

# SCAW NEWSLETTER



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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

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 Punay, 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.

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**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

catastrophic mud slides leaving some classrooms with only three walls.

Many sad tales were told by the teachers who volunteered to dress the children. I was told of the psychological impact of this catastrophe on the children. For example, some kids would nervously stand up and run out of the classroom every time it rained. One child (recipient of a bedkit) had both of his parents killed.

A family miraculously survived by holding onto floating wood. Amid the panic, the mother could only manage to embrace two of her five children while her husband got hold of the others. The violent water kept pounding on them until the father lost hold of their four-year-old son. The boy was not seen again. Blaming himself for what happened, the father still experiences nightmares and has lost much weight.

A group of families took refuge at a resort which appeared solid. They were trapped inside when the roof caved in. For several days, those who still survived, drank the water that dripped into the building, and sometimes their own urine. For weeks, only helicopters could bring aid to the disaster area and that posed its own problems. Later, aid arrived by ship.

The Red Cross, World Vision and other relief agencies were still trying to get into the areas when the Tsunami hit the Islands around the Indian Ocean. There was an instant response of help worldwide for Tsunami victims. In Canada alone, over a billion dollars was donated by Canadians and organizations, plus the government match-up promise. This was the result of minute-by-minute flashes of videos taken by CNN and other TV news stations in Canada and worldwide. Unfortunately, the mudslides and flooding in the Philippines, where this SCAW distribution took place, did not receive the worldwide publicity of the Tsunami. For example, in our own Toronto Filipino Community, some donated money to the Tsunami victims through the internet, and were not even aware of the devastation in their home country. The one article carried inside the daily newspapers was easily missed by many.

I am so happy and proud that SCAW distributed bedkits to some of these children. I hope future distributions to

places still not accessible by vehicle such as the town of Infanta will be planned for the future.

The actual distribution in Real was unreal. After we found an okay site, the children started being photographed and receiving their bedkits. There were over eighty volunteers from different Kiwanis clubs who came to help and wanted to be part of this distribution. The road from both sides was closed to traffic and was easily packed with people watching us and looking grateful for what we were giving their children.

Suddenly, without warning, a heavy torrential rain poured from the sky. We dashed to save the three bedkits displayed for the photos. The contents and signs were splashed with mud, and everyone tried to save the cameras and other equipment. Before long, the tents overhead were heavy with water. With long poles, the volunteers poked to remove the accumulated rain water. This created more mud. The downpour stopped and we found another dry spot for our photos and continued with the distributions.

After SCAW completed the 500 bedkits, we helped the Kiwanis club distribute eighty huge bags of foodstuff and clothing to eighty children who did not receive bedkits. This truckload of goodies was donated by a Kiwanis club from Los Angeles, California.

Many people are caring and generous to the SCAW donors. I am grateful and feel happy that I was here to see these children feel good, and to hopefully reduce the anxiety they are still feeling from their trauma.

## **BY ROSEMARY BOYD LONDON, ONTARIO**

Our team of four SCAW volunteers, along with many dedicated Filipino Kiwanis club members lead by Dr. I. Torres, distributed 5,000 bedkits throughout 11 different communities around metro Manila and the Island of Mindoro.

The poverty was overwhelming!



Rosemary Boyd preparing to hand out bedkits

One project that was exceptional and impressed me the most was a day care centre in the heart of Quezon City in a district known as Escopa. In our culture we would refer to an area like this as a slum or ghetto. Squatters or displaced people are what the locals would say. As we strolled through the narrow streets filled with children, animals and debris, the people sitting out were willing to smile and have their photos taken. Many would never before have seen a person from the outside world.

Following our distribution of 300 bedkits, we were invited by Dr. Torres to visit an area where hundreds of families lived under a bridge, below a major Manila roadway. I was struck by how joyful the children seemed. In a child's world, if this is all they know, they are carefree and unaware of the possibilities beyond. The area was dark with dirt floors. It was much like a commune with a laundry area, sleeping sections and community kitchen. Children were everywhere and fascinated by the display area of my digital camera. I felt like the Pied Piper as they followed me on my tour.

When the Pope (John Paul II) visited the Philippines and toured these areas, it is said that he cried.

The Kaisahang Buhay Foundation (KBF) came into being in 1975 as a branch of Holt International Children's Services. KBF coordinates the following:

- Adoption services - international and local sponsorship services
- Foster care
- Family and community outreach
- Residential service for expectant single mothers
- Day care service.

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(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!**