



July 2018

Dear Friends,

One of the most commonly asked questions I receive about the Lingap Project is: ***“How are the twins doing?”*** For those of you who are new to us or may not remember the story, Genalyn and Genelyn are the identical twins I wrote about in my January, 2012 update letter. A copy of the letter can be found on our website (*lingapcenter.org*), under ‘latest newsletter’ and then scroll to ‘archived newsletters.’



January 2011

It was a very sad story but one with a very happy ending. It was during a home visit to a squatter village in January of 2011 that we found the girls (then age 19 months). They were lying in a filthy, squalid nipa hut. Both of them were suffering from pneumonia, tuberculosis, malnutrition, dehydration, lice, body sores, and severe cleft palates among other things. They were in desperate need of immediate medical attention! They were too weak to even drink water, which just ran out of their mouths when we tried to provide it. The doctors later told us that they were within perhaps three days at most, of death. Due to the severity of the situation, the Department of Social Welfare could do nothing for them and the police told us to just walk away since they did not have the money for medical expenses or burial fees. I am just so thankful

that the Lingap Center was

there for them at such a critical time. We took them to the hospital where they were admitted for approximately five months. Their mother eventually gave up her parental rights and the girls became wards of the Lingap Center. Since we were not licensed to accept babies, one of our social workers took them in as a foster mother.

Today, the girls are doing exceptionally well. They are both extremely healthy and very, very happy. They celebrated their 9th birthdays on May 4. Both have had several cleft palate surgeries and are undergoing speech therapy. They have just entered the 3rd grade and are considered to be “academic achievers!” Please keep in mind that they would not be with us today if not for the Lingap Center and the Lingap staff who were there for them when they



Genalyn and Genelyn May 2018

had absolutely no place to go and no hope whatsoever. The Lingap Center was there only because all of you made it possible through your support and your donations. As I have in the past, I want to again thank you on behalf of Genalyn and Genelyn. They are alive today only because of people like you.



In my February 2018 update letter, I mentioned that we were in the process of building a new Annex Building. Here is the story behind it: In the Philippines, when a child turns age 17, they are considered to be adults and as adults, they can no longer live at the Lingap Center, with younger children. However, since many of our kids never had an opportunity to attend school until they were older or until they came to us, we may have a 15 year-old 5th grader, for example. When they turn age 17, if they are in a qualified educational program, we will not return them to the dangerous streets. Consequently, they have been staying with friends or members of the community so they can continue with their educations under the auspices of the Lingap Center. We set up what we call our ‘Independent Living’ program, which is a sort of halfway house, designed to teach them to live independently, yet under the supervision of the Lingap staff. Our Independent Living students must also work to provide a portion of their living expenses, or work at the Center to teach them how to manage money and other essential life skills. However, it is very difficult to monitor them when they are scattered throughout the community. So, we decided to build an annex building to house the Independent Living kids as well as for our local college students.

To facilitate this, we purchased four lots immediately adjacent to the Lingap Center. Since the lots were a former rice paddy, we had to raise the level of the land by approximately four feet. This meant that a substantial retaining wall would be needed to hold the fill as well as perimeter security fencing. The fencing and filling was completed late last year. We then submitted our building permit application on February 26 of this year. I am delighted to inform you that it was approved on June 1. Construction ‘officially’ began on June 15, with the ordering of materials.



Proposed Annex Building

The new facility will include a much larger library, computer lab, much-needed storage, a maintenance shop (something we have never had) and four residential rooms, which can accommodate up to 32 Independent Living or local college students (eight per room). This will help us to ensure that the kids are safe as they complete

their educations; that they can take their meals at the Lingap Center and have all of the facilities they need to complete their school work. Additionally, we can work closely with them to help them prepare for their ultimate transition to a life on their own. We estimate that construction will take approximately six months or more, depending on many factors. I will try to keep you informed of our progress.



On May 28, we held our 6th annual Honor Society and Homecoming night. It was a spectacular event during which we celebrated all of the kids academic successes. Since we opened the new Center in 2006, we have had 25 college or vocational graduates, one of them receiving her master's degree. The kids made all of their own costumes and performed beautiful cultural dances and of course, our very own choir and string ensemble performed. But the very best part of all for me was when many of our former wards 'came home' for the event. I am not ashamed to admit that seeing them 'come home' was a very emotional experience for me. The older kids now understand all that has been done on their behalf and a very important part of the evening was a recognition, expression of gratitude and thanks by the kids to all of YOU, their benefactors. They specifically asked me to share their gratitude with you. So, on behalf of the over 450 kids who have received some level of services from the Lingap Center, I want to share their sentiments and say thank you all so much. None of what we have achieved thus far would have been possible without you. Please keep in mind that 100% of all your donations went directly to the benefit of the children.



Celebrating academic achievement!

Thinking of how emotional I felt when so many of our former wards returned 'home' to the Center during our Homecoming night, I can not help but recall an anonymous quote I once heard:

“My precious child, wherever your journey in life takes you.....I pray that you'll always be safe, enjoy the ride and life's challenges but never forget your way back home.”

Thank you all for helping to give the Lingap children a place that they can call home and the Lingap family to love and care for them.

Sincerely,

John Drake