hatters Tea Party - highly successful and a delightful afternoon which raised \$4393. A huge thank you to the MMUDS orchestra, the Honorary Consul for Timor-Leste in Victoria, the Crocketts for offering the use of their beautiful garden and all the tireless workers who provided the delicious food. Special thanks to Lynn Elder for the fabulous photos.

Scholarship Recipients



Dombito de Sousa Freitas
 Bercoli Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 15
 A very clever student who likes playing soccer and thinks he'd like to be an English teacher



Gaudincia de Sousa Mendes,
 Bercoli Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 12
 She is academically talented, gaining top marks in her class for all subjects. She would like to be a doctor.



Octaviano Julio da Silva,
 Bercoli Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 15
 He lives with his mother who grows vegetables to sell at the market. His favourite subject is maths.



Teresa da Costa Guterres
 Bercoli Junior High
 Grade 9, aged 16
 Her mother died when she was six. She has 6 siblings and lives with her uncle and aunty in Venilale so that she can go to school.



Maia da Costa Morais
 Uai Bua Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 15
 Her favourite subject is English and she sings in the choir at church.



Nelino Vital Sousa Costa
 Uai Bua Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 14
 He is the youngest of three children and gained the top marks in his class. His father is a farmer and mother a house wife.



Aurea Imaculata Salma do Rego
 Uai Bua Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 14
 She is the youngest of 8 children and her parents are getting older. She likes to play volleyball and would like to continue her studies.

22 scholarships were awarded this year.

12 Junior High School

4 Senior High School

University -
2 in their final year—Tourism and Education

1 in 2nd year of Civil Engineering

1 new student studying Engineering

2 health -
1 in 2nd year
1 in final year



Nelson do Rego
 Uai Bua Junior High
 Grade 8, aged 15
 He is one of five children and likes to play soccer . His favourite subject is maths and he wants to continue studying at secondary college.

Reasons for awarding scholarships

Renato Tomas do Carmo
Luga Oli Sen High
Grade 12, aged 19
plays soccer on the Venilale town team and is one of five children. He would like to be a doctor.



Ligia Soares Marques da Silva
Luga Oli Sen High
Grade 11, aged 19
She has 6 siblings who stay home and work in the garden. She is very academically talented.



Estaque Luis da Costa
Luga Oli Sen High
Grade 12, aged 17
He plays in the Venilale town soccer team and wants to be an English teacher.



Almerinda Pereira Guterres
Luga Oli Sen High
Grade 11, aged 17
She has 5 siblings and wants to be an English teacher.



Jematio Candido Correia
Uai Laco Junior High
Grade 9, aged 16
He lives with his father and 3 siblings.



Anirinda da Costa
Uai Laco Junior High
Grade 9, aged 15
She has 7 siblings and would like to continue her secondary education.



Students are awarded scholarships based on their academic achievement, economic circumstances and overall attitude. Nearly all the recipients have fathers who are subsistence farmers and mothers who are housewives. If there are not two parents then life is quite hard. Unfortunately the death rate in Timor-Leste is far higher than in Australia due to the hard living conditions and limited health resources. Life expectancy is 69.3 years. The average family has 5 to 8 children though family sizes are starting to reduce.

Attendance at school depends on family circumstances. Often a small fee has to be paid monthly in order to pay volunteer teachers and children must have the necessary uniforms. Most schools have at least 3 separate uniforms which must be worn on specific days of the week. Also a student must have pens and notebooks. You might notice that there is a wide range in the ages of students in the same grade level. This is caused by parents not being able to afford to send all their children to school at once so the children take turns year about to attend. Often there is a class set of text books but when 25 books have to be used by at least 4 classes at the same level they don't last very long. Most of the time teachers write the information on blackboards for the students to copy so pens and note books are essential.

The students have a wide range of interests covering sport, cooking, sewing, reading and music. The goal for many is just to be able to continue attending school and studying. Each year that this happens makes them very happy and is highly valued. When asked about future ambitions the range of jobs is narrow as only students who have been to the capital city, Dili, have any exposure to possibilities. Therefore when these students in Venilale are asked they generally respond with the occupations they see around them – teacher, nurse, doctor, construction worker. There is very little trade-based education in Timor-Leste, no running water and limited electricity so plumbers, electricians etc are not common aspirations.



Liandra Ervina da Costa
Uai Laco Junior High
Grade 8, aged 12
She is very academically talented and loves to play volleyball and sing.



Zonibel Guterres Soares
UNPAZ University—
Civil Engineering
Second year
In Dili he lives with his uncle and aunty. He hopes to work in the construction industry.



Esau Rui da Cunha
UCT University—
Engineering
first year
He lives with his uncle in Dili and hopes to work in construction.

Partnership Schools

Mansfield Primary School raised US\$287 for Uato Haco



Mestra Mariquita, the Principal, who because of our inability to visit during Covid, thought that their partnership relationship with Mansfield Primary School had ended. She was thrilled to see us again and proudly showed us the library with the bookshelves funded by Mansfield Primary brimming with well used class sets.



The library is fully utilised. MPS raised money for the first shelves

These Grade 2 students sang "If you're happy and you know it" in Tetun.



Students heading to the Bercoli School canteen to get a prepared lunch.

Grade 7 students loved having some Australian visitors.

Mansfield Secondary College students raised US\$715 for their partnership school, Bercoli Junior High.



Teachers of English Mestri Pedro and Mestri Inacio



Bercoli Principal Senor Silvestre de Sousa



Uai Bua deputy principal Senor Ronald Badin and Mestri Pedro



Lauriston Girls School Howqua Campus raised US\$634 for their partner Uai Bua Junior High.



As you can see from the photo where students are carrying water (6 trips needed by each group) for toilets, the volleyball court is in a sad state. Uai Bua intends to use the funds to rebuild the court and have sent costings for cement, sand and labour.

Geelong Grammar School Timbertop raised \$2,400 US for their partner Luga Oli Senior Secondary. Luga Oli has sent a quote for 2 blackboards, 4 laptops, 2 dictionaries for teachers of English, a large purpose made glass cabinet for science equipment and 2 tables for use during practical experiments.



The new classroom built by the students above the toilets funded by Timbertop.

Luga Oli Senior Secondary is the only government school in Venilale catering for Years 10, 11 and 12. The number of students has grown from 600 in 2019 to 744 in 2023. The final results of their Year 12 students have been astounding which has led to more students moving into the area in order to attend this school. In 2024 Mestri Pedro and Joni will join Mestra Candida as English language teachers there. There are 12 permanent teachers and their salaries are paid by the government but there are also 7 contract teachers. Their salaries are paid by the students. Each student pays \$3 a month. The students have even added to the school by building an extra classroom above the toilets which were built in 2017 using funds raised by their partner school, Timbertop. It was interesting to note that this school has two toilets for 700 students while the nearby primary school has 8 toilets for 353 students!



On the left Mestri Pedro, the Coordinator of the very newly established Bercoli Senior High

Bercoli Senior High

Bercoli Junior High has many plans for the future. They intend to use one classroom block for the kindergarten students when not used by the current students and have land at one end upon which they hope the government will build the Bercoli Senior Secondary School.



A Year 10 class in 2023 with Year 11 and 12 being established in future years

At the moment the Senior Secondary School is using an old Catholic Primary School as its base. It is a branch of Luga Oli Senior High so one of the teachers is a Uni student doing their practical placement there. Senor Pedro is the Co-ordinator and all the young teachers are volunteers.

This was very interesting as it reminded us of when Timorese teachers like Senor Pedro first started. They were all volunteers with no experience and very little payment.



The very young volunteer teachers at Bercoli Senior High. One is studying an education degree and doing her practical training here. Two are teachers on contracts which means students give a small amount of money monthly which is paid to these teachers. Only permanent teachers are paid salaries by the government.

Candida



Candida and Celestino with their children.

Candida Belo was the successful candidate for the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program Scholarship. She will travel to America in September 2024 to undertake an intensive 7 week course which will be focussed on teaching English as a foreign language. In order to be awarded the scholarship she had to pass a rigorous written application and interviews.

Currently she and her husband Celestino have 5 children ranging in age from 4 to 17. She is the deputy principal at Luga Oli Senior High School and is employed by FoV as an assistant. She is also the Co-ordinator of Fretilin Women in Venilale. At her home she and her husband are farming 13 pigs and 60 chickens.



Candida with one daughter and one son.

While staying in Venilale, David and Anne Foster were the lucky beneficiaries of Candida's wonderful cooking. She stepped in for Mana Teresa who was in Jakarta. Despite her own busy schedule Candida popped in to cook lunch and dinner and have a chat every day.



Candida proudly showing the latest litter



In 2016 Candida spent 10 weeks in Melbourne studying at RMIT. She was awarded her English For Academic Purposes certificate with top marks

Friends Visiting Venilale



Delivering medical supplies to the Venilale Health Centre



Medical Centre donations were gratefully accepted. Special thanks to Melissa Andrews (nee O'Halloran) a nurse who collected supplies no longer able to be used in a Victorian hospital and her mother Jane who delivered the supplies to the Fosters. We met with the Director of the Medical Centre, Senor Amandio Henrique Guterres. He was particularly excited to see some products which the Centre did not have but were much needed.



At Uai Bua Junior High, it was delightful to meet up again with Mestra Elvira, Joni's aunty. She used to walk for a couple of hours to teach at Osso Uaque Primary School

They now have four doctors, five midwives, eleven nurses, three pharmacists, five Public Health workers, one analyst and two nutritionists. There are at least fifteen births a month in the maternity wing. The centre has an outpatients facility and regular days for maternal and childcare checkups and family planning. There is a strong emphasis on outreach education in the villages and a comprehensive vaccination programme particularly in the schools. Malaria, dengue and malnutrition now seem to be eradicated. The warmth and gratitude expressed by the Director were humbling and we hope this is in some measure communicated to Melissa through their gift of tais.



Joni trying out the traditional head gear prior to Alipe's celebration



Mestri Pedro, the Education Support Officer, Joni, the Friendship Liaison Officer and Anne share a joke while co-ordinating scholarship information

Memorandum of Understanding Renewal



We met with the Sub District Administrator, Senor Miguel Mendes Manso Guterres, where David outlined the relationship of FoV and FoM and the role of Mansfield Shire Council. Senor Miguel was very happy to meet with us again. A key topic for us was the Community Centre. We discussed the urgent need for security as no further resources could be purchased for the centre until it was quite secure. Senor Miguel suggested that secure fencing would be the main deterrent for thieves. It seemed that this would be paid for by FoV. In November there will be a meeting with all the stakeholders in the community and the administration intends to draw up a formal agreement for FoM to use the Community Centre. The administration will be responsible for the renovation of the building. Copies of the MOU will be presented to the Mansfield Mayor, James Tehan, FoM and FoV. Since Timor-Leste had an election earlier this year it is understood that key positions of authority will change. Since CNRT headed by Xana Gusmao won the election, members of his party will be appointed to these positions.

FoV Committee 2023

Enormous thanks to the committee of 2023

The position holders are:

President -Julie Aldous

Vice President—Rachel Meadows

Secretary—David Foster

Treasurer— Karen Lewis

Committee Members—Ann Eldred, Lynn Elder, Andy Barltrop, Andrew and Helen Crockett, Michelle Harmer, Margie Twycross, Anne Foster, Joni, Boss, Candida

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN 2024?

Find out about our projects on the 4th Wednesday of each month, 6 pm in the RSL rooms

WANT TO BE INVOLVED?

Here's your opportunity to contribute. Everyone welcome.

Venilale News

Vale Senor Manuel Castro.

Senor Manuel Castro was an ardent supporter of Friends of Mansfield holding the position of Chairperson throughout our Friendship Town relationship. He was instrumental in the completion of projects like the Rotary funded toilets at Uai Bua Junior High, the Lauriston funded basketball court also at Uai Bua and the Mansfield Secondary College funded court at Bercoli. Whenever FoV members visited Venilale we were invited to his house where his wife and family hosted us for meetings and parties full of music, laughter and dancing.



Senor Manuel Castro and Senor Julio celebrating the beginning of our friendship town relationship in 2005



2011 celebration of Rotary funded toilets at Uai Bua



We made a special visit to Sr Manuel's widow, Zulmira, to pay our respects and offer our condolences at his passing. There is no doubt that his support from the very beginning of the friendship relationship will be missed by all.

FoV has also been saddened by the passing of Mestri Alcino dos Santos. He was the Principal of Luga Oli Senior High from 2002 and during his tenure we have seen new classrooms built by students as well as a new block of 4 classrooms built by the government. Under his leadership the school has flourished achieving outstanding results and increasing its enrolment significantly.



2018 Mestri Alcino with Candida

US Peace Corps Volunteers

Joni was keen to tell us about three US Peace Corps volunteers who should start in December this year. One will be based in Bercoli while two will be based in Venilale, one with the Community Centre and one at Luga Oli Secondary School.

They arrive in Timor-Leste in September but need to do an induction course for three months learning Tetun language, how to cook using a fire and the tasks undertaken by families who often have to collect water from nearby streams and cope without electricity. The volunteers are not allowed to drive cars or motorbikes being expected to travel like the locals ie walking or microlet. Their tenure is two years.

One Venilale volunteer will teach at the Senior High School and the other will be involved in economic development including working with Joni and also do some teaching at the Salesian Santa Maria Mazzarello school. The Bercoli volunteer will teach at Bercoli Junior High School and doubtless at the Senior High too.



Peace Corps meeting July 2023 with Joni and Boss



Meeting of Peace Corps host families September 2023

Community Centre Damage

Unfortunately thieves broke into the back of the Community Centre smashing glass windows, wrenching away wire protection and smashing through the back door. They stole the only computer and printer that were still in working order. This is a great loss to the senior students and has also meant that the centre cannot be used for English and music sessions which were so popular with kids of all ages in Venilale. Until the building can be more highly secured it must remain closed to the community. Steps are being taken to solve the security issues.



Friends in Dili



We met with Nesto who worked at Flavorite Hydroponic Tomato Farm near Mansfield in 2020-21. He was delighted to receive a gift from his good friend and sponsor in Mansfield, Ross Martin. On returning home Nesto graduated in Social Science at the University of Timor Lorosae and is now working in HR at Heineken. We also met with Febby de Sousa who visited Mansfield while she was studying for her Masters in Accounting in Melbourne. She is now working in the Department of Finance. It was great to catch up and hear how they were doing.



We caught up with Boss, Iza and their adorable son, Valenzo. They helped us with Telecom phone cards and drove us to the Tais Market in their cute little car. We were also taken to a very modern cafe where we drank delicious coffee and ate Portuguese tarts. They invited us to meet Iza's extended family who greeted us wholeheartedly,



On returning to Dili we stopped at the pretty town of Laleia and tried out the recommended Bouali Cafe which serves amazing coffee and nice snacks. Senor Julio has retired from sub district administration and is now studying social inclusion at university. His daughter, Lihucai, who had also returned home for the weekend returned to Dili to continue her studies in horticulture.

In Dili we briefly met another of Sr Julio's daughters, Aulo, who was a senior student when we stayed with them previously. Now she is married and has two children.

Venilale Health

The Marsh Foundation

Thanks to Ann Eldred meeting part time Goughs Bay resident and Marsh Foundation Director, Tom Tully, the Foundation agreed at their November meeting to support health scholarships in Timor-Leste. David Foster compiled a comprehensive list of the medical scholarships which have been granted by FoV. Boss and Joni have given advice on costs and identified the universities which offer health studies. The health scholarships are our most expensive and also most critical in Venilale.

The Marsh Foundation is a medical-based charity that provides full scholarships for students studying health courses who would not otherwise be able to follow this path because of their financial circumstances. Once selected each student would agree to a memorandum of understanding with the Foundation.

This is an exciting development that links closely with the objectives of FoV's scholarship program.



David met up with Jesuinha . She was one of the first recipients of an FoV Health scholarship and became a qualified midwife



Venilale aerial view 2023

Friends of Venilale

MEMBERSHIP –If you are new or your membership details have changed please print this form, fill it in with your updated contact details and mail it to the address below. You may pay by cheque or direct deposit.

Bearing in mind that FOV is a purely voluntary organisation which is trying to make a difference, your annual membership of \$20 helps keep it viable.

NAME:

PHONE:

ADDRESS:

.....

EMAIL:



**Please post to—
Friends of Venilale
P.O. Box 204
Mansfield Vic 3724**



If paying by direct deposit

ANZ
Account Name: Friends of Venilale Incorporated
BSB: 013714
Account number: 269147371
Use your name as reference

If you want to know more about FoV or Venilale check out these websites:

<http://venilale.com>
[facebook.com/groups/friendsofvenilale/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofvenilale/)

If you do not wish to receive emails from FoV in future, please email anne_foster28@hotmail.com

SCHOLARSHIP FUND DETAILS

How much does education cost in Venilale?

For one year:

Junior High School
Grades 7-9 = US\$80

Senior High School
Grades 10-12 = US\$120

University—US\$240

Technical College - US\$240

To study to be a nurse or
midwife - US\$530



Venilale Scholarship Fund

Hunger for Education

Timor Leste has had a tumultuous history over the past twenty years. Forced occupation, a war of independence and civil unrest have ruptured many families and deprived children of opportunity.

But the hunger for education is strong. One of the 2012 scholarship winners is Adriana da Costa, who walks two hours each way each day to attend Year 11 classes at Luga Oli Senior High School. After Adriana's mother died in 2001 her father remarried and is no longer in contact with her.



If you would like to contribute to this fund use the same direct deposit details as for membership