

SCAW NEWSLETTER



28 Pinehurst Crescent
Islington, Ontario, Canada M9A 3A5

Toll Free #: 1-866-321-1841

Phone: (416) 231-1841

Fax: (416) 231-0120

E-mail: scaw@bellnet.ca

Web Address: www.scaw.org

A registered Canadian charity founded by Margaret and Murray Dryden

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PHILIPPINES: April 13 - 25, 2005: 5,000 Bedkits

BY DOUG CUNNINGHAM COBOURG, ONTARIO

The top picture immediately to the right of this paragraph is the core team for this year's SCAW Philippines distribution, and here is a brief introduction to them. Our Canadian team normally changes yearly but the Filipino personnel have been involved for many years.

[Seated left] **Linda Taiabjee** — Linda is a Filipino born Canadian citizen. We travelled together on the 2001 Philippines distribution. She and her husband live in Scarborough, and she has been an active volunteer with SCAW for many years.

[Seated next to Linda] **Linda Nielsen** — This was Linda's first distribution with SCAW. Linda hails from Morrison, Colorado, USA. She will tell you that she first came across SCAW while surfing on the internet — what she discovered at scaw.org really caught her attention. Liking what she saw, she took the appropriate steps, applied, and was accepted as a travelling volunteer.

[Seated middle] **Rosemary Boyd** — Rosemary calls London, Ontario home. This also was her first trip as a volunteer. She is a Registered Nurse at St Joseph's Health Centre in London. When Rosemary heard about SCAW she realized that this was the type of volunteering that she had been contemplating trying to get involved with for some time, and happily she, too,



took the appropriate steps.

[Seated right of middle] **Alice Torres** — Alice is the Grand Lady of SCAW in the Philippines. [Notice I did not use the term old] Alice is the



wife of Dr. Juan F. Torres, Jr. Besides travelling with us every day and helping wherever needed, Alice would see that the shopping urges of us Canadians/Americans were satisfied.

[Seated right] **Josie Lucero** — Josie was a great help to me by keeping the number of pictures corresponding with the labels. Josie,

like her husband, travelled with us most of the time.

[Standing left] **Boyet Lucero** — Boyet is a real work horse! He is Dr. Torres's side kick. He is always on the move making sure teams at distribution locations have things right.

[Standing Next to Boyet] **Jess Navarro** — Jess is the man that kicks Dr. Torres from the other side. He also looked after us overseas volunteers, as well as helping to make everything run smoothly. He was always at our hotel one half hour before we were scheduled to be picked up, and saw that we were back safely each night.

[Standing Next to Jess is THE MAN] **Dr. Juan Torres** — Dr. Torres, fondly called Ito, will proudly tell you that he has been associated with SCAW and our founder Murray Dryden for close to twenty-five years. What a nice gentleman! What an ambassador for SCAW! Dr. Torres has fine-tuned the system in the Philippines to ensure that everything always works efficiently, so naturally he gets very upset if or when things go wrong.

[Standing Right] **Doug Cunningham** — I come from a little town in Ontario, Cobourg, and have been associated with SCAW for five years now. This is my seventh distribution.

Also included on Dr. Ito's team of regulars is Teng Punny, Rolly Esguerra, and Teng's son Vincent. To our dismay, we learned that a long time worker with this team passed away suddenly just weeks before this distribution, Romy J. Tan.

(continued on page 2)

MURRAY'S DREAM 1,000,000 BEDKITS - TO DATE 766,850!

(Philippines by Doug Cunningham, Cobourg, Ontario, continued from page 1)

As well as these dedicated workers, the lower picture gives you some idea of the number of working volunteers at every distribution site — about 40 people in this group. Tomorrow we will be at a different location, but there will again be at least this many volunteers. These people are drawn from organizations such as Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus, Salvation Army, church groups, and teachers.

They, like you dear donor, and all our home office volunteers, want to be part of Murray's dream to give children around the world a better chance in life.

BY LINDA TAIABJEE SCARBOROUGH, ONTARIO

Day One: We have just completed our first distribution of 500 bedkits to children in Real, Quezon Province. Real is about 400 miles from our headquarters, Danarra Hotel where SCAW's travelling volunteers usually stay in the Philippines. It took us more than five hours to get there.

It was 4 a.m. the following day, when I decided to start my journal before getting ready for the next distribution. I was awake half the night reviewing the events of the day, and thought this couldn't be happening already ... all in one day! It started quite normally with a quick breakfast with the team at 6:45 yesterday. The van arrived with our driver, Tony and the Kiwanis Rep, Jess Navarro, who will accompany us in the SCAW mobile for the duration of the distribution.

Other vans started arriving to accompany us. There was Dr. Ito Torres and his family,



Linda Taiabjee with new friend.

Alice, his charming wife, along with two sons. Boyet Lucero and his wife, Josie, and Teng Punay and his son, Vincent, joined us in another vehicle. During my first trip to the Philippines in 2001, Vincent was wonderful with the kids and was our most efficient helper.

We were taken to our first stop, a warehouse in Antipolo, a famous town just outside Manila where the cathedral is best known for the Black Madonna who people believe to miraculously assist travellers. The warehouse is a four story concrete structure donated by a Kiwanis member for use in sorting, packaging and shipping the bedkits to the different distribution sites.

We were impressed by the orderly and efficient way the bedkits had been sorted by destination. This year, there are over 60 items in each bedkit. Not bad for a mere \$30! On the third floor, six volunteers were efficiently packaging the items into large transparent plastic bags which are later sealed and tied by ribbon to help the children handle them.

Real is one of the disaster areas where 500 children have been designated to receive bedkits. The other flood- and mudslide-stricken areas whose children will receive bedkits will be Candaba, Palayan and Roxas. The drive through the town of Real took over an hour on a winding road. On both sides of the road, except where there were openings which appeared to be small beaches, are high mountains with green vegetation interspersed with long stretches of mud and boulders. One sizeable mountain appeared to be cut in half by a wide stretch of mud from the top of the mountain down to the road.

The road was surprisingly good, considering reports indicating that the mudslides had covered a great part of the highway with mud, huge boulders, whole uprooted trees and logs from the lumber operations in the mountains, which would make it impassable. Both sides of the highway, I was told, were once the very picturesque mountains that embraced it. I wondered how they physically cleaned up these areas, and how they were able to open access to the towns again. In response to my query, I was told that a 'guardian angel', a very rich man who did not want to be named, sent his crew to clear and clean the road as 'an assistance' to the devastated area.

In November 2004, heavy torrential rains and strong winds continued for several days, releasing the mud, boulders, and uprooting trees and cut logs from the mountain top. Typhoons Unsang and Winnie wrought havoc in the Province of Quezon. At the height of the typhoons, the rivers also overflowed, and the water forcibly rushed into houses in the vicinity. The mudslides from several locations throughout the towns of Real and Infanta avalanched into the houses below. Over a thousand homes were buried, and as many as five-hundred people perished.

2005 PHILIPPINES BEDKIT CONTENTS

5 shorts
4 T-shirts
2 sweaters
1 plastic mat
1 mosquito net
1 blanket
1 mat sheet
1 pillow
1 pillow cover
1 school bag
6 note books
10 coloured pencils
10 pencils
1 pencil case
4 ballpoint pens
1 pair scissors
4 ruler sets
1 plastic envelope
1 pencil sharpener
1 rain coat
1 bath towel
2 pair of socks
1 plastic bag
1 pair of slippers
1 duty bag
1 lunch box
1 face towel
1 handkerchief
1 tumbler
2 toothbrushes
for a total of 69 pieces/31 items

The once picturesque mountains now have gaping sections of mud and boulders. New rivers formed where you can now see floating wooden posts and skeletons of what used to be fishing houses and huts.

Our distribution took place in an elementary school where mud covered the sides of the classrooms that are fronting the mountains. Concrete walls were torn by the force of the

(Philippines, Rosemary Boyd, London, Ontario, continued from page 3)
Ceila E. Cammaya started the day care centre 17 years ago, providing meals, a library and community support in Escopa.

My favourite line from the Desiderata comes to mind: "With all the sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world."

**BY LINDA NIELSEN,
MORRISON, CO, USA**

Her name is Aprilyn C. Enipto. She is too shy to tell me this, but she writes down her name in beautiful block letters. Aprilyn is a 7 year old girl from the Palayan area who has been randomly selected for me to interview in order to give you, the generous contributors to SCAW, a view into the life of one of the 5,000 Filipino children to whom we have distributed bedkits.

I am not surprised that Aprilyn is frightened, but I am shortly to discover the extent of her fear. This particular distribution is unlike the others in that we are making it from a modern convention centre in the town of Palayan. 1,000 children have been transported here, many in military trucks, from areas as far as 30 miles away. The translator tells me that this is the first time that Aprilyn has left her mountain village. Her life is encompassed by a two kilometer square area whose boundaries are her house and her school. I suddenly understand her fear and reluctance to speak when I look through her eyes at this enormous glass building, the thousands of people milling about, and the noise of the traffic outside.

Had it not been for the grass fire which destroyed Aprilyn's home last week, her



Linda Nielsen with 7 year old Aprilyn C. Enipto

family might be considered one of the luckier families to have survived the flooding and mudslides which ravaged this area in November/December of 2004. Aprilyn lives high in the mountains overlooking the coastal area. Although her village was cut off by landslides which blocked the roads, her home was not one of the many which were bulldozed to the ground when the slides swept down the mountain.

Our translator, who also serves as Aprilyn's social worker and dentist, tells me that the local government will try to help Aprilyn's family rebuild their home. The old house which burned was a two metre square thatched roof structure with bamboo walls. Inside, the only furniture was a wooden platform bed on which Aprilyn slept with her three brothers and her mother and father. The family's only income comes from the growing of root vegetables which are sold at the local market. The family gets electricity from a line run to a neighbor's house and the power is used for a single light bulb and a radio. Their diet consists of fish, rice, and local vegetables. Water must be obtained daily from a source which is 7 km down the mountainside. Local authorities are in the process of digging a well much closer to Aprilyn's house, but it will not be completed for several months.

Aprilyn goes to morning classes at a school located 2 km up the mountain. There are only three classrooms in the school and the school operates on split sessions with grades 1-3 attending in the morning and grades 4-6 in the afternoon. When asked what she wants to be when she grows up, Aprilyn can not even conceive of an answer to such a question. More than likely she will mature, marry, and raise a family without ever leaving her mountain village.

THANKS to the following for their contributions to this Philippines trip:

Anonymous donors for providing a myriad of gifts

Black's Photography (Humbertown Plaza) for donating 50% of our film & photofinishing

The Printing House (Gordy Leong, 5120 Dundas St W, Toronto) for printing this newsletter

Kay Kelly, Harry Keating, and Maurice Kowanetz for publishing this newsletter

Milton van der Veen for maintaining SCAW's web site

Donors and volunteers for their continuing support!

When the interview is completed, I ask Aprilyn if I may take her picture. She agrees, but shakes her head "no" in response to my request that she sit on my lap for the photo. Her social worker speaks to her briefly and she reluctantly climbs on to my lap for the photo. I make plans to send her a copy of the photo with the help of the same social worker. Shortly after the interview, I return to my assigned task for the morning which is that of distributing the 64-item bedkit to the children after they have been photographed. At one point I look up and see that it is Aprilyn who is next in line. I squat down so that I am on eye level with her and open my arms. As she approaches, she briefly raises her downcast eyes to look into mine. I see her hesitate briefly, but she walks into my arms and lays her head on my shoulder. It is over in an instant. I stand up and watch as she is led away and I am overwhelmed by the inequities of this life.

To you, the generous contributors to SCAW, I extend my thanks on behalf of children like Aprilyn. It is only through your continued support that we are able to make a difference in the life of a child.

**NEXT SCHEDULED
DISTRIBUTION TRIPS**

**July, 2005
SRI LANKA - 5,000 BEDKITS**

**August, 2005
TANZANIA - 5,000 BEDKITS**

**September, 2005
HONDURAS - 5,000 BEDKITS**

SCAW'S GOAL - 1,000,000 BEDKITS BY 2010!