



The Volunteer

Volume 26 No. 2

Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency

Second Quarter 2004

NVM Honorary Chair



Corazon Alma G. de Leon was the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chair from 1995 – 2001 where she implemented the “Mamamayan Muna, Hindi Mamaya Na” project and the “Spirit of 100 hours – A Gift of Time.” The latter invites government employees to render at least two hours a week doing voluntary work. She was also the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Secretary during the Ramos administration. Prior to that, she was the Chairperson of the Mt. Pinatubo Commission from 1993 – 1995 and the Undersecretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. She also served in different high government positions before she became a professor at the Asian Social Institute.

But despite her frenzied schedule, Ms. de Leon’s passion for volunteerism and socio-civic activities never faltered. Her civic commitments and voluntary

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Search for Outstanding Volunteers 2004 launched

A series of radio interviews and TV appearances with past awardees, National Volunteer Month’s Honorary Chair Corazon Alma G. de Leon and Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) Executive Director Joselito C. de Vera marked the launching of this year’s Search for Outstanding Volunteers (SOV).

Ms. de Leon and Director de Vera enlightened the listeners about PNVSCA, volunteerism and the mechanics of the SOV. Past awardees Dr. Amelita Dayrit-Go, Ruel Hipulan, George Go Pen Siong, Joaquin Sy and Carmelea Sy talked about their brand of volunteerism, the sacrifices and rewards of being a volunteer and the effects of the award to their voluntary work.

“Before, you will often hear ‘I am just a volunteer,’ as if what he does isn’t important at all. Now with this awarding, it shows how important volunteerism is to our national development. We would like to show that there are individuals and organizations who help, give their services and resources willingly and freely to improve the situation in the country,” Director de Vera said.

Through the SOV, individuals and organizations are recognized paving the way to the influx of positive feedbacks. Mr. Hipulan, literacy worker teaching indigenous people in Agusan del Sur noticed a growth

in the number of people who volunteer to help him out financially and physically after being awarded in 2003. Even his wife, who was adamant about his leaving the comforts of a high paying job to just focus on Save Mindanao Foundation programs, now works hand in hand with him in the Foundation. Mr. Pen Siong, volunteer firefighter, agreed that there was a noticeable growth in volunteers and expressed hope that soon there will be a volunteer in every city. At present, there are 36 associations under the Association of Volunteer Fire Chiefs and Firefighters of the Philippines since it started in 1987.

“Volunteerism does not hanker for recognition nor is it meant to fuel any political ambition. For me, what is important is that you do voluntary work

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Ms. de Leon and Dir. de Vera with Ugnayang Pambansa host Alex Magno

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2004 is PNVSCA's 40th Anniversary

The Multi-Sectoral Advisory Body (MSAB), the group that advises the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) on policy matters, approved the change of PNVSCA's anniversary date from December 12 to December 17. The Body based its decision on the fact that the Agency's precursor organization, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Committee (PNVSC), was created by virtue of Executive Order No. 164 issued by then President Diosdado Macapagal last 17 December 1964. PNVSC evolved into the present PNVSCA by virtue of Executive Order No. 635 issued last 12 December 1980. The MSAB ruled on the issue through a resolution signed by its members. ■

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associations include the Children's Hour, CARITAS Manila, Parenting Foundation, Philippine Association for Volunteer Effort (PAVE), Habitat for Humanity and Save the Parañaque River Foundation, among others, where she was either the presiding Chair or an active member.

Her accomplishments, both as a government official and volunteer, were not overlooked. The University of the Philippines, ZONTA Philippines, the Professional Regulations Commission and Maryknoll College paid her their highest respect by giving her outstanding awards doing what she loves best. Yet despite her stature she remains humble.

Now, she is this year's Honorary Chair for the National Volunteer Month (NVM) celebration. She will help spearhead the volunteerism awareness campaign and NVM promotion of the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA). Hopefully, through it too, she can realize one of her dreams: for volunteerism to reach out to barangay levels and to have a barangay resource center run by volunteers.

Volunteerism, she says, is bringing out the best in a person and doing what one enjoys the most. "It is putting your heart above your pocket and it is an everyday form of heroism. I believe that one must leave a place better than before one had found it."

Ms. de Leon is second from the youngest in a brood of five. When she was younger, she had witnessed the condition of the squatters living in Intramuros and that inspired her to take up Bachelor of Arts major in Social Work at the University of the Philippines (UP) and a masteral in Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. Currently, she is completing her doctorate degree in Public Administration at UP. ■

Relentless Bayanihang Bayan campaign

During the 4th Bayanihang Bayan Desk Officers' meeting held at the PNVSCA library, the pilot agencies gave updates of their activities and accomplishments as part of the Bayanihang Bayan implementation.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) launched the Car Less Day on Fridays last March 26 to promote its anti-pollution campaign. It likewise promoted the use of bicycles by engaging cycling groups to tour around Manila as part of their Firefly Brigade. It also had an exhibit of environment-related machineries and implements held at the Marikina River Bank last 15 April 2004. Aside from those already cited, it continues to campaign for the Adopt-a-Mountain, Coastal-Clean-Up Drive and reforestation programs.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) meanwhile included the dissemination of Bayanihang Bayan posters to all regions including the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and a government radio program interview in February 2004.

For its part, the Department of Education (DepEd) has the following volunteer programs: (1) The Brigada Eskuwela, a community-based program mainly for the improvement of school buildings and facilities, and (2) the Strong Republic, which involves volunteers to teach in the secondary level in different regions of the country.

In 2003, DOH mobilized 781 volunteer workers who extended professional medical assistance, community missions, hospital maintenance, spiritual and moral support to patients in underserved hospitals and areas all over the country. The private sector helped by providing medical supplies, equipment and sponsorships of training and deployment of medical practitioners to rural areas.

Secretary Manuel M. Dayrit issued on 2 March 2004 Department Memorandum No. 3 s. 2004 to set in motion Bayanihang Bayan Program for Government Service in the Department of Health. The memorandum establishes Bayanihang Bayan Desk as the coordinating unit for the program within the Department and sets the direction for effective coordination of private sectors' service and assistance to DOH's programs and projects. ■

PNVSCA staff visits the elderly



Members of the PNVSCA Employees Association (PEA) visited the elderly residing at Golden Acres Bago Bantay Quezon City last June 11 as part of their volunteer activities. Golden Acres is a Department of Social Welfare Development (DSWD)-run facility for the elderly whose families or relatives are unable to care for them at home.

Ms. Paula Sarino, head social worker, assisted the group when they arrived laden with foods, gifts and a stand fan.

"It is a nice feeling to see their faces light up and enjoy what little we have to share. We spent the afternoon just talking to them or even singing with them. Our next activity will be a visit to an orphanage or women prisoners. If only time permits us to, we would do this kind of outreach every month," Fernando Macato, PEA President said. ■



PNVSCA conducts Volunteer Sharing Session in Aklan and Antipolo

Fifty-two local and foreign volunteers assigned in the Visayas and Mindanao region attended this year's volunteer sharing session held at the Aklan State University (ASU) in Banga, Aklan last 21-23 April 2004.

ASU President Dr. Benny Palma welcomed the participants and PNVSCA Executive Director Joselito C. de Vera gave his message to all the volunteers in the opening ceremony. There followed a cultural presentation rendered by the students of ASU and a night of dancing.



On the second day, Ms. Elvi Nazareth of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) conducted a workshop on stress management. She talked about stress and stressors. The volunteers had the chance to share their experiences during the workshop where they were asked to share stressful events they have encountered, their coping mechanisms and recommendations to avoid stress.

In the sectoral discussion, six groups gave presentations related to their respective sectors. The sectors were health, environment, education, enterprise/livelihood development, information and communication technology and agriculture. Each group identified the areas where volunteers are needed, types of organization partners and the facilitating and hindering factors in each sector. Though the areas cited were varied, the gist of the discussion of the six groups clearly showed that volunteerism is an essential development tool that cuts across sectors.

One of the most enjoyable part of the sharing session were the team building exercises in Boracay on the third day where the volunteers played games like patintero, tug-of-war, catch-the-dragon's tail and three-legged race.

PNVSCA likewise held a similar volunteer sharing session last 23 - 25 June at the GEMS Hotel and Conference Center in

Antipolo City for the volunteers serving in Luzon. Director de Vera kicked off the event by welcoming all the participants and thanking the Directors and representatives of foreign and local volunteer organizations for gracing the event.

The whole morning of the second day was devoted to teambuilding activities. The participants were divided into four teams -red, yellow, blue and green. After the Oath of Sportmanship led by PCV Nicolas Hake, games such as guessing game, patintero, tayakad and leg run were played.

Group discussions on information and communication technology, environment, education, agriculture and enterprise and livelihood development were held later in the day. They have identified specific areas in their respective sector where volunteer work is more useful. Cultural differences, lack in funding and red tape, meanwhile, were seen as major obstacles in the implementation of a certain project or program.

On the third day, Dr. Lito Britanico conducted a stress management workshop where he emphasized that methods such as relaxing the mind and the body and during stressful situations are only applicable to stress which are just starting or still within the control of the person. He said that there are serious cases of stress that need professional attention, e.g., stress caused by trauma. He also debunked certain misconceptions on stress and devoted the last part of the session by engaging the participants in a series of physical and mental exercises to relieve themselves of stress.



PNVSCA conducts this activity yearly for volunteers to build networks, share experiences and strengthen coordination among volunteers, the Agency, local and foreign volunteer organizations and other program partners.

PNVSCA also took the opportunity to present certificates of appreciation to outgoing program officers and coordinators namely, Kim Roperio of VSO, Beatriz Fernandez of UNV, Kumiko Ogawa of JOCV and Horst Croessmann of DED. ■





Multiple Dividends

Following is a reprint from Mr. Cielito Habito's regular column No Free Lunch in the Philippine Daily Inquirer's business section. The article entitled Multiple dividends came out last May 3, 2004. Mr. Habito is the former National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) Director-General and Socio-Economic Planning Secretary during the Ramos administration.

“One of the little known but helpful programs of the government that has been around for many year is the local volunteer program. The program is administered by the Philippine National Volunteers Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA), an attached agency of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). This is the government agency that coordinates the various foreign volunteer programs operating within the country including the US Peace Corps volunteers, Japanese and Korean volunteers and those from several other countries and agencies like the United Nations. Being part of the overall package of official development assistance (ODA) extended by our foreign donors, the task falls on NEDA to coordinate the deployment of these foreign volunteers to achieve maximum benefits for the country. At the same time, it takes responsibility for ensuring the safety of the volunteers and making their experience in the country a personally and professionally rewarding one.

VIDAs and BBs

What many do not know is that we also have a small program for Filipino volunteers deployed in various places in the countryside working in communities and institutions engaged in various “aspects” of development work. These volunteers are usually fresh college graduates who sign up for the Volunteers for Information and Development Assistance (VIDA) or the more recent program called Bayanihang Bayan. Volunteers receive a modest P2,000 monthly allowance from the government while the host organization is expected to provide a counterpart allowance to ensure adequate support for the volunteer's essential expenditures.

VIDA and the BB volunteers can work with schools, especially those that are rural based, health centers, local government units, grassroots service NGOs, farm cooperatives, and many other countryside institutions that could use some help from a college graduate to fill in gaps within their own staffing. The beauty of the program is that it provides them a way to be of service to fellow Filipinos while giving them valuable field experience that then enhances their employability later on.

Apart from gaining field experience, the participating youth volunteers gain an enriched appreciation of working at the grassroots level and solving problems where they are. Like the foreign volunteers who sign up for deployment in overseas developing countries, local volunteers who are deployed away from their home localities gain a widened awareness and perspective on the country's development challenges. Thus, such volunteer programs provide two-way benefits between the volunteer and the host institution or community availing of his/her services.

Better citizenship

For all its virtues, the local volunteer program is a very limited one, with only tens of volunteers supported by a very modest budget in any given year. The PNVSCA-managed program is admittedly not the only one of its kind. The University of the Philip-

ines has its Pahinungod program, which harnesses the energies of volunteer UP students to the service of depressed communities, but mainly as a part-time, extra-curricular activity. Ateneo has similar programs to put student volunteers' spare time in the service of the poor. This is also probably true with many other colleges and universities.

In a country where among our foremost challenges are high unemployment and low productivity, a nationwide volunteer program can be an important instrument for addressing these problems and more, all at the same time. It is a program that gives multiple dividends.

Through this same mechanism that promotes volunteerism, fresh college graduates unable to find work immediately have an option for spending their time and energies productively and meaningfully - rather than to the statistics of the unemployed. They also become better citizens in the process of preparing them for their longer term careers, which has been one of the recognized virtues of the alumni of the US Peace Corps Volunteers program, for example.”

Meaningful retirement

But there's another important segment of the population for whom a nationwide development system can be a God-send, and these are the retirees and senior citizens. There are countless members of our population from all walks of life who remain healthy and productive even way past retirement, and who would prefer to keep meaningfully busy rather than accelerate their aging through idleness. In the US and other affluent societies we see them doing volunteer work in public libraries, community centers and other places where they can continue contributing their skills, knowledge and talents for the good of the community. There is no reason why we cannot put together an organized program for harnessing volunteerism among Filipino senior citizens - and actually doing them a favor even as society benefits from their help. And I suspect we will be indirectly improving the health of our senior citizens, for whom fulfillment and a feeling of being useful can be far more effective than drugs.

Upscaling and expanding

It makes a great deal of sense then to channel significant public resources to upscaling and expanding the current local volunteer program into a National Development Volunteer System, with ample funds to support thousands of volunteers who only need minimal allowances all over the country. The local governments could either have their own parallel counterpart programs as well, or the national system could be so designed as to have them become its primary implementers. In any case, we would be raising national productivity, lowering unemployment, molding better citizens out of our youth, keeping our senior citizens healthier and happier and addressing various development needs of our communities - and achieve all this with one cost-effective national program. Certainly a good way to spend our tax pesos. ■

☞ ...continued from page one because your intentions are pure. Being a volunteer isn't a tall order. You give what you can. Each one of us can contribute something. You have no money, your presence would do or if you can motivate people, that would just be as good. Volunteerism should be treated like a corporation. It should not be sporadic. That is why it's great to have a coordinating agency to assure the smooth flow of all resources. PNVSCA may be a small agency but it becomes bigger each time because of the passion of the volunteers who become part of it," Dr. Go said.

Director de Vera then reiterated the need for a registration system wherein a volunteer organization will be recognized through its membership with PNVSCA. This system hopes to professionalize volunteerism and match volunteer opportunities with the

supply.

"Volunteerism is a hard advocacy to impart. Still I observed a greater clamor to develop a partnership between the government and the private sector to help, not only a community, but the entire country. The private sector has the capacity to help the government because the latter cannot do everything on its own. We have to give members of our society the opportunity to help or become pillars of the country," Director de Vera said.

The Search is the centerpiece of the National Volunteer Month (NVM) celebration in December pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 55. Its objective is to increase public awareness and appreciation of volunteerism in nation building and humanitarian activities. It is open to all Filipinos serving in the Philippines as individuals or groups of volunteers. Individuals are categorized as either youth (15 to 25 years old) or adult.

The NVM Steering Committee will also confer Volunteer Lifetime Achievement

Awards to individuals and groups who:

- have consistently contributed through their lifetime time, effort and resources to addressing issues and problems of local or national significance;
- have mobilized others to support volunteer causes;
- play significant roles in promoting the practice of volunteerism and
- give a positive representation of volunteerism as a development tool; and are regarded as models or examples of volunteering.

Nomination forms may be obtained at PNVSCA office, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) regional offices, the Regional Planning and Development Office of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and may be downloaded from the PNVSCA website at <http://www.pnvscaneda.gov.ph>. These regional offices are in charge of information dissemination and serve as search committees in the regions.

The deadline for the submission of nominations to the Regional Search Committees is 17 September 2004. National awardees will be feted on 17 December 2004 in Manila to coincide with the celebration of PNVSCA's 40th anniversary. ■



ASU gains from volunteerism

Aklan State University (ASU) is one of the partner institutions of the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) that greatly benefits from the volunteer programs and services offered by the latter. At present ASU has five volunteers assisting it in different development projects.

One of the volunteers is Shunji Aoki, a Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) helping the University develop a database system by creating an accounting integrated database by which the payroll, remittances, student and employees' information can be accessed. He has been with the ICT Center of ASU in Banga, Aklan since 10 April 2003. One of the things he would also want to accomplish is to create an easier internet access in Banga. He says that it can be done by connecting Banga and Kalibo using wireless. Mr. Aoki is a psychology graduate who worked as a computer engineer for two years before signing up as a volunteer.

Ai Orime arrived at the ASU Ibajay campus last July 2003. She advises the teachers and students of the university on animal husbandry. In February, she started an organic farming system by using organic materials such as cow dung, chicken manure, rice straw, rice coals and rice bran. Ms. Orime plans to utilize biogas for the campus, plant grass for the goats to eat and put up fences to keep the goats from going astray.

Joel Ordon of the Volunteers for Information and Develop-

ment Assistance (VIDA) started to facilitate trainings and seminars on farming technology and system last September at the Banga campus. He also introduced a variety of vegetable and rice that farmers can alternately plant in their lots. Aside from facilitating trainings, he also serves as a tour guide to visitors of the campus. He has a musical program in the campus radio station, which gives trivias on agriculture from time to time.

Judival T. Retinio is another VIDA assigned at the Banga Campus Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Center since June 2003. He teaches the faculty members how to use the MS Word program. Mr. Retinio is likewise the one in charge of maintaining the computers in the university and the ASUnet card, an internet card designed especially for internet surfers inside the university. He also does the financial report for the ICT Center.

Sim Jin Young, a 25-year-old Korean Overseas Volunteer (KOV) assigned in ASU since 5 December 2003 is assisting in the library information automatic system of the University in Banga. She suggests to get a program from Korea and just translate it to English. This library automatic information system will replace the traditional catalogue system in libraries where students need to search catalogue cards to find a book they need. With the new program, the students can easily determine the availability of the book they need. It is also more convenient for librarians because a barcode system will help them when students need to borrow books. ■

Farewell to Foreign Colleagues

Jong-Seon Lee

Mr. Jong-Seon Lee, Resident Representative of Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in the Philippines, likes to serve and impart what he has. His working principle "work by heart and do your best" and amiable personality made him an easy boss to deal with.



Beatriz Fernandez



If there's one important lesson that Beatriz Fernandez had learned in her job, it is listening to what other people have to say before deciding what she does for them.

Ms. Fernandez is the outgoing Program Officer of the United Nation Volunteers (UNV) Philippines. She assumed her post last August 2002 and despite the brevity of her tenure, she felt she had accomplished a lot. One of which is strengthening UNV Philippines' relationship with the volunteer coordinating agency of the government, the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) and in promoting volunteerism in the country. She also got involved with the recruitment and training of new volunteers for the Multi-Donor Program Phase 3, a multidonor-funded rehabilitation program for the conflict areas in Mindanao and Palawan.



Kim Claydon-Ropero

Kim Claydon-Ropero was assigned as Programme Officer with VSO Philippines where she used her agricultural and enterprise development background; assessment skills and familiarity with VSO. Prior to her post as Program Officer, she was a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) volunteer posted from 10 May 2000 to 9 May 2002 at USWAG Development Foundation, a private non-stock, non-profit organization that addresses the socio-economic problem of the province of Aklan. She assisted USWAG's projects in promoting income-generating activities through marketing research and product development. Ms. Claydon-Ropero also worked with Aklan State College of Agriculture (ASCA), now the Aklan State University, from 1997 to 2000 where she produced technology information leaflets and reading materials for farmers, women and out-of-school youth; helped the college start a piña production and processing; set-up model backyard vegetable gardens in five (5) barangays in Banga and conducted a series of farmers' trainings on bio-intensive vegetable gardening.



Horst Croessmann



Mr. Horst Croessmann was the NGO Coordinator of the German Development Service (DED) from 1 July 2002 to 30 June 2004. Mr. Croessmann worked closely with PNVSCA in the project "VIDA Volunteers for Mindanao" supported by DED. ■

Volunteers in First Consolidated Cooperative along Tañon Seaboards

Being a volunteer is not at all easy but gaining new knowledge, skills and service to others makes it all worth the sacrifice.

Malvin Lesmes and Metzi Hermo are Volunteers for Information and Development Assistance (VIDA) in Asturias, Cebu. They are both working in the Micro-Finance Project designed to meet the financial requirements of its members by providing them additional capital by the First Consolidated Cooperative (FCCT) along Tañon Seaboards.

Mr. Lesmes used to be a part-time staff of the organization before becoming a VIDA volunteer. As a volunteer, he supervises daily collection of members' contributions; facilitates credit investigation; assists in the preparation of aging accounts and monthly reports; and sends out demand letters to delinquent members. He also provides assistance in the identification of livelihood projects that helped in the development and productivity of the organization.

Ms. Hermo meanwhile records accounts, helps encode names of members, makes adjustments of unliquidated expenses, consolidates financial documents for the merger of cooperatives, prepares members' directory and monitors patronage refund and capital interests of members. She also conducted several formal and non-formal trainings. Like Mr. Lesmes, she was a part-time staff of the organization before becoming a VIDA volunteer.

Though they encounter some difficulties, they try to find ways to cope and continue serving their community. ■

PNVSCA provides staff members skills trainings

Seventeen Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) staff members underwent short trainings last summer.

Assistant Director Benjamin Turiano of the National Development Authority - Development Information Staff (NEDA-DIS) conducted a two-day Presentation Skills workshop that emphasized on how to effectively deliver and present briefing/orientation materials. Assistant Director Jose Montero and Wilfredo de Perio of the NEDA - Project Monitoring Staff meanwhile lectured and gave workshops on Result Monitoring and Evaluation focusing on new principles and tools in planning, monitoring and evaluation.

PNVSCA conducts regular skills training and capacity-building programs for staff development, as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance delivery of services to clients and partners. ■

DepEd holds Brigada Eskwela! anew

The Department of Education (DepEd) held a weeklong event from 17 - 21 May 2004 to encourage local communities and parents anew to volunteer time to do minor repairs in their children's schools for the 2004 - 2005 school year. Aptly called Brigada Eskwela, this program had parents, local businesses, the school board and communities paint roofs; repair tables and chairs; cement existing footpaths and drains; repair toilets and leaky pipes; replace ceiling boards and broken windows, and spruce up the gardens. ■

Charito Hall:

A Look Into the Undernourished World

Following is a volunteer's perspective of malnourishment amidst the mountain of trash in Payatas contributed by VSO Volunteer Charito Hall



"I first became aware of Payatas when I was assigned there as a Health Nutrition Specialist by VSO in March 2003. Payatas was just one of the 19 urban poor areas where I was em-

ployed with the goal of improving the health and nutritional status of the people. Haligi ng Bata Inc. (HBI), my employing NGO, has a Child Sponsorship Program and other services aimed at improving the lives of children and their families in areas like Payatas.

In the Philippines, poverty continues to impact on the nutritional well being of the population. In the last nutritional survey (2002), it is estimated that 3.5 million children suffer from stunting, wasting or are underweight for their age. Professor Cecilia Florente of the University of the Philippines estimates that as many as 9 million children are at nutritional risk. On average, as many as 30% of children under the age of 10 are stunted and underweight. In HBI areas, the average is much higher, reflecting the depth of poverty in those locations.



One goal of HBI is to identify and then respond to children who are classed as underweight for their age. Through their medical visits, HBI determines which children are below normal weight and then implements a 6-

month supplementary feeding program. Prior to my arrival, HBI did not have any nutrition expertise and based the Supplementary Feeding Program (SFP) on "what felt right." While the HBI was better than nothing, its results were certainly below those which I felt it possible to achieve. Roughly, only 40% of children registered on the existing program showed an improvement in their weight prior to my arrival.

One of my first duties was to give a lecture to the officers of the SFP on the preparation of balanced meals and the importance of hygiene and safe food practices. My education program was designed to reinforce simple and easy to follow practices that were within the capability and the resources of the beneficiaries of HBI. We discussed menu planning, how to

select a balanced diet sourced from cheaply available or seasonal products, food myths, food preparation, storage and hygiene, etc.

I regularly lectured and spoke informally to all mothers about the different sources of micro-nutrients and vitamins. For example, mothers were unaware that liver is a very cheap and rich source of iron and Vitamin A. Anemia and Vitamin A deficiency are particularly high in the Philippines especially among women and teenage girls. Similarly I tried to promote breastfeeding as the natural and most nutritious alternative to powdered milk.

The impact of the new SFP regime proved to be a significant improvement when compared to the years prior to my arrival. Out of 114 participants in 8 urban-poor communities, 87% reached their ideal weights and were able to graduate from the program. Overall this year's program delivered a 117.5% improvement on the figures from previous years. This was equivalent to an extra 41 children reaching their ideal weights. In Payatas, 71% of the children graduated to their normal weight. One child gained 8 kgs., 4 gained 7 kgs. And the remainder an average of 4 - 6 kgs. during the 6-month period.

I am heartened to know that as a volunteer I have been able to share my skills with the 1000 people who attended my lectures and the countless individuals who consulted me on an individual basis. On March 15th 2004, I will commence a new placement in the slum district of Malibay. I go there knowing the challenges that face me, but with a keen desire to repeat the impact of my time with HBI." ■

Charito Hall from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) conducted health and nutrition training sessions consisting of 4 modules in 19 HBI sub-project areas. Thru her assistance there was a 117% increase in the number of children who participated in the program compared to the previous year's program implementation.

