

UPDATE LETTER



BEING A GIFT

Thinking how she will become a gift to others with no money involved, Teacher Judy, one of the beneficiaries of Support at a Distance and who had just graduated a teacher, rummaged through her closet and took out one by one the clothes she was not wearing anymore and her children's books as well. Every day she distributes these to her students until all 50 of them got something. Beyond material things, she also saw to it that if any of them needed someone to talk to, she would allot time after each class just to listen to their problems. One of her students confided having a problem with her stepfather and that was the reason why she could not attend class regularly. Having felt the sympathy of Teacher Judy, she found the courage, and resolved to get along well with her stepfather from then on.

Dear friends,

Christmas is a time where everyone gives and receives gifts to and from those close to them. Come shopping time, everyone

looks into their list of gifts which they wish to give out for their friends and family. A lot of thought goes into the giving. Everyone wants to give from the heart. Unfortunately, many think that they would need to spend a lot to give something meaningful. However, gifts coming from the heart need not drain the wallet after all. What matters is...give of yourself!

To prepare for our Christmas Party last year where the theme was BE A GIFT TO OTHERS, we encouraged everyone to live with that spirit the whole year round, even after Christmas is over. -Nancy, another college graduate of Pag-asa, decided together with her classmates to give up their budget for their class' Christmas party in order to contribute and participate in the Pag-asa feeding program after Christmas. Cooking festively delicious yet nutritious snacks, they fed 35 excited children. This initiative gave them much joy, more than they could ever have, had they pushed through their class' Christmas party only among themselves.

For the past six months, we have intensified our being a gift to others in the following ways:



BY SPENDING TIME

Family Day celebration has been a tradition for our Pag-asa families! On its 7th year, our Family Day program continues to help Pag-asa children develop a sense of identity and belonging as we institute new customary practices and carry on old ones. On Family Day, they turn off the TV, ignore the phone and just spend quality time together. This allows them to feel secure, to feel loved, and to bond with each other.

Every year, Family Day becomes an occasion to cherish the precious yet little time we have with our families. The years will fly by. The older our children get, the

less time there will be for us to spend with them, given our busy work and school schedules. Spending time together, by engaging in a conversation, doing simple daily activities such as sharing a meal, or enjoying fun activities—is the best way that Pag-asa knows to give its children the tools of life which they will need-as they grow up and when they will start their own families.



BY GIVING A TREAT

Gen Rosso, the Focolare Movement's international performing arts group of musicians, dancers and actors, has been traveling to promote understanding among nations, solidarity, and a spirit of brother and sisterhood for more than 40 years.

For the first time, they performed their



musical concert entitled "Streetlight" here in the Philippines. The concert has been an ideal vehicle for reaching young people, and the emotional appeal comes with their style of music and dance, and it did reach all our high school and college students who were there to experience the spectacle. After the show, our high-schoolers remarked that they had acquired an inner strength of their own, and they had discovered things they can do to counteract a subliminally aggressive atmosphere in the classroom and among their friends. The show encouraged them to solve conflicts in their immediate surroundings.

Our group, Teatro.Pag-asa, on the other hand, enjoyed watching a musical concert of the United Nations Singers. It was a chance as well for our Teatro members to observe and learn some points in singing and acting.

United Nations Singers came to the Philippines for the first time, Gen Rosso for the second time, and both did a series of musical concerts. The proceeds were sent to the victims of Haiyan typhoon which severely devastated the southern Philippines in November of last year.



BY GIVING A LIVELIHOOD

Having been blessed with some staff members who happen to be gastronomes and who have mastered their culinary skills through time, we have always been commended for the dishes we prepare for special occasions. Many who had tasted our dishes, encouraged us for quite a number of years to venture into catering.



Finally, we decided to make it a livelihood and thus give jobs to mothers who cook well and love to cook, too. We named our catering service "haPag" (which means dining table), also carrying the prefix "Pag" the name "Pag-asa". It was launched in February as we cooked a week's meal for the visiting Gen Rosso Band members who all enjoyed the variety of both local and international food served to them.

Another livelihood project designed to help more children and families, is the newly launched PAG-ASA ONE FAMILY MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE! We envision that with the cooperative, our families enjoy the fruits of their labor at the same time it helps them and their family members to better their lives in the long run.

As for one of our existing livelihood project: the Favola T-shirt printing, we partnered with Starkmacher e.V., an international organization as well as with six European and non-European countries. Through



Starkmacher e.V. we participated in the project: "Young People's Business" which refers to a wider project aimed at creating a network between different civil society associations worldwide that work with young people, and young entrepreneurs growing their own business ideas. It is a project supported by the European Union. Part of the one-year-project was

an international workshop organized by the Associazione Culturale Modo, with the patronage of the city of Udine, Italy. Three of our youth working in Favola, and its endorser, local actor Hero Angeles, joined thirty other youth participants from different countries.

From design to fashion, graphics and communication crafts, etc., this project is designed for those who want to make innovative entrepreneurship. But more than doing business from creative ideas, the heart of this project is to have a fruitful collaboration between experts, entrepreneurs, and teachers from different countries.

BY FEEDING

It's already the third year that the British School Manila, as part of their Creativity Action Service Program (CAS Program), joined our Saturday Activities. The boys enjoyed playing at our Sala Leo with our basketball team, while the girls shared talents with our theater group. Some of them also visited a few households who are still without electricity connection yet. They distributed – together with the Empowering Brilliant Minds Foundation, Inc. (EBM) and the One Million Lights Foundation – 30 solar-powered lights! They also fed 190 of our children with snack and lunch, which they themselves prepared together with haPag. Driven by the desire to help long



RYONAN Electric Philippines Corporation came for the second time, offered 175 snacks to our children.

For 5 years now, the **Benedictine sisters of St. Scholastica's House of Spirituality in Tagaytay** offered 150 snacks, by giving up their meal budget in observance of the Lenten fast.

term, they funded the lunch feeding of 50 children studying in our Daycare Center for the entire year, starting last month.

BY GIVING EDUCATION

With the increasing number of aspiring college students, we have partnered with Dualtech Training Center Foundation,



studies, where daily attendance is required. The alternative system allows students to choose schedules according to their choice and availability.)

BY DONATING

For the past 17 years, **YOU**, our dear sponsors and friends, have made Pag-asa what it is now: progressive and big. You supported us, through thick and thin. Your every contribution, your initiatives



and efforts, are priceless—and it is there is where we draw our inspiration to continue helping, and to be more progressive in what we do.

BY LOVING

Many of our teens actively participated with the 400 youth campers in this year's National Youth Camp, organized by the Young Ones for Unity of the Focolare Movement in the Philippines. With the theme: "Hearts in Action"!, they experienced, for four days, true happiness, unity, and love. It is a love that sees Jesus in everyone; a love that takes the first step; a love that loves



everyone without distinction; a love that loves one's enemies; a love that makes an individual one with the other, except in sin.

AND LOVING MORE

A year after the very first meeting, all the social centers of the Focolare Movement met again, this time at Fazenda da Esperança in Masbate, Philippines. We were not only able to come up with a common Vision-Mission

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on those two-days meeting, but our desire to love **EVEN MORE** the communities we are helping, was fueled up on hearing how the people in the rehabilitation program tried every moment to live the spirituality of unity that we are living. Fr. Hans Stapel, the founder of Fazenda says: "Taking drugs away is very quick, but we want them to be new people, with a new lifestyle," "A year is necessary. In the first period, we carry them. Then they are able to walk on their own. Then they begin to carry others." This is also how we practice extending help in our social centers. We don't simply give help. The first thing we do is love, and that love transforms our beneficiaries.

Dear friends, going to the bank to send us your contributions might be very simple act, but you are doing much, much more than that because the effects of your contributions make lasting transformations – not only in the lives of "your" children, but also in their hearts. Enjoy your summer!

Your *Pag-asa* family



Other graduates:

Judy Ann Palanganan
BS in Education

Nancy Fernandez
BS in Business Administration

Aljhon Manalo
Computer Science

Raymond Lagarde
HRM



Pag-asa and more than 100 of the household of its member beneficiaries were badly stricken by typhoon Glenda (international name: Rammason) on July 15, 2015. The roof of the Pag-asa Social Center itself was blown off.

Please help us to rebuild.



*Stories of this experience in our next issue
in December 2014.*