

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

January 2009

Helping the Neediest in Tondo

By Rose Hunt



Kids from Harvesters Christian Ministries-Tondo eating before their performance. Lady in red is Lyn.

Harvesters Christian Ministries-Tondo was set up in 1995. Harvesters for Christ Foundation Inc., the social

action arm of the organization, was officially registered in 1997 to help transform people's lives in Tondo, one of the poorest areas in Manila. Lyn Galamay, the speaker at the December 8 MWF meeting, is the founder and

driving force behind the organization. Lyn is a nurse and is currently doing her Masters in Community Development. When she first starting reaching out to the people in Tondo in 1993, she
(Continued on page 2)

JANUARY MWF MEETING ■ **When:** 6:30 p.m., Monday, January 19, 2009. **Where:** Julia Cummin's home, 76 Real Street, Urdaneta Village, Makati City. **What:** Pindie Stephen, Sr. Migrant Training Officer with the International Organization for Migration, and Sylvia Lichauco of Lola Grande Foundation for Women and Children, Inc. (LGF) will speak on "A Filipino Phenomenon: Caretakers of the World". They will share their reflections on the feminization of migration in the context of Filipino migrant workers, also known as OFWs. What price is paid by the generation that has left behind their families, and what is currently being done to address this? **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner.
February meeting: Monday, February 16, 2009.

(Helping... from page 1)

found multiple problems: incest, malnutrition, and ill health. Many families did not have an adequate means of livelihood.

The Harvesters for Christ Foundation began in a small way with an informal preschool center serving 12 homeless students. The center was situated in the backstreets of Tondo in a tiny room about three by four meters square.

Since then the center has grown to accommodate more than 100 students, and offers a mixture of formal and non-formal education to adults in the form of literacy classes, and to children 3 to 6 years of age. After pre-school, children are sent to public school with a small allowance. The organization partners with the Department of Education to provide literacy class for the adult and out of school youth.

Harvesters helps in providing scholarships to deserving students.

The Foundation has further expanded to provide health, relief and emergency assistance. Many children are nutritionally vulnerable, so the Foundation has a feeding program for about seventy-five children as well as medical and dental check-ups and weight monitoring. Parents are also offered livelihood training (e.g., making soy sauce, soap and candles) as well as sessions in responsible parenting.

Illegal drug use is common in Tondo, and several members of the community are imprisoned in Manila City Jail. Some are innocent victims of injustice with no easy access to legal help. The Foundation aims to help such people through spiritual guidance and counseling. Many lives have already been transformed to the extent that recipients are now actively involved in

the Foundation's work in the community. An offshoot of this ministry is an outreach program at the Manila North Cemetery where some of the inmates' families live in mausoleums.

These achievements are tremendous considering that the Foundation has very little funding, largely sourced from Lyn's friends and committed individuals, and the Union Church of Manila, which sponsors two feeding classes. The Foundation receives no formal grants, though Lyn would greatly appreciate the opportunity to receive additional funding. Lyn explained that her vision is to open a larger school and to expand outreach work to other areas of the Philippines such as Bulacan, where they have started a small program.

It was clear from Lyn's presentation that the Foundation is meeting the

(Continued on page 4)

Helping the Neediest All Over the World

Nashville

Every Christmas Eve, the neediest families in Nashville, Tennessee receive free baskets of food and toys. Police personnel and volunteers line up at a loading dock in their cars to accept baskets for delivery, all a part of a great annual tradition for over 40 years.

Kenya

Her commitment to "helping the neediest patients anywhere" is one of the reasons why Panizales, a native of the Philippines, was the first recipient of the Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Award. Tess Panizales, MSN, RN, was one of the first non-Kenyan citizens to volunteer on a medical mission led by the Nairobi Women's Hospital to help Kenyans displaced from their homes during the post-election violence that erupted [the previous] December.

For Panizales, the most difficult part of the mission was seeing patients as young as 18 months who needed treatment for horrific sexual violence. "It was devastating," she said. "To hear and read about sexual violence among children and women is just heart wrenching, but to see a repair operation being done to this child

is beyond my emotions. This is when I question myself, what can I do as a nurse, as a mother, as a citizen of the world."

New York

Last November 9, 2008, The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund began its 97th campaign. Until February 6, 2009 articles will appear about children, families and older adults whose lives were improved through assistance from the New York Times Neediest Cases Fund. The previous year, 11,340 donors contributed \$7.6 million.

The Neediest Cases Fund is administered by The New York Times Company Foundation. It raises millions of dollars to help thousands of individuals and families in distress. The assistance is rendered by seven New York City social service agencies. The Times pays the Fund's expenses, so all contributions go directly to provide services and cash assistance to the poor.

Kolkata

The neediest children in the slums of Kolkata, and their parents who are sex workers, street-sweepers, and those who burn the bodies of the dead – all traditionally low-caste occupations. Helping them is the focus of The New Light Foundation in Kolkata, India.

In 2003, a \$2200 grant was given to

New Light to construct a building for the children's program, a night shelter, a vocational training center, and a medical clinic. The grant came from the 100 Friends Project, a small, informal grassroots project based in Berkeley, California.

100 Friends

The 100 Friends Project began in India in 1989 when its founder, Marc Gold, met a Tibetan woman with terrible ear infections. Marc took her to the doctor.

One US dollar from Marc paid for antibiotics that saved the woman's life, and \$30 got a hearing aid that restored her hearing. "I was amazed to learn that you could make such a big difference to a person's life with so little money," Mr. Gold said.

When he returned to the US, he decided to return to India to help other needy people in a similar manner. He contacted one hundred of his friends so that he could share this experience with them and gather donations to put to use on his next trip.

Since then, the project and its supporters have expanded dramatically. This year, 2009, Mr. Gold will carry out the project's twentieth humanitarian mission.

~ Compiled and adapted by BPT

December 25 is the peak of Christmas celebrations. But did you know that it was a pagan festival in pre-Christian times? It's because in the Julian calendar, it is the winter solstice.

Here's more, on winter and winter solstice celebrations.

1 JANUARY 2009

KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited by
Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Year End & the Winter Solstice

Midwinter Gatherings

Even in modern cultures, midwinter gatherings are still valued for emotional comfort, giving people something to look forward to during the darkest time of the year. This is especially true for populations near the polar regions of the hemisphere.

The depressive psychological effects of winter on individuals and societies are for the most part tied to coldness, tiredness, malaise, and inactivity. Winter weather, plus being indoors, causes negative ion deficiency which decreases serotonin levels and results in depression and tiredness.

The Winter Blues

What causes the winter blues? It is believed that insufficient sunlight in the short winter days increases the secretion of melatonin in the body, throwing the circadian rhythm off balance with longer sleep.

What can one do to combat the winter blues? Exercise, light therapy, and increased negative ion exposure from plants, well ventilated flames, burning wood, or beeswax can reinvigorate the body from its seasonal lull. These relieve the winter blues by decreasing melatonin secretions, increasing serotonin, and temporarily creating a more regular sleeping pattern.

Cultural Winter Therapies

Midwinter festivals and celebrations occurring on the longest night of the year often call for evergreens, bright illumination, large ongoing fires, feasting, communion with close ones, and evening physical exertion like dancing and singing. (Think Christmas trees, Christmas lights, Christmas parties, and family gatherings.)

These are examples of cultural winter therapies that have evolved as traditions since the beginning of civilization. Such traditions "can stir the wit, stave off malaise, reset the internal clock, and rekindle the human spirit."

Winter Solstice Observances

Amaterasu Celebration

In late 7th century Japan, festivities were held to celebrate the reemergence of Amaterasu, the sun goddess of Japanese mythology, from her seclusion in a cave. Tricked by the other gods with a loud celebration, she peeks out to look and sees an image of herself in a mirror. She is convinced by the other gods to return, bringing sunlight back to the universe.

Requiems for the dead were held. Shishimai and Manzai (a style of stand-up comedy) were performed all night, awaiting the sunrise. To this day, aspects of this tradition have continued with festivities on December 21, the winter solstice, to celebrate Amaterasu's coming out of the cave and welcome the New Year.

Dongzhi Festival

The Dongzhi festival is one of the most important festivals celebrated by the Chinese, Vietnamese, and other East Asians on or around December 21. This is the first day of the dongzhi solar term, when the sunshine is weakest and the day is shortest.

The origins of this festival are based on the yin and yang philosophy of balance and harmony in the cosmos. After this celebration, the days will have longer daylight hours, and an increase in positive energy flowing in. Traditionally, the

Dongzhi festival is also a time for the family to get together. Families make and eat tangyuan—pink and white balls of glutinous rice symbolizing reunion, family unity, and prosperity.

Beiwè Festival

In Finland, Sweden and Norway, the indigenous people called Sámi worship Beiwè, the sun-goddess of fertility and sanity. Her name is invoked in special prayers for the insane, in the belief that it is her absence together with the continuous darkness of the long winter that causes madness.

Together with her daughter, Beiwè-Neia, Beiwè travels through the sky in an enclosure made of reindeer antlers, bringing green plants back to the winter earth for the reindeer to eat.

On winter solstice, Beiwè's worshippers sacrifice white female animals. They thread the meat onto sticks, bend these into rings, and tie them with bright ribbons. They also cover their doorposts with butter so Beiwè can eat it and begin her journey once again.

Christmas or Christ's Mass

This is one of the most globally recognized midwinter celebrations, marking the birth of Yeshua of Nazareth, later known as Jesus Christ. It is observed on December 25, the winter solstice in the Julian calendar.

Below: A folk tale depiction of Father Christmas riding a goat.



(Helping... from page 2)
many challenges of Tondo with tremendous resourcefulness even though its monetary resources are scarce. Most workers are contributing to the Foundation on a voluntary basis, showing great dedication and determination in moving toward their vision. Access to additional funding can only augment their achievements.

If you know of any individuals or organizations that would be willing to provide funding or if you are willing to assist in preparing proposals or

provide other assistance, please contact Lyn at (632) 255-9385. Mobile: +632917-824-0001 or email HARVESTERS95@yahoo.com

Mission

We commit ourselves to the transformation in the quality of life of people through provision of quality education, health services and community development.

Below: The kids from Harvesters Christian Misnistries-Tondo, singing for MWF.



“It was once said that the moral test of Government is how that Government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.”
~ Hubert H. Humphrey (1911 - 1978)

Manila Women’s Forum

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. **Shari Virjee**, MWF Membership Message Board and Assistant Chair. **Cecilia Leung** and **Julia Holz**, Programs. **Lisa Stuart**, MWF Membership Message Board Moderator. **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. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

MWF Newsletter
c/o Lisa Lumbao
26-B Casa Real Townhouse
Real St., Urdaneta Village
Makati City 1225