

THE Antonio O. Floirendo, Sr. Foundation (AOFF), named after one of the most successful agricultural industrialists in Mindanao, if not the whole country, is also a leading institution in the pursuit of the ideals of corporate social responsibility.

From providing livelihood projects to extending medical and dental services, the foundation is at the forefront of community service particularly in the province of Davao del Norte.

Recently, to help address the perennial problem on the shortage of classrooms, AOFF donated a two-unit school building donated by the Don Antonio O. Floirendo, Sr. Foundation (AOFF) to Ramon Magsaysay Elementary School (RMES) in Carmen, Davao del Norte.

Rep. Antonio F. Lagdameo (2nd district, Davao del Norte) led the groundbreaking ceremony of the school building construction where he said, "Alam naman natin yung programa ng AOF Foundation, nauuna sa mga eskwelahan." Lagdameo also donated basketballs, footballs and volleyballs to the students of the school, saying that the building and the additional donation will not be the last project of the foundation.

Russell U. Barrizo, programs director of AOFF and senior manager of Tadeco Livelihood and Training Center (TLTC), added that despite having only two classrooms, the school building project will contribute in easing the problem of lack of school facilities, especially with the increasing student population.

RMES, the beneficiary school, headed by principal, Aurelia Cuarenta, gave thanks to AOFF and Rep. Lagdameo for the donation. "This is a very timely [project] for this season because the student population will increase due to the 'No Payment Policy' [of DepEd]," Cuarenta said.

The new school building is the fourth that AOFF has donated to different public elementary and high schools in Davao del Norte. This is part of the foundation's educational assistance program. It supports the DOLE project called "Classroom Galing sa Mamamayang Pilipino Abroad" that is aimed at providing 5,000 classrooms in public schools to mitigate the school building shortage throughout the country.

Projected to be finished within three months, the building will have complete toilet facilities and well ventilated rooms. With a land area of 100 square meters, it will accommodate 45 students per classroom.

AOFF has been focusing on improving the quality of education in the Philippines by adding facilities and advance technology to public elementary and high schools. The foundation has been actively involved in providing educational resources such as classrooms and other school facilities, as well as instruction materials to students in Davao del Norte.

The other guests who graced the groundbreaking ceremony were Mayor Marcelino A. Perandos and Vice Mayor Alberto Sarin of Carmen, councilors Jesus Atanoza and Roselyn Buen, chairman Moises V. Lura and kagawad-kaabag Jesus T. Sagayno of Brgy. Magsaysay, and the teachers and staff of RMES.

Scholarships

As part of its educational support projects, the foundation also extends financial supports to students.

Among the graduates of the last school year (2009) were the scholars of AOFF in various University of the Philippines units.

Cristina Y. Deña and Jan Kristel B. Saligan earned their degree in Agribusiness Economics at UP Mindanao last April 22. Marchie V. Pacol completed her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Major in Horticulture at UP Los Baños last April 25. Marianne P. Salmasan received her diploma in Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from UP Visayas-Iloilo last April 28. All four were

with their parents and Floirendo Foundation Programs Director Russell U. Barrizo during their respective graduation ceremonies.

“Mapasalamaton kaayo mi sa Floirendo Foundation sa ilang dakong tabang sa edukasyon sa akong anak. Tungod sa scholarship, nagmalampuson usab sa pag-eskwela ang anak namo diri sa Iloilo (We are very thankful to Floirendo Foundation for its assistance in the education of my daughter. Because of the scholarship, my daughter has successfully finished her studies here in Iloilo), said Neria Salmasan, who was with her daughter Marianne on the latter’s graduation day.

“The foundation and its benefactor, Don Antonio O. Floirendo, Sr., are more than happy for having assisted these hardworking students to finish their studies, which is a stepping stone towards fulfilling the career that they want,” remarked Barrizo.

Other previous scholars, like Richell Argones, Abbeah Rebuta, and Angelie Vitor, who were also graduates of various UP units, have since then been working with ANFLOCOR and its sister company Tadeco.

The foundation has also recently welcomed its newest batch of scholars for SY 2009-2010. The scholarship shall cover the students’ tuition and miscellaneous fees, book and transportation allowance, and monthly stipend, according to a bracketing system.

Bayanihan

In times of crisis, the foundation has also readily extended its hand to those who suffer tragedies.

Recently, the AOFF, together with the Tagum Agricultural Development Company, Incorporated (TADECO), enjoined this spirit of bayanihan with other groups and organizations in service to the victims of the recent landslide that struck Brgy. Masara, Maco, Compostela Valley Province. Heading the team, AOFF Programs Director Russell U. Barrizo said extending donations to residents of critical areas is one of the projects of the organization. “TADECO community is nestled in a co-existent area, so we aim to spread our assistance, not only within but also beyond the boundaries of TADECO. This is also a way to widen our scope on how we can help other people,” Barrizo added.

TADECO and AOFF visited the Incident Command Center of the Municipal Disaster Coordinating Council in Brgy. Elizalde, Wednesday, to deliver their donations made up of food items such as rice, canned goods, and fruits as well as medicines for common illnesses.

The team also dropped by the evacuation center at Elizalde Elementary School to see the condition of the residents and to know how they could be of help in according the other immediate needs of the victims. There, they found out from Edwin R. Lastra, principal of this said school, what the students of the school need.

Evacuees still remembered the horrifying incident that happened so swiftly, it took the lives of their close friends and neighbors. They also left some of their personal belongings in their houses. “Dagha’g nabiyaan, pero mahadlok mukuha’g gamit ang uban kay basi’g mausban,” said one Jimmy Cortez.

Nonetheless, they thanked the various organizations and groups who offered help through relief goods and other forms of assistance in this critical time. “Daghan ang nanabang [ug] nagpasalamat mi sa paghatag [nila] ug hinabang” said Norma de Leon, who especially thanked TADECO for the bananas that they received.

Medical missions

Even outside the crisis situation, the AOFF also extends free medical and dental services to indigent residents.

Recently, the foundation conducted a three-day medical mission series in three different areas of Davao City and Davao del Norte.

The AOFF started the series last December 4, 2008 in Brgy. Wines, Baguio District, Davao City where a dental service was offered for free to the residents of the community. The beneficiaries of the mission availed of tooth extraction and free medicines.

A medical and dental activity also took place in Brgy. Sto. Niño, Talaingod, Davao del Norte on December 5, where beneficiaries received free medicines after having their medical and dental consultations.

The last stop of the week was in Brgy. Nanyo, Panabo City on December 6. Beneficiaries of the activity were also given free medical and dental consultation as well as medicines.

Floirendo Foundation Programs Director Russell U. Barrizo stressed that “medical mission and other activities like feeding program will go on and will even spread to other areas outside Tadeco and Davao del Norte.”

This series of medical outreach activities, which gathered 735 patients altogether, was made possible with the assistance of the medical and dental team composed of Dr. Gladys Ogatis-Sermon, Dr. Claire Frances Miyake, Dr. Jomari M. Ancheta, Dr. Nicolas Dawi, Jr., and Dr. Andree Guada-Jumanguin. The efforts of the health workers, Hugpong officers and members, and council members of the three barangays led by their heads Neson Binobo, Vicente J. Bascon (Hugpong Talaingod President), and Demetrio C. Maligro, respectively, also contributed to the success of the activities.

Beyond the province

The foundation also extends community service even beyond Davao del Norte.

Recently, the AOFF and Southern Fresh Products, Inc. (SFPI), an exporting company of fresh Del Monte Gold pineapples, joined hands with the 29th IB of the Armed Forces of the Philippines to render dental services to the students of San Nicolas Elementary School in Don Carlos, Bukidnon.

Rollyn John Cabaluna, one of the pupils who availed of free tooth extraction, was among those who were grateful for the timely dental service.

Grade I teacher Donna Nguho emphasized the benefits of the said dental activity. “Dili na o ma-minimize na ang absences sa mga bata kay naa’y dental services nga gihatag diri (The children will avoid or minimize their absences in school because of the dental services given),” said Nguho. She added that the pupils receive dental and even medical attention only when the medical team of the Department of Education visits their school twice a year.

Aware of the high cost of dental services by dental clinics, Nguho told the students, “Chance na ni ninyo kay kita na’y gi-anhian, wala na’y rason nga dili ninyo dawaton kay gihatod na sa inyo [ang serbisyo] (This is your chance to avail of the free service).”

Before this last week’s activity, SFPI and Floirendo Foundation were also in the same school to distribute toothpaste and toothbrushes to the pupils. Along with the civi- military operations of the 29th IB of AFP, this forms part of the community outreach activities of SFPI and Floirendo Foundation which they have been doing in depressed areas in Bukidnon.