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Dear Friends,

One of the things about the Lingap project that I like the most is seeing the kids succeed and actually achieve their dreams. Keep in mind that most of them come from very challenging backgrounds and previously had little hope of success. I love sharing their stories with you but I think it is always much better to let them tell you in their own words.

One such story is from Mark Jay. He came to us in May of 2008 at the age of 12 along with his sister Rose Mae. Theirs was a simply heartbreaking story and their hopes for any kind of future were bleak at best. We put them both in school where they excelled. Several years ago, Mark Jay came to me asking if he could go to college to become a Marine Engineer and “see the world.” I felt that this was a stretch but we agreed to give it a try so he enrolled at the University of Cebu. He graduated last year very near the top of his class! In order to be licensed, one of the requirements is the completion of a year-long apprentice program. In the Philippines, such opportunities are very scarce. While some of the other graduates got jobs on tramp steamers, if at all, Mark Jay applied for and was accepted into the Maersk Line program, one of the finest shipping companies in the world. This is a very prestigious and highly sought after assignment!



I recently received a letter from him while he is ‘home’ (at the Lingap Center) on leave. I thought you might like to see it in his own words [edited for clarity]. While it is addressed to me, it is really for all of you, our supporters who have helped to make it possible.

“Good Day Tito John,

Thank you again for helping us towards our goals in life. I can see your God blessings to fulfill our needs and make our dreams come true. I want to tell you about my experience aboard the vessel. It was great and truly amazing. For me, it is my honor to work in the largest container shipping company in the world. I was assigned in the Triple E Class vessel which means for ‘economy of scale,’ ‘energy efficient’ and ‘environmentally improved.’ This ship (the Merete Maersk) is new and is considered as one of the largest and longest ships in the world. You can see it on the internet.

I can say that I am very lucky to have this opportunity since not all fresh graduates have a chance like this. But there are also many challenges Tito John that I experienced as an apprentice engineer; learner and beginner in this career. It is very difficult especially since I worked with foreign people from different cultures, styles and more. It is not an easy job either. I encountered mean superiors, unpredictable weather and seas with no proper

sleep and rest. While it is hard, it helped to make me strong and more responsible. I promise Tito John, that I won't give up no matter what it takes. I will fight and stand on this because I really love it and want to be part of it.

Beyond all of the challenges of being a seaman, I have also had wonderful and unforgettable experiences. As they said, I would travel the world for free. It was really amazing but there are limitations depending on the demands of the ship which have to be completed before we can go ashore and how long our port stay will be. But, I have been to countries in Asia and have seen the wonders of Singapore; Hong Kong and South Korea. I have been to the Muslim country of Malaysia and many places in China like Yantian, Ningbo, Dalian and Shanghai. And from Asia to Europe – we sailed through the Red Sea (which is a very hot place) and passed through the man-made canal which is called the Suez Canal in Egypt. From the Mediterranean Sea, we crossed to the Bay of Biscay which is considered as one of the most dangerous seas, especially during winter or times of low atmospheric pressure. I have been in Spain, Belgium and I have visited also the wonderful place of Le Harve, France and the beach and old town of Gdansk, Poland and I have seen the beautiful Denmark. I have been also in Germany, the UK and Amsterdam where I signed off for my leave.

I am now here at the Lingap Center until May when I will return to complete the second half of my apprentice program. When it is finally completed, I will take my license exam. If I pass the exam, I will be hired by Maersk as a fourth engineering officer.

God bless you Tito John and thank you and all of our supporters who helped to make my dream come true. We all love you so much.

Truly yours, Mark Jay”

In addition to Mark Jay, I am happy to tell you that two of our earlier graduates were hired by Norwegian Cruise Lines. In January, Marme went aboard the NCL Pearl in the Housekeeping Department and on April 1, Marjie went aboard the NCL Getaway as a chef. They are both great kids and will do well.

As I hear the success stories of the kids, I can't help but remember the famous quote from Dr. Seuss in which he said:

*“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself in any direction you choose.
You're on your own, and you know what you know.
And you are the guy who'll decide where to go.”*

Again, I want to thank all of you. Can you imagine that these children grew up in an orphanage and had no hope for a brighter future? Now look at them. How is this possible? It is truly a miracle, but the greatest miracle of all is you. You are all the ones who have made such stories possible. We have some more graduations coming up and I look forward to sharing more stories like this with you in the future.

Since



John Drake



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