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July 2022

Dear Friends,

My most recent update letters have focused on the past two, very challenging years at the Lingap Center in Toledo City, Cebu. This was due to the seemingly endless ‘covid-chaos’ and then dealing with the devastating December 2021 Typhoon Odette which struck the central Philippines, including Toledo City. My April update letter mentioned that we were very fortunate that no one was injured and we sustained very little damage to the Lingap Center itself. But the impact on our community and subsequently life at the Lingap Center, was dramatic.

Since then, things have slowly been returning to ‘normal.’ I was able to visit the Center for the first time in April and Fr. Geoff Rose, (my eventual successor) was able to visit earlier this month. The frustrating mask mandate was thankfully lifted in May and the children and staff were able to return to church for the first time in over two years. The schools remained closed to ‘in-person’ classes but thanks to our dedicated staff and tutors, we were able to continue to teach the Department of Education’s (DepEd) classroom modules. While these classes fell woefully short of actual, in-person teaching, the kids were able to keep up with their grade level. In June, we were able to celebrate with 10 wards who graduated from high school. We had two vocational graduates who completed the “Youth Workforce Readiness Program” with a major in Commercial Cookery. Since opening the new Lingap Center in 2006, we have had 36 college or vocational graduates! It should be noted that so far, well over 700 children in need have received some level of residential support from the Center and its staff. So, in spite of all the challenges, we still have had many tremendous successes!

You will recall that during the pandemic, the staff changed to a week-on, week-off work schedule. Happily, they were finally able to return to their regular eight-hour shifts in April. This lifted a tremendous burden from their very supportive families.

The 2021/22 school year ‘officially’ ended on Friday, July 8 and we are now planning for summer camp later this month. This will include a myriad of theme-based activities focusing on creativity and gratitude. Activities will include such things as a variety show presented by the kids, with dancing and singing; sleeping outside in tents with values training woven in for good measure! Most of all however, the kids will be outside the claustrophobic confines of the Lingap Center campus!!! Even though our campus is quite spacious and



*Lyka and Franklin Kris graduate from Commercial Cookery School!*

beautiful, it still became very confining during the pandemic. Summer camp will include plenty of time for swimming at the beach along with a visit to the nearby Water World. To say that the kids are looking forward to summer camp is a dramatic understatement. I think they are counting the minutes and seconds until they can go!

Looking to the future, we still have not received any guidance about the coming 2022/23 school year from the DepEd. I expect that it will include 'in person' classes since the mask mandate has been lifted, but we still don't know for sure. As in the U.S., COVID cases have fallen to a much more controllable level, making it possible to return to in-person classes, but we continue to await guidance.

You may recall that we are licensed to operate by the Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) as a Level II organization. In March of last year, we were named the best NGO (*non-government organization*) in our entire Region VII (*similar to saying the Midwest United States for example*). As a Level II organization, we are required to be reaccredited every five years. However, we have been asked by the DSWD to go through the reaccreditation process early this time. They are hopeful that we will be able to achieve a Level III rating. If we are able to achieve that rating, then we will be the top-rated organization of our kind not just in Region VII, but throughout the entire Philippines!!!

The reaccreditation process is arduous to say the least. It will require all of the staff to put forth their full and complete effort in preparation. The process has been complicated significantly by the pandemic and the many subsequent policy revisions necessitated as a result. Staff preparation training has been underway for some time with a target application submission by this fall. After that, there will be a detailed, multi-day visit to the Center by the DSWD to review everything – and I mean EVERYTHING! They will review our physical facilities, all of our policies and procedure manuals, records, and there will be in-person interviews with the staff and even the children!! It won't be easy and everyone must be ready.

As I was thinking about how happy I was that things at the Center were slowly beginning a return to normal for the staff and the kids, I remembered some excellent advice I once heard from a fellow by the name of Dave Hollis who said:

***“In the rush to return back to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to!”***

That was excellent advice and our reaccreditation process may be the perfect vehicle to help us see where we were, where we are and where we want to go. Additionally, it will help to clarify how we can best help the Lingap kids to improve their lives and achieve their future dreams. Please just never forget that we could never have gotten through the past two years or be ready to face our Level III accreditation review without the help of all of you. Looking backwards, it was a fellow by the name of Jim Butcher who said:

***“When everything seems to fall apart, the people who stand by you without flinching – they are your family!”***

Thank you all for being such an important part of the Lingap Family!! The Lingap project would not be possible without all of you.

Sincerely,



John Drake