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# Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

January 2005

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## A Circle of Friends for the Handicapped

**T**he annual Christmas meeting was held Dec. 6th in the fabulous home of Pilar Martinez-Miranda. The setting was elegant and festive, and as members arrived we enjoyed wine and pica pica. Our speaker for the evening, Margrith Gloor of The Circle of Friends Foundation, Inc., brought along various items for sale as a fundraiser, including cards, totes and hand carved jeepneys created by disabled artisans at Tahanang Walang Hagdanan (TWH). We moved out to tables set on the patio and the meeting commenced. Lisa Lumbao had recently given birth to a beautiful, healthy boy, so CJ Fischer filled in for her. Before the program began, twelve wheelchair-bound carolers from TWH sang cheerful holiday songs, both traditional and Filipino, after which they introduced themselves and the work they do within the TWH. MWF presented a monetary donation to the group and then Margarith began her program, introducing us to the The Circle of Friends Foundation, Inc., which she founded in 1998. While we

dined, we viewed a video about the foundation that was prepared by Aenny Vonow.

Margrith Gloor is a dynamic and energetic woman who when she sees a necessity that needs to be filled, works tirelessly to accomplish the task. Margrith's idea of creating a circle of volunteers to support the disabled had been on her mind ever since 1987 when she became regularly involved with Tahanang Walang Hagdanan, which is located in Cainta, Rizal. This center was built by a Belgian Sister, Sr. Valeriana Baerts, in 1974, and the funding came primarily from the Belgian Government, as well from Australia, with no support from the local government. A visit to this center shows the amazing things that one single person with perseverance can accomplish.

Margrith's involvement in TWH was not in day-to-day activities, but in marketing, product development and simply being there when questions would arise or help was needed. While mobility in TWH is no problem, the name after all means "House with no Steps," the disabled at TWH (and for that matter thousands of disabled throughout the archipelago) are housebound because of lack of transport, thus limiting their potential and quality of life.

Margrith decided she wanted to help bring mobility to the disabled in the Philippines. Not knowing where to start from, she began visiting centers for the disabled in Europe and in the US during her annual holidays to see how they are run and how the disabled get around. One day she visited a schoolmate in her Swiss hometown and was delighted to hear that a transportation service for the wheelchair bound called Tixie Taxi exists in many towns in Switzerland. Margrith was able to meet with the person in charge and ride with a patient

in a Tixie Taxi. She returned to the Philippines, came up with the name "Wheelmobile" (courtesy of her daughter Gaby) and called the first organizational meeting in 2002.

The Circle of Friends launched the first Wheelmobile last November 2003 in Glorietta. The Wheelmobile can accommodate 2 wheelchairs. Since then, three ramps have been imported (thanks to her husband Reiner) one of which was paid for by the Spouses of the Heads of Mission (wives of ambassadors). The Circle of Friends' first major fundraiser, a matinee of the Repertory Theater's "The Wizard of Oz" was held last November and the money raised will partially fund a second Wheelmobile, with the remaining funding to be provided by the American Women's Club of the Philippines.

The Foundation also continues to  
*(Continued on page 4)*

"Treat people as though they are what they ought to be and you help them become what they are capable of being."

Goethe

"Disability is not a 'brave struggle' or 'courage in the face of adversity' ... disability is an art. It's an ingenious way to live."

Neil Marcus

### Next MWF Meeting

**When:** 6:30 p.m., Monday  
January 17, 2005

**What:** Irene Oudyk-Suk, a psychotherapist, will speak on Peak Performance For Women. Social and internal messages hold women back from achieving their best. Strategies used by athletes and performing artists can help women perform at their peak.

**Where:** Where: Mara Pardo de Tavera's home, 1188 Tamarind Road, Dasmarias Village, Makati

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

**February meeting:** 6:30 p.m.,  
Monday February 21, 2005

*UN Population Fund assists tsunami victims, warns women, girls especially vulnerable*

## Agency Seeks Funds to Meet Massive Needs across South and South-East Asia

NEW YORK, 27 December (UNFPA) — In the aftermath of devastating tsunamis that struck several South and South-East Asian countries on Sunday, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is calling on governments, sister United Nations agencies and other humanitarian partners to ensure that the special needs of women and girls are factored into all short- and medium-term relief planning.

Tens of thousands of people are feared dead and hundreds of thousands have lost their homes and livelihoods as a direct result of the giant waves triggered by an undersea earthquake in the Indian Ocean. But the United Nations warns that a “second wave” of the disaster could be even deadlier than the first, as

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millions of people face health risks due to contamination of drinking water and devastation of health infrastructure.

To help meet immediate needs, the UNFPA has committed up to \$1 million and additional staff for rapid health assessments, hygiene needs and health supplies, including water purification tablets. The UNFPA is collaborating closely with governments and other United Nations agencies and humanitarian partners to assess immediate and longer-term needs and to develop an inter-agency flash appeal to be issued to major donors in the coming days.

UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid said on Monday that “while the magnitude of this disaster may be unprecedented, we already know from our experience in previous crises – such as last year’s earthquake in Bam, Iran, and the hurricanes that struck the Caribbean earlier this year – that women and girls will be hit especially hard”.

Among the affected are tens of thousands of pregnant and nursing women, who are especially susceptible to waterborne diseases and may require supplementary feeding, prenatal care and delivery

assistance. Even in ideal circumstances, some 15 per cent of pregnant women require emergency obstetric care to avoid maternal and infant deaths. The UNFPA warns that physical and psychological trauma will mean even more pregnant women in need.

To address these concerns, the UNFPA is working with partners to ensure that all humanitarian assistance addresses the special vulnerability of women and girls in disaster-affected areas. Priority areas to be addressed by the UNFPA in a soon-to-be-issued donor appeal will include emergency obstetric care, the establishment of temporary health facilities, and the provision of equipment and supplies.

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*Even in ideal circumstances, some 15 per cent of pregnant women require emergency obstetric care to avoid maternal and infant deaths...physical and psychological trauma will mean even more pregnant women in need.*

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The UNFPA is the world’s largest multilateral source of population assistance. Since it became operational in 1969, the Fund has provided substantial assistance to developing countries, at their request, to address their population and development needs.

For more information, please contact: David Del Vecchio at tel.: +1 (212) 297-4975, e-mail: [delvecchio@unfpa.org](mailto:delvecchio@unfpa.org); or Omar Gharzeddine at tel.: +1 (212) 297-5028, e-mail: [gharzeddine@unfpa.org](mailto:gharzeddine@unfpa.org).

“I walk on the beach during prayers at sunrise every morning. The golden, soft, moist sand is untouched at that time except by the gentle waves of the ocean which sculpt it according to a Divine intelligence. But my footprints leave their mark on that virginal surface — not forever, only until the next wave comes moments later and smoothes out the beach. Our world behaves similarly: living beings affect it, and like waves the cyclical ages, the Yug, destroy, rebuild and preserve all that is. One person can change the world, albeit for a certain duration. History is full of examples of men and women who have single-handedly made desirable changes for periods of time. Like footprints in the sand, each one of us can too.”

Jai Maharaj on Saturday, April 28, 2001

“What quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of a great calamity, when all the artificial vesture of our life is gone, and we are all one with each other in primitive mortal needs?”

George Eliot

Why is gender important?  
Why study risk, and look at  
disaster, through  
women's eyes?  
Here's why...

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## KaWoMeNaN

**Selected and Edited  
by Beulah P. Taguiwalo**

Like age, gender is a factor that shapes every person's daily life. The relationships in society between women and men are a powerful force in every culture, resulting in differences as well as inequalities. Just as women and men are differently affected by economic and social development, they are differently affected by hazards and disasters.

...Women have unique perspectives on community danger and safety. There is no uniform or universal "women's view" on risk and disaster. Being a woman means different things in different cultures, and these cultural differences matter in a crisis.

...Nonetheless, women across cultures...are highly vulnerable to the effects of disasters – though not automatically just because they are women.

Yet the dangers faced by girls and women simply because they are female are not reflected in most disaster research. Nor is much known about how the gender division of labor, for example, can cause the deaths of women and men, respectively, in disasters.

...The world is not "gender blind" and our assessment of risk cannot be either...Until we look at disasters through women's eyes, we won't know enough about half the world's population in disaster situations.

– From "Working with Women at Risk: Practical Guidelines for Assessing Local Disaster Risk" by Elaine Enarson, et al. International Hurricane Center, Florida International University, April 2002.

## In Touch Community Services

Calendar of Events

### January 2005

*Natural Eyesight Care* - Free Introductory Lectures. Saturday 15 January : 10am to 12 noon. Thursday 20 January : 2pm to 4pm & 6.00pm to 8.00pm

*Telephone Crisis Line Training Course* - No previous experience necessary. Gain valuable crisis intervention skills and enhance your interpersonal, communication skills. Meet a variety of new people. Course runs from 18 January to 8 March : Tuesday & Fridays : 9am to 1pm. Evening courses available Tuesdays & Thursdays 6pm to 9pm.

*Improve Your Breathing With Buteyko's Method!* - Improve your health and well being. Particularly effective for asthma, allergies, rhinitis, sleep & anxiety disorders and many others. Free Introductory Lectures: Tuesday 25 January 2pm – 4pm & 7pm – 9pm. Workshop: 31 January, 01, 02, 07, 10 February 2 – 4pm or 6 – 8 pm, (Saturday 4-6pm)

*Introduction to Living in the Philippines* - by Daryl Newton. Living and working in a new culture can be a challenge! We can help make the transition smoother! Join our open seminar and learn how to fit in. Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January : 8.30am to 2.30pm

*Natural Eyesight Care Workshop classes* - Saturdays 29 January to 12 March 10.00am to 12.30pm. Thursdays 27 January to 10 March : 1.30pm to 4.00pm

### February 2005

*Effective Listening & Self Awareness* - An interactive workshop giving participants an opportunity to explore the barriers to communication & gain skills on effective communication and listening. Monday 31 January & Thursday 3 February : 9.00am to 1.00pm

*Managing your Domestic Helpers* - by Gigi Gatti. This seminar aims to help you understand social, legal and cultural aspects of managing your domestic helpers. Wednesday 9 February : 9am to 11.30am

*Living With Stress* - A stress management workshop. Wednesday 16 & 23 February : 6pm to 8pm

*Oriental Carpet Auction* - Carpets from Eastern Carpets of Singapore. Thursday 17 February at Skytop Room, Hotel Intercontinental. Viewing from 6pm. This is an evening fundraiser to help support the community services of ITCS

*Your Life In Transition* - Back by popular demand! A workshop for people too familiar with yet another change! Tuesday February 22 : 9am to 2.00pm.

Watch out for other interesting workshops coming up!

- ▣ For Women Only – Marriage Workshop
- ▣ Tracking Your Money
- ▣ Peak Performance & Empowerment for Women
- ▣ Feng Shui for Healthy Living
- ▣ Jung workshops
- ▣ In Touch Open House Coffee Morning

For further information please call 810-6233 or 893-1893 or visit us at No. 48 McKinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati (Holy Trinity Church compound)

Email: [intouch@i-manila.com.ph](mailto:intouch@i-manila.com.ph) Website: <http://www.in-touch.org>

*(A Circle... From page 1)*

support Tahanang Walang Hagdanan in product development as well as in many other areas. The disabled crafters at TWH sew beautiful tote bags that the Foundation sells for fundraising to help buy more Wheelmobiles. They also sell beautiful jeepney cards, gift tags, paintings and hand carved mini-jeepneys that sell like hotcakes. They also have continued to support artists in wheelchairs through continuous training. Disabled artist Romy Tarine has made fantastic comics regarding recycling and composting.

Last July, Margrith visited Sandra Coles, 19, who became completely disabled at the age of 10. She has two sisters and one brother. Their father died and their mother abandoned the children when Sandra became sick. Sr. Valeriana of TWH found them and Sandra and her sisters are now living in a small center for women located on J.P. Rizal Street. Despite being disabled and parentless, Sandra has the determination to learn to paint with her mouth. Margrith invited all of them to attend a street party organized last November in Libis, Quezon City. On this rare occasion to go out, they used the Wheelmobile. Driving along EDSA on their way back to the center, they were mesmerized by a spectacular show of holiday fireworks. The children were totally amazed by the show of lights.

Margrith concluded her talk by saying, "I have packed so many ideas, visions and hopes into a single firecracker receptacle, ready to explode into thousands of sparkles, each

sparkle representing an idea, each sparkle inviting a volunteer...and then I was engulfed by this show of fireworks last Saturday. It was uncanny!!" She summarized the foundation's volunteer opportunities as follows:

We need volunteers in the office, especially an office manager;

We need volunteers to work with the artists;

We need volunteers to visit companies and hotels;

We need volunteers to help in fundraising;

We need volunteers to set up the Wheelmobile office, do the scheduling, etc.;

We need volunteers to liaise with the government;

We need volunteers to liaise with the private sector;

We need volunteers for product development;

We need a treasurer; and

We need a membership person.

Margrith envisions wonderful centers existing here in the Philippines like those she visited in Switzerland and Germany. This is still a dream, but with Margrith's hard work, perseverance and the help of others who are committed to make the dream a reality, it can happen, just as the first Wheelmobile became a reality. In closing, she said "With your help we will, because you have the power to make a difference." □

~ Margrith can be contacted at [mgloor@attglobal.net](mailto:mgloor@attglobal.net)

## *it's a boy!!!*

MWF Chair Lisa Lumbao and her husband Manny are the proud parents of a new baby boy. Aaron Emmanuel was born on December 1 at 7:06 p.m. He weighed 6 lbs. 11 oz. and is healthy and happy!

### **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. **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. 812-3932, Tel/Fax 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)

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