

 **THE LINGAP CENTER** 
The Lingap Children's Foundation

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Dear Friends,

It has been a long time since my July, 2020 Lingap update letter. The reason, as you might expect, was due to all of the challenges we faced stemming from COVID-19. The year 2020 was horrific for everyone around the world and we were no exception. The quarantine began in March for the kids at the Center, with severe food shortages and price gouging but we're grateful that this situation didn't last too long. By mid-April, the food situation was almost back to normal. We had stockpiled a lot of rice, so we were able to weather much of it with little problem other than lots of inconvenience and a liberal amount of worry!

Next, the schools were closed and no one was allowed to travel throughout the city without a special permit. This meant that no one was allowed to enter or leave the Lingap Center. As a result, 100 little ones were confined to our campus with no end in sight. The staff was challenged with keeping everyone engaged while maintaining a high level of morale. Since they were not able to come and go during the lockdown, the staff reverted to a week-on, week-off work schedule, leaving their families for a week at a time to take care of the Lingap kids. This took a very special sort of commitment on their part!



House parents step in to help teach.

step in to assist as needed and have done a truly remarkable job. Since we are using licensed educators as well as staff tutors while following the school teaching modules, all classes are being counted towards the children's educational requirements. Of course, the kids are obviously disappointed that they haven't seen their school friends since March when the lock-down began, but they are very understanding. Some of our older wards have also stepped in to help as tutors, working with

Education was the next challenge that had to be faced. Since the local schools, teachers and most of their students do not have personal computers, virtual classes were not an option as it is for schools in the U.S. So, we obtained all of the teaching modules for each of the children's classes. I also hired four teachers (*part-time*) who come to the Center periodically as they are able within the constraints of the quarantine. I know all four of them well and they are very gifted educators. The Lingap staff members



Older wards help tutor the younger ones.

the younger ones and as a result, are learning a lot more themselves in the process!

This is just my opinion but I firmly believe that the kids are doing much better academically through our 'homeschooling' than they did in their regular hot and overcrowded classrooms. I really do wish we could continue this way from now on, but the DepEd would require that we be licensed and accredited as a school. They don't make it easy, even though the kids are doing better.

I continue to thank God every day that we were able to construct the new Lingap Learning Center in 2018 which was intended to provide housing for our older (*college level*) wards. Thanks to this new facility, we have been able to house the staff onsite (*separate from the kids*) during their week-long shifts, which are still ongoing at this time.



Virtual music lessons continue.

The computer lab in the new facility has been getting very heavy usage as the kids have been able to conduct research projects online. The choir and string ensemble have been able to continue their lessons virtually with their instructors located in Cebu City (*who do have access to computers*) so I can say that our choir is still beyond good! The library has seen an increasing interest in reading which is a wonderful, positive benefit of the pandemic. To encourage even more reading, thanks to several donors, we were able purchase significantly more books for them.

The staff has been beyond incredible in their commitment to the kids. They have come up with many creative and ingenious ways of keeping the kids engaged and it has paid off. Several examples include Summer Camp, which took place on our grounds during the summer. As I mentioned in my July update letter, it lasted for a full two weeks, since the kids wanted to ensure that the entire staff (*both shifts*) had the 'opportunity' to enjoy the thrill of sleeping on the ground outside! The garden continues to be a source of pride for all as both the kids and staff work in it every morning before breakfast, thereby providing many of the vegetables needed for our own consumption.

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The kids organized special Christmas events themselves, including talent contests with singing, dancing and more. You may recall that the kids are very talented dancers and musicians and they practice constantly. This was capped off with a Christmas fiesta which included lechon (*roast pig - a local delicacy*) with all of the trimmings. The staff did everything they possibly could to make it a very special event. Many of the kids even managed to stay awake to watch midnight Mass virtually. They also had several New Year's events and some managed to stay awake long enough to usher in what we all hope will be a much brighter New Year.



They absolutely love gardening.

Sadly, most of our other 'outreach' programs, such as Summerlympics, Third Saturday Outreach and community choir performances to name a few, have been temporarily suspended due to the ongoing lockdown. We are anxious to see them resume as quickly as possible. Additionally, due to travel

restrictions, my last visit to the Center was in February of last year.

Many of you have contacted me expressing concerns for the welfare of the kids and staff following the numerous typhoons that struck the Philippines late in the year (*four terrible ones in the course of one month alone*). Fortunately, all of them missed us. Once again, it was clear to me that God has His hands over the Lingap Center.

As the quarantine restrictions have begun to lift somewhat, the staff has been able to take them all to an isolated beach a time or two, so they could let off some pent-up energy. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. So, in the midst of it all, there are still many bright spots to be celebrated.



Living with your very best and closest friends isn't bad.

People have often told me that it's unfortunate that the children have to live in an 'institution' like the Lingap Center, rather than with families. But I have to say that living with 100 of your very best and closest friends, isn't all that bad! They truly are their own little family and their support and care for each other is truly heartwarming. The Lingap Center is their home and it's a warm and loving place that I still consider to be a miracle. There is simply no other way to describe it.

As you can see, 2020 was challenging to be sure and we're learning as we go. But all of the kids (*and staff and their families*) are safe, healthy and are making the most of a very difficult situation. But please always

remember that we could never have made it without the support of all of you. You are the ones who have made it possible for the over 600 children who have passed through the doors of the Lingap Center and our 32 college or vocational graduates since we opened in 2006. There is no way in the world that I can ever thank you enough.

As I was thinking about how much you care about the Lingap kids; children you have never met, living on the other side of planet Earth, I remembered a quote I heard from 'Mr. Rogers' many years ago. He said:

“We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say ‘It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.’ Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people to be my heroes!”

Thank you all for your prayers and inquiries about the welfare of the kids, staff and their families. Thank you so much for being part of the greater Lingap family. **You are our heroes!**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Drake'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

John Drake