

UPDATE LETTER

SEPTEMBER 2018, PHILIPPINES

Dear friends,

We would like to welcome first the new sponsors of Pag-asa, including a group from the New Families of the Netherlands. In order to support additional children, they organized a lunch concert. During the concert, six Gen 4 showed up in the hall carrying with them canvas pictures of 6 of our applicant children, and within just a minute, all 6 children each found a sponsor. Big thanks also to the many sponsors who gave extra for our specific programs or for our general fund, specially to the Rotary Club of Papenburg and its outgoing President, Mr. Christopher Trouw, and his successor, Mr. Rolf Abrams donating the entire sum we requested specifically to remedy our water shortage problem.

Throughout Pag-asa's 21 years, we became even more convinced of the true power of giving. Very recently we encountered Mario (not his real name), who compassionately and simply did the right thing, and because of that, once again we learned that giving is more powerful than receiving.

Mario is not blood-related to Pablo, one of the former beneficiaries of Pag-asa. He is not even a close friend to him but when Mario first knew about Pablo's trials, he was the first one to visit him. When the then depressed Pablo posted a message on his FB wall hoping someone would donate a kidney to him, many came to their house including their relatives but because of fear, not a single one offered their kidney. Pablo got depressed when many people got judgmental towards them. Many of their relatives even said their blood type did not match that of Pablo, only to escape from getting involved with Pablo's problem. Then he posted a suicidal thought. His classmates realized he was not yet well so they planned a visit to Pablo and lift his spirits up. In the end, there were only two of them who showed up. And one of them was Mario. It was in the hospital when Mario asked if there is an option to dialysis in order to cure Pablo's stage 5 kidney failure (glomerulonephritis), for which the only option is kidney replacement. There, Mario cracked a joke "Let me be your organ donor!" Their blood types were also compatible. Before ending his visit, it was Mario



himself who told Pablo "Chat me when you are ready to take me as your organ donor."

The process and preparation of the organ donor and the recipient took 6 long months. On February 2018 the operation was done. No, Mario is no saint, he is as normal as everyone else. In fact, at the last minute, he was so afraid he wanted to back out. The most touching part of this experience was when the doctor woke him up and gave him the good news that Pablo was already awake and that he finally peed normally. A cheerful giver that he truly is, Mario didn't want to disclose his identity. He is a minor too and made the decision without consulting his parents. When he discussed it with his parents, he had no need to repeat it to them as his parents fully supported his decision.

"I feel more physically fit when I donated one of my kidneys for free" - Mario

Truly, giving will ALWAYS be more valuable than taking/receiving.

Dear friends, Pag-asa has survived and thrived for 21 years because like Mario, you took care of us. Were it not for your generosity, Pag-asa would have shut down a long time ago. You may have different good reasons for giving but we are sure that it makes you feel happy when you do.

This led us to wonder how giving makes us happy. Does giving creates in you a "warm glow" effect? Does your altruistic behavior release endorphins in the brain, producing the positive feeling known as the "helper's high"?

Aside from the beneficial effects of giving on physical health – as scientific research has confirmed - **when you give, you are more likely to get back or be rewarded (more commonly knowns as hundredfold) by others down the line – sometimes by the person you gave to, sometimes by someone else.**

Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, has numerous experiences about



this hundredfold. One day, a poor person asked Chiara and her friends for a pair of shoes size 9. Knowing that Jesus was in the poor person, Chiara turned to the Lord, in the church of St. Clare with this prayer: "Give me a pair of shoes size 9 for you in that poor person". As she came out, a lady came up and gave her a parcel. She opened it and it was a pair of shoes size 9. Another time, they had just one apple left in the house. They gave it to the poor person who asked. The next morning, maybe from a relative, a dozen apples arrive. They gave those to others who were in need, and in the evening a whole suitcase of apples arrived. Similar episodes in different forms continue to happen today.

The act of giving is contagious. When we give, we don't only help the immediate recipient of our gift. We also trigger a ripple effect of generosity through our community. One very good example is our sponsors from Teramo, Italy. When Natalina Pellizzari and her family started helping Pag-asa, her friends and her neighbors learned about her noble activity and soon, they too, started supporting Pag-asa.

Dear friends, we will not tire of telling you how appreciative we are with your support. We want you to know that we see you as a friend, a family, and not just a few extra "dollar bills".

For us, there is NO substitute for the care you give to "your" children.

When some of our young professional beneficiaries were little kids, there was nothing better than receiving a gift from their sponsors. A wrapped present was a mystery story. They didn't know exactly what was inside, but they knew it was for them, and it was probably something they wanted.

Dear friends, may I ask you something? Have you ever become poor since the time you started supporting Pag-asa? I guess **enriching the lives of the children of Pag-asa makes you all wealthier because there is nothing more fulfilling than knowing you have made a palpable difference in the lives of these children.**

It could mean the difference between life and death for some people, or a decisive leap in the quality of life of families where their children get education – and a good job – thanks to your unflinching support. Your generosity actually has an impact. The children you have supported in the past may not be able to give back to you, but with little acts of generosity, they are paying it forward to others in need.

Your support is a powerful inspiration in their educational process. They do excel at school as a big number of them usually receive recognition awards during their Quarterly Grading Period, Moving Up and Graduation such as: Special Awards, Character Awards, and With Honor Awards. We have beneficiaries who got "With High Honor" awards which is equivalent to a general average grading of 95 to 97%. This year, we also had our very first Magna Cum Laude, Florence Manalo, the daughter of our Community Development Worker Cherissa Manalo.

Dear friends, we hope you had a wonderful summer vacation and now you get to enjoy the colorful season of autumn!

Your Pag-asa family



Other activities of Pag-asa from December 2017 up to August 2018:

- Donation of Yoghurt drinks (Nestlé South Distribution Center c/o Rissa Colayco), slippers (from Mr. Richard Ng), toys (from Wan Hua Hoi of Singapore) and medicines also to Noveleta and in Sambong, Tagaytay. We came here with the gen boys (we always bring the gen boys whenever possible). Before the distribution, we shared about how the words of the Gospel which we call "Word of Life" can be put into practice; then we taught the children some songs about loving God and neighbor.
- Family Christmas Party centered on the theme of loving and giving.
- Distribution of Christmas gifts to both children and their families.
- Distribution of donated old clothes.
- Annual Incentive Treat for Teatro Pag-asa (watching a play in the Cultural Center of the Philippines, free tickets and snacks by Fralynn Manalo, a dedicated member of Focolare).
- Summer Outing for children.
- Youth camp.
- Basketball tournament with some children and their fathers.
- Distribution of donated notebooks to members and non-members of Pag-asa.
- Family day celebration of our Daycare with the theme: Children are safe in a family that loves one another.
- Corporate Social Responsibility activity of a pharmaceutical company: they distributed toys and school bags while distributing lunch.
- Distribution of 70 solar lamps by the British School of Manila and One Million Lights Foundation. The children of the British School created greeting cards and sold them in order to purchase solar lamps for households which, until now, are not reached by electricity.
- Distribution of Hotel & Spa Essentials Inc.'s donated shampoo and soaps even to Noveleta, Bukas Palad, and Silang Community upon the initiative Troy Inciong, a Focolare adherent.
- Gen Fest, a worldwide gathering organized by the Focolare Movement for the youth. It was held this year at the World Trade Center in Manila, with the theme Beyond Borders. A Focolare Volunteer from New Zealand helped to pay for the participation fee of some of our beneficiaries.
- Nutrition Month Day for our Daycare with the theme about planting nutritious vegetables. With their parents, the toddlers planted seeds of different vegetables in makeshift soft drink bottles.