

# Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

June 2004

## Living in Harmony

By Chrissie Matheson

**U**rsula Schloer is one of the most fascinating women I have ever met—her knowledge on Holistic Health, Tribal Cultures, Spirituality and Environmental issues is endless, not to mention her jewelry line!

Ursula is originally from Germany and has a background in education, having worked with children up to the ages of 18 years in creative development. She had a boutique/gallery where she

designed jewelry and garments inspired by the indigenous people of Africa, South America, Nepal, Indonesia and the American Indians, along with a clothing production company. To spend more time with her two sons, she decided to give up her work, packed her “two children in a suitcase” and relocated to the Philippines.

Looking for a more relaxed, simple and flexible lifestyle away from her structured European life, a friend recommended she visit Talisay in Cebu; 23 years later she is still there with many amazing stories to share.

She started her own jewelry business, and at 41 had daughter Angela with long-term partner George Aznar from Cebu. Her business “Ursula Designs” expanded quickly and employed over 200 people. Her designs embody her interest in healing by using natural materials, semi-precious stones, crystals and shells, etc.

But with her passionate interest in tribal culture, healers, health and environmental issues she decided in 1996 to reduce her jewelry business to pursue new challenges by creating a non-profit organization called Shambala Center Inc. This also enabled her to concentrate more on family life with her daughter and to visit her sons who live now again in Germany.

Shambala Center and Tribal Museum's mission is to nurture and develop indigenous culture as a holistic way of life. It creates livelihood programs that make use of creative ethnic talents and documents traditional chants, dances and music. The Center also conducts healing sessions and health conferences and educates people about

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Ursula with some of the tribal artwork she brought to the meeting, and wearing one of her “Ursula Designs” necklaces.*



### Next MWF Meeting

**When:** Monday, June 21, 2004, 6:30 p.m.

**What:** Sister Mary John Mananzan will speak about her life and work as a Benedictine nun, founder of the women's advocacy group GABRIELA and the Women's Crisis Center, dean and president of St. Scholastica's College, and creator of the Women's Ecology Wholeness Farm.

**Where:** Heather Davenport's home, 18C Splendido Gardens Condominium, 146 de la Costa Street, Salcedo Village, Makati

**Bring:** A contribution to the potluck dinner.

**July meeting:** July 19, 2004



## Voice of the Chair

By Lisa Kircher Lumbao

### Visit to Marillac Hills Center for Girls

*The following is an article written by Caz Wade about her visit with the girls being assisted by Advocates for Youth that was featured in last month's newsletter.*

**M**s. Lisa Stuart of Manila Women's Forum and I were kindly invited to attend the Fat Tuesday event organized by Ms Cyndy Tan-Jarabata, President of Advocates for Youth and staff from The Bellevue Hotel, Alabang. They organize a number of activities and events; these include fundraising ventures for the Marillac Hills Center in Alabang. The Center was designed to accommodate 150 but currently provides housing for 282 girls, including some with their own babies. The girls are 7-18 years old and are the victims of sexual and emotional abuse, including rape. Some of the girls are actually hiding from their own families where the main perpetrator lives and hence their safety is jeopardised. Others were lured from their homes in the provinces with promises of plenty of work in the "big city of Manila," then were drugged and forced to perform sexual acts against their will. Most of the problems the girls have experienced are not physical but social, psychological and emotional.

Upon arrival, we were escorted to a large open court area where the girls were seated. Welcome speeches were given and thanks for the donations received for this event from a number of sources including Advocates for Youth, Manila Women's Forum and private donors. The goods included candies, biscuits, sanitary pads, toothpaste and balloons for the girls. The government only provides funding for food, thus these "extras" are a welcome contribution to make their

lives as normal as possible under the circumstances.

One of the speakers was the Head Social Worker, Ms. Angelina C. Vidar, who has 37 years' experience and is responsible for managing the establishment. Some of the girls performed a variety of entertaining cultural dances that they had arranged themselves. Food and drink were distributed and the girls had fun playing games such as sack, egg and spoon races.

We were invited by Ms. Vidar to look around the facilities, which include eight cottages to house the girls and their babies. It was a very pleasant site, with a garden area and an array of potted plants, shrubs and hanging baskets. First we visited the 'baby' cottage, which had a bright and cheery living area and a bedroom that was full of bunk beds with pink bedspreads and simple furnishings to make it feel more like home. The kitchen facilities were rather more dismal, reflecting their limited resources.

Each cottage has a houseparent who takes on a "motherly role" to support and help the girls run the home. They are all expected to undertake household chores and are responsible for keeping the home and garden areas clean and tidy. There are 27 houseparents, a ratio of 1:11 girls. The girls attend a special school on-site, wearing second-hand uniforms. The class numbers vary from 10-40 per class, and there are ten teachers.

Our tour continued onto the medical clinic containing rather antiquated facilities in the clinic area, delivery and dentistry rooms. A doctor, dentist, and midwife are available, and any difficult deliveries or those with complications are taken to a hospital. Treatments are also given for sexually transmitted diseases.

A staff of ten is available to provide counseling and skills training, including cosmetology, toy craft, baking, dressmaking, candle making and food processing. The girls also have an opportunity to learn basic skills in carpentry and painting. The center sells potted plants, cakes and a variety of gifts, dolls, candles, baskets and embroidery items. Goods are sold locally at bazaars.

Currently the government provides P35 per day for each resident, but the actual cost is P80-100 for food, schooling and medicines. When asked for a budget increase, the reply from the government is "facilitate earlier

discharges." They have as Ms. Vidar said become "professional beggars." Maintaining safety standards for the property and soliciting funds is a constant struggle.

The Advocates for Youth (A4Y) group started working with the Center in December 2003 and have a special interest in helping them develop new programs and livelihood activities. Ms. Tan-Jarabata is arranging for a pastry chef to train the girls to produce quality goods that can be sold at a competitive rate. Volunteers from A4Y participate in events and activities at the Center every quarter and private donors are given feedback on how their money is utilized.

Care is taken to work closely with staff from the Center as the girl's individual needs are considered, especially as many have been physically abused. Sensitivity in dealing with each case is essential, and there is a need to ensure that food, shelter, general hygiene and health needs are met before starting the long road to recovery, developing self-esteem and helping to re-build lives.

Generally, the girls are expected to stay an average of one year, but pending court cases can drag on longer. Some girls we spoke to had been there up to 3 years and were being moved to another location as their cases were still unresolved.

The main aim of the center is to return

#### The Manila Women's Forum

The Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Penny Poole**, Programs, Newsletter. **Susan Nishihira**, Programs. **Heather Davenport**, Database. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 818-2887 or 813-0168, or at [lumbao@mozcom.com](mailto:lumbao@mozcom.com) for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress  
[www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum](http://www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum)

the girls to their immediate families, which occurs in 90% of the cases. Incest cases are the most problematic, so help is solicited from the extended family to provide a safe environment for the girls to receive care.

In order to facilitate this return, the staff work closely with key members of the family to help them to understand:

- Their role and responsibilities as parents,
- Child-parent dynamics,
- Create a greater awareness of the trauma the child has suffered and pain experienced.

Seminars and one-on-one sessions are run by the social workers who work to bridge the gap and address these issues.

A few girls we talked to had the opportunity to go outside the campus on a swimming trip or were learning to play a musical instrument. Others said the only trip they went on was to the court for their hearing: a frightening, daunting and upsetting experience which left them with mixed emotions—some drained and sad, others relieved their case was finally over, even if true justice was not always achieved.

Our meeting with the girls was invaluable—spending time with them allowed us to learn why they were there and gain insight into how some of these tragic incidents occurred. Some girls were able to express themselves well and openly shared their stories with us, and said the staff encouraged them to be positive. Others did not join the discussions, their non-verbal behavior portrayed a very different picture: frightened, introverted, and defensive with very sad expressions. Another group of older girls we spoke to appeared frustrated, bored and lacked motivation, they seemed fed up with the mundane activities of their daily routine and seemed to need mental stimulation and new challenging ventures.

We had a very moving and enlightening trip. Many thanks to Ms. Tan-Jarabata for inviting us and looking after us so well, Ms. Vidar for the tour and allowing us to see the Center and especially the girls we spoke to, who made us feel very welcome and were willing to kindly share their stories and make this experience an unforgettable event for us.

Donations can be sent directly to: Ms. Vidar, Head Social Worker, Marillac Hills, Alabang. ■

## KaWoMeNaN

Selected and Edited  
by Beaulah P. Taguiwalo

### Women's crisis centers

There are many helpful models of women's crisis centers that offer a variety of free and confidential services. The Women's Rape Crisis Center (WRCC) in Chittenden County, Vermont for example, has been providing services to women, men and teens for thirty years now.

It began as a group of women in 1973 who simply started answering a nighttime hotline for survivors of sexual violence. Calling themselves Women Against Rape, or WAR, they are now a non-profit agency with 4 full-time and 4 part-time staff and about 60 volunteers. The center's services - which are available to survivors whether their assault was hours, days, months or even years ago -- include:

- meeting survivors at the hospital or their health care provider's office to seek medical care after a sexual assault;
- assisting survivors in reporting to the police and providing support through the legal process;
- helping survivors connect with resources that might provide safety planning, medical care, legal advice and representation, counseling, and shelter;
- manning a hotline that is accessible 24 hours a day through which the center's advocates offer emotional support, information about resources and options, and referrals for survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones;
- providing crisis counseling and advocacy for those whose lives have been affected by sexual violence;
- conducting education outreach work that aims toward changing attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate and condone the cycle of violence.

More about the WRCC at <http://www.stoprapevermont.org/wrcc.html>

*"My concern has always been for the people who are victimized, unable to speak for themselves and who need outside help." (Joan Baez)*

In the Asia-Pacific region, there are programs managed by the Asia Foundation that focus on preventing violence against women and training for disaster management.

One example is the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) which conducted training in 2003 for 24 women's human rights experts from nine Pacific Island nations so that they in turn can train their peers in combating violence against women. In the same year the FWCC also held the first of its four-week Regional Training Programs (RTP) for representatives of domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers and hotlines, and other service providers in Fiji. This comprehensive training provided instruction in legal rights provision, basic counseling, crisis center management, advocacy, lobbying, and using the media.

In Papua New Guinea, a resource center was developed to provide education and support to women in Bougainville province, and a hostel and crisis center for women and children in Port Moresby City. Support is also being provided for the Family Violence Action Committee (FVAC) to help curb family and sexual violence through its awareness programs, which include meetings, newsletters, and radio programs. There is also a national database on family and sexual violence that is being developed that will generate the hard data needed to influence national policies. In connection with this, a standard format was designed for the systematic collection of information on the incidence of family and sexual violence offences. All this is done in collaboration with the Community Peace and Good Order Committee, the police, court officials, health workers, welfare officers, youth and women leaders, and churches.

To know more about the Asia Foundation's work in connection with women in crisis in the Asia-Pacific region go to <http://www.asiafoundation.org/Locations/pacificisland.html>

*"How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak?" (Isabel Allende)*

*(Living... From page 1)*

the benefits of live raw food and how to prepare gourmet dishes.

During the last year, she has shared her "live raw food" with the squatter children in her area in Talisay, resulting in visible better health. The parents have said they no longer buy medicine, which documents Ursula's belief in raw food's benefits.

Ursula has worked with many local tribes, reviving the Marano art of weaving 22 years ago. She has also worked closely with the T'bolis, Mandaya, Mamanua, Mangyan, Eruamanen Manobo, Talaudig, Tagakaolo, Tasaday, among others.

She has led an incredible and varied life and has generously shared her skills and knowledge internationally, attending conferences worldwide.

- 1991 & 1993 Organized peace marathons with Peace concert and Exhibits by Sri Chinoy (Peace Ambassador and Sports Guru) in Cebu
- Sound Healing Concert and workshops with Kailash in Cebu and other venues
- Vision Quest Conference with Healers and Doctors in Cebu.
- Alternative health conference at the Waterfront Hotel in Cebu
- Cosmic Convergence in Cebu, with UP Upstage and Musicians from Bacolod
- Spoke at "Biogenic Health and Longevity" conference in Moscow, Russia
- New Age Conference where she exhibited her Healing Jewelry in Denver, Colorado

• Seminars on "Raw Live Foods" in St. Monica, California

• Was featured by Elsa Klensch of CNN's Lifestyle program for her jewelry designs and tribal work.

• Held the first Natural Health Conference in Manila organized by Josef Ubaldo (1996) – showing how indigenous people live in harmony with nature and body spirit by using movement, colors, symbols and sound.

It is impossible to mention all her achievements as there are too many to include in this article. But I'm sure you will all agree with me when I call her a "Most Fascinating Woman."

Ursula has demonstrated a great passion for helping others and has made a positive impact on improving peoples' lives.

I feel very privileged having had the opportunity to get to know her and believe her life story has the ingredients for a bestseller and great movie!

A special Thank You to Ursula for sharing some of her life adventures with us.

And now here is a great opportunity for you to become involved in Ursula's future project:

- Volunteers needed to help set up and develop a tribal and environmental education center/museum in Cebu.
- People who would be interested in structuring research material and special artifacts.

Contact Ursula at [ursulaschloer@yahoo.com](mailto:ursulaschloer@yahoo.com) or [shambalamaharlika@gmx.net](mailto:shambalamaharlika@gmx.net)

When you need someone to talk to, someone who will listen, someone who cares, Crisis Line is there. Call 893-7603 or 893-7606.

Crisis Line is a convenient, confidential and compassionate way for callers to receive valuable and lasting benefits from trained phone counselors simply by picking up the phone. It offers exceptional convenience; you can call us from anywhere and as often as necessary when you need compassionate help and absolute confidentiality.

Crisis Line is designed for people with hectic work and family schedules who need a listening ear, with expatriate and Filipino counselors who speak English and Tagalog.

If you are currently experiencing emotional pain or stress, help is only a phone call away. You can receive immediate and caring support from your home, office or even a public telephone. Just Dial 893-7603 or 893-7606

*For information on how to support Crisis Line, call In Touch Community Services, Inc., Tel #s: 810-2333 or 893-1893, or Fax # 893-1892. E-mail: [intouch@i-manila.com.ph](mailto:intouch@i-manila.com.ph)*

*"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."*

(Mother Teresa)

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