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Dear Friends,

Who could ever have imagined that I would be writing a second update letter related to the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Lingap kids. Sadly, each day here in the U.S., new cases are being reported in the news. This gloomy outlook has prompted many of our supporters to reach out to me to inquire about how things are in the Philippines and more specifically, how the Lingap children are doing. Therefore, I thought I would try to provide you with a little insight into how things are going for them.

Fortunately, we have not experienced any coronavirus cases at the Lingap Center, either among the children or the staff. The worst malady we have experienced so far, is one broken arm! However, COVID-19 cases seem to be spiking higher each day throughout Toledo City (*Cebu*). In fact, Cebu has the most reported cases in the Philippines! We are very fortunate to have a qualified registered nurse on the staff to help monitor the situation.

In my April 17 update letter to you on the subject, I mentioned that my greatest worry was to ensure a sustainable supply of food. But so far, we have been able to find adequate supplies, in spite of price gouging and limited sources. In fact, the food situation seems to be getting a little better. Fortunately, we had planned ahead and stockpiled rice - a LOT of rice! The island of Cebu also has many vegetables and fruits easily obtainable, not to mention that our garden is flourishing!!!! The kids work at it every day (*they certainly have the time due to the lockdown!*) In fact, the staff has had to restrain them from planting more and even more vegetables anywhere and everywhere!! They love gardening and this is gardening with a purpose!



We have lots and lots of beans!

The lock-down itself was much more harshly enforced in the Philippines than it has been here in the U.S. In fact, in early May the government imposed even more stringent restrictions (*Enhanced Community Quarantine*) than I described in my April letter. Theoretically, the Enhanced Quarantine ended in June (*at least in Toledo City - other areas are still on Enhanced status*), so now, they are back to the General

Quarantine level. However new cases are still being identified. We are still not allowing visitors at the Lingap Center. Additionally, travel between towns is strictly prohibited and violators are subject to arrest unless they have the appropriate government authorization! In my April letter, I told you that due to the eight-foot high concrete security wall surrounding our two-acre compound, the Center is reminiscent of the Alamo! No one comes in and no one leaves, other than our cook and driver to obtain food. Consequently, the staff is maintaining their week on - week off shift rotation that I told you about. What a blessing our new Lingap Learning Center has been, so we have a place where they can stay.

The Philippine school year ends in March and was supposed to begin again on Monday, June 1, but everything is still on hold. We simply don't know if the Department of Education (*DepEd*) will open the schools or not and the staff and I are having a spirited debate about whether we should just keep everyone out of school for this entire school year. The current word is that the public schools may reopen in August or more likely in December. But no one knows for sure. I am very reluctant to risk the lives of 100 little ones (*in a crowded classroom of 50 - 60 or more*). We have already independently determined that our college students will take a year off. While they are all very disappointed, they understand and agree. These are extremely difficult decisions and the government has provided little guidance since understandably, there are simply so many unknowns.

Some of you have asked if the schools are planning to use 'virtual classroom learning'. While this sounds like a real possibility here in the U.S., keep in mind that Toledo City is a very impoverished area and few of the students or teachers have access to computers or iPads. Wifi for many is not available and when it is, it is often unreliable at best. We do have a tremendous computer lab at the Lingap Center that is definitely being utilized to help the Lingap kids continue their learning, but virtual classrooms for the schools is not really practical.



The Lingap Center Computer Lab

The staff has been absolutely incredible in their selfless dedication to the children. They have been miracle workers at keeping the kids involved, engaged, safe and happy by organizing games, contests, and movie nights. On the educational side, they organize reading groups, spelling bees, and utilizing our computer lab, they are providing online tutorials and as many other kinds of online learning activities that they can come up with. They are also teaching 'classroom style' and through hands-on learning. Some of the older wards are helping the younger kids with reading and math, etc. Thanks also to our computer capabilities,

our choir and string ensemble instructors have been able to continue to provide virtual lessons over the internet.

Since all of the children's eagerly anticipated summer activities, such as; Honor Society, Summer Camp, 'Summerlympics', and other events including our Third Saturday Outreach Children's Mass and Soup Kitchen had to be cancelled, the staff needed to find new and creative ways of keeping the children busy. The garden has been a tremendous outlet for them. Rather than holding Summer Camp at a beach location (*which is the absolute highlight of their social season*) it was held on the grounds of the Lingap Center.



Summer Camp At The Lingap Center

The kids pitched their tents for a five-day summer camp but had so much fun cooking outside and sleeping in their tents, that they extended it for a second five days. They wanted to be sure that the second shift staff got to ‘enjoy’ the experience of sleeping on the ground as much as the kids did!! I know the kids had a wonderful time and I think the staff did too... I hope! Thankfully, the downpour rains held off until the next day!!

In summary, I would describe the children as happy, healthy and frustrated. I would characterize the staff as healthy and very concerned about the future. The coronavirus has forced everyone, not only the Lingap children and staff, but people around the world to find new

and creative solutions and sometimes even better ways of addressing life’s challenges. It was Benjamin Desraeli who once said:

“There is no education like adversity!”

If what he said is true, then what an educational experience this has been!! But even though the challenges have been great, the Lingap kids are learning and they will be stronger and better for it. I can only say thank you to each and every one of you who have expressed your concerns and have continued to provide support. We simply could not have achieved any of what we have without your help. Please know that the children continue to keep all of you, their benefactors, in their prayer intentions each and every night. You continue to be their inspiration!

Sincerely,

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

John Drake



The kids loved eating and sleeping outside! I'm sure the staff did too...?