



March, 2017

Dear Friends,

Typically, my update letters tell about the activities and successes of the Lingap wards, or how they might have come to live at the Lingap Center. However, one question that I frequently receive is, ***“Who runs the Lingap Center when you are not there?”*** So, perhaps it’s time for you to **‘Meet the Staff!’** Because of the Lingap project and your support, these individuals, who live in an area of very high unemployment, now have jobs and can send their own kids to school and provide their families with the hope of a better future.

The Lingap Center is a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year operation. Therefore, it is critical that we maintain a full staff, covering three shifts. They include 4 registered, licensed social workers (RSW); 9 house parents (1 doubling as a driver and another as an assistant admin. clerk); 1 administrative clerk; 2 cooks; 1 maintenance worker; 3 security workers; 1 counselor; 2 part-time tutors and 1 part-time street educator for a total of 21 full-time and 3 part-time employees. I am very proud to say that these individuals are nothing short of miracle workers!

The Lingap Center Staff



1st Row Left to Right: Rosila Acosta; Marlene Uy; Merlita Barcenas; Neil Ko; Jojin Ladroma; John Drake; Judy Drake; Mary Ann Genon and Ross Lyn Grace Ventic

2nd Row: Almer Espina; Oscar Nacion; Teresita Bucaco; Cerila Pardo; Rosalinda Diaz; Rebecca Pahamutang; Arnold Uy; Edgar Caballero; Johnny Villamor, Benbelino Mag-aso; Steeve Villegas; Joseph Barcenas; Jeffrey Bubuli; Ariel Echavez

Absent: Caren Villegas, Nordiza Inoferio and Marites Tapil (Rosila Acosta has since retired)

<p>As you might expect, they do literally everything for our 100 children that any parent would do for their own kids. They help with homework, perform school visits to check on individual ward's progress and attend countless meetings, the equivalent of PTA. They bandage wounds and standby at the hospital around the clock should someone need to be admitted and on Sundays, they take them to church, often acting as baptismal sponsors. </p>

<p>The social workers help to rebuild lives as needed or work to create identities for children who have no official records such as birth certificates. Without such documentation, the children would never be able to obtain jobs or do any of the myriad of things that are required in order for them to live a normal life when they ultimately go off on their own. The social workers also have the daunting task of performing home visits and making the often heart breaking determination about who should be brought in to the Center.</p>

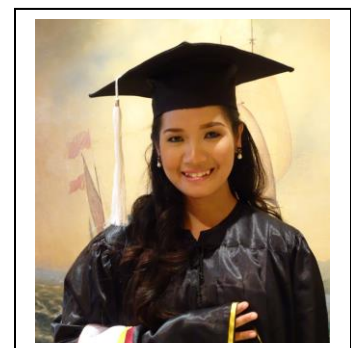
<p>The children eagerly 'assist' the cooks and in the process, they learn commercial cooking and they don't even realize that they are learning!! One of the cooks helped to organize our commercial cooking class, teaching the children to bake every type of bread or pastry you can imagine – and their baking skills are beyond belief!! Since then, the kids have set up their own business selling pastries to the local community. After expenses are paid, the proceeds are shared among the participants. Along the way, this sustainability project is also teaching them business skills.</p>

<p>Our maintenance worker, gladly accepts 'help' from the kids, who in the process, learn welding, electrical and plumbing skills among other things. Some of the kids can fix or build virtually anything and several former wards have been hired by large companies as welders (after being certified by vocational schools!) We even have a graduate electrical engineer and marine engineer!</p>

<p>Since education is one of our core values, our part-time tutors (licensed teachers) in conjunction with the house parents, help them at night with math and a host of other school projects. One of our house parents doubles as the choir director and our counselor helps them through their rough times and serves as a true inspiration for everyone – staff included! It is the staff that choreographs dance routines for fiestas and organizes them for community activities.</p>

<p>I could go on and itemize everything that they all do, but instead, I will just tell you that the entire staff, working together as a tremendous team, are the ones who helped us to achieve the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Level II rating, establishing the Lingap Center as one of the finest facilities of our kind in the entire Philippines (top 5 in Region VII out of 232 NGO's). In short, the staff and their families have dedicated their lives to the Lingap children and they are making a huge difference.</p>

<p>I would also like to mention that our most recent staff addition is none other than one of our own. Marites came to the Lingap Center years ago as a very young Lingap ward. She went through our entire education program and graduated in March of last year from South Western University in Cebu City with a degree in Social Work. She is currently handling the Street Education Program for us as a part-time intern. She is planning to take the Social Worker licensing exam in July. We are very proud of Marites who is serving as a role model for the younger wards who are following in her footsteps.</p>



The entire staff is capably led by Jojin Ladroma RSW, one of our four social workers. Like the others, Jojin is totally dedicated to the children. I consider the entire staff as a gift from God to the Lingap wards, but even more so, to me. They are not only friends, but they are family.



As I think about all that the Lingap staff does on behalf of the kids and how they are helping to rebuild so many young lives, I am reminded of a quote I once heard which went like this:

“The only people who truly know your story are the ones who helped you write it.”

Author Known

The children line-up for the 2016 Christmas photo shoot.

I want to again thank you all for helping to make the Lingap Center project possible. Without your support, we never would have been able to achieve what we have for the over 400 children who have received some level of services from the Lingap Center since we opened the new building in 2006. Also remember, that 100% of your donations went directly to the benefit of the children.

Please visit our website at: www.lingapcenter.org and  like us on Facebook!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Drake'.

John Drake

P.S. We still have 15 staterooms available for our August European Riverboat Cruise fundraiser – round trip Paris to Normandy. Just like donations, 100% of the proceeds from this event will go directly to the benefit of the kids. Just give us a call at 517-529-9702 if you would like more information.

