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Vietnam Veterans of
America Foundation



PROFILES

Founded in 1980 by a contingent of war-aware Vietnam veterans, VVAF endorses a globally conscious environment to assist civilians trapped in the crossfire of war. Staffed by people intent on lessening the pain inflicted on the civilian populations of war-torn countries, members of VVAF possess the knowledge and caring capacity to dedicate the time and resources necessary to rebuild the lives of war victims.

If we teach kids mine awareness, they will teach their parents and friends." Perhaps his most poignant message encompassed the simplest lesson of all.

"I always start by asking kids...what they need to be a pro. They give me great but wrong answers like 'dedication,'....My answer to them is: 'To be a professional soccer player you need your legs.' It's short, it's sweet, but it gets them every time."

Mine Awareness

VVAF actively participates in The Campaign for a Landmine Free World, which provides assistance to landmine and war survivors, conducts surveys of mine-affected countries and vigorously promotes war and mine awareness among affected populations. To further these objectives, VVAF publishes *The International Humanitarian*, a quarterly periodical devoted to increasing mine awareness.

The Spirit of Soccer Program

Current VVAF related efforts detailed in *The International Humanitarian*, March 2000 issue, include the Spirit of Soccer program in Kosovo, a program combining athletics with mine awareness instruction. On August 13, 1999, VVAF established an official presence in the conflict-stricken country in reaction to the estimated 400 to 600 people injured or killed by exploding landmines since June 1999. As the 15 to 24-year old age group has endured the brunt of these casualties, VVAF responded with a mine education program tailored to common interests of this group, specifically athletics. Sarah Warren, head of the Kosovo program, spoke with local schools, youth centers and the government in an attempt to ascertain the best method to relay mine education to the youth of Kosovo.

Topping the list of viable resources was Scotty Lee's Spirit of Soccer program. After viewing graphic television reports of civilian deaths in Bosnia, Lee ventured there with hopes of a difference. From this work, the Spirit of Soccer program came to fruition, using the international love of sports to instruct young people of the dangers of landmines and other ordnance. Lee's six-week tour of Kosovo enabled him to reach not only the youth of Kosovo but also the older segment of the population, as "kids are very intelligent and are excellent teachers themselves.

The Survey Action Center

Established in 1998, the Survey Action Center (SAC) is a collaborative program comprised of the world's most respected and experienced landmine awareness and relief organizations. Headed by Richard Kidd, SAC is determined to change the perceptions shrouding the landmine issue by educating governments, citizens and others of the horrific impacts people living in mine-infested areas experience daily. SAC performs missions that consist of a ground-level, community-by-community assessment of mine field locations and local impacts. To date, they have performed successful advance missions in Yemen, Thailand, Somaliland and Chad and are considering Cambodia, Lebanon, Vietnam, Angola, Eritrea, Western Sahara and Ethiopia for future advance missions. In a "Report from the Field" from the Fall 1999 issue of *The International Humanitarian*, Kidd proclaimed, "If we can convince the mine action community that the standard of evaluation should be people, not mines, we will have succeeded."

Music Tour

VVAF sponsored a singer/songwriter tour of five California venues December 1-5, 1999, headlined by Emmylou Harris and Willie Nelson, in an effort to raise public awareness of the severity of the landmine problem. Ten other well-known musicians joined Harris and Nelson in this tour to benefit The Campaign for a Landmine Free World.

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