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Youths make hammer-and-saw harmony in Miag-ao

26 young men volunteered for an annual social outreach program in Iloilo, Philippines

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THEY came, they sawed, they hammered.

26 young men made worthwhile noise in Bacauan-Mambatad Elementary School (BMES) in Miag-ao, Iloilo from Dec. 26 to 30, 2006. They volunteered for a project

known as the annual Christmas Work Camp. The volunteers constructed the ceiling for the school canteen, taught remedial classes to some pupils, and facilitated a medical-dental mission.

Since 1991, the Work Camp has been an annual activity of Tuburan Study Center, a project of the Daguiiao Foundation in Iloilo City. The 2006 Work Camp received support from Metrobank Foundation, Philam Foundation, and Dr. Jose Sandejas. Other sponsors include University Center Foundation, Ostrea Mineral Laboratories, and Juan Miguel Benedicto. Mang Inasal donated food, while Weesam Express gave discounted boat fares to the volunteers from Bacolod City.

Most of the volunteers are students from Iloilo and Bacolod. The rest are young professionals. These gentlemen chose to work for the

good of others rather than stay in their comfortable homes during the vacation. "I chose to join the Christmas Work Camp because it was a time to serve and give joy to other people", said Albie Clarito, a 2nd year high school student of Westbridge School in Iloilo.

"The experience of being part of the carpentry team was uplifting. Every nail that I hammer represents a person who could benefit from my work", recalled Ryan Gonzales, a Computer Science student of the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos in Bacolod.

While some of the volunteers hammered nails, others stayed inside the classroom teaching remedial classes. This group of teachers was called the Asal-Aral team. They taught a group of about 20 elementary pupils. The subjects were Math, English and Catechism. "The

volunteers in the Work Camp are generous and kind. They help beautify our school canteen and help us learn more of our lessons," a student of BMES remarked.

A medical-dental mission took place on the third day. Six doctors and two dentists gave free consultations and extractions for a total of 340 men and women, young and old. At the same time, Prof. Serafin Malecosio, a Public Health professor of the University of the Philippines, ran a deworming project for 245 children.

The medical and dental team consisted of Dr. Rey Mollenido, Dr. Anthony Montalban, Dr. Marchette Noble, Dr. Dolly Octaviano, Dr. Fely Nollo, Dr. Ryan Nollo, Dr. Emery Demegillo, Dr. Martin Parreño, and Dr. Lore Provido. Some companies and individuals donated boxes of medicine. These donors are Dr. Joefil Acosta, Dr. Ronnie Samorro,

Biomedis Inc, and Pediatrica Inc. Mr. Joemarie Muyco of Iloilo Doctors Hospital also gathered donations of medicine from his friends in the pharmaceutical business.

Meanwhile, Dionnie Salanatin, an Economics student of UPV, helped out in the activity. He later gave this testimony: "In the people's eyes, I saw how grateful they were for the simple gift we gave them."

At the end of each working day, the volunteers took part in sports and entertainment activities. They had games of basketball, badminton, volleyball, swimming, soccer, and patintero. They also held a War Game, which consists of two teams trying to capture each other's flag, armed with water bombs. The nights got filled with musical get-togethers and jokes. While the volunteers did a lot of things, they kept in mind the most important aspect of their lives-

the spiritual. They made time for mass and prayer.

The Work Camp closed with a simple program in the school. The teachers, pupils, and Work Campers showcased their literary-musical talents. In her closing remarks, BMES Head Teacher Mrs. Teresa Jalandoni said "We were impressed to see young men who live far away, doing community service with us here in BMES. We wish more young people would also join your activities..."

The Work Camp is a project of Tuburan Study Center on 49 Gen. Luna Street, Iloilo City. Tuburan was established in 1991 to help professional men and male college students develop themselves into responsible citizens. The center holds activities in academic excellence, civic welfare, sports, music and culture, and spiritual growth. The spiritual direction in the center is entrusted to

Opus Dei, a Personal Prelature of the Catholic Church. For more details, please call (033) 337-0351.

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