

# Arnold Janssen Kalinga FOUNDATION

Quarterly Newsletter of the Arnold Janssen  
Kalinga Foundation Inc.



*Inside the Issue*

## REUNITED AT LAST: MELVIN'S HOMECOMING

by Venice Narisma

“Sir Vinz, this is Polangui, Albay, the place where I was born and where I felt the love of my relatives. But this is also the place where I experienced my worst nightmares. A lot has changed...”

Melvin, who spent 31 years living on the streets, went on to describe how what used to be a grassy expanse was now a national highway. Dense forests and mountains were now rolling plains. “I left this place 35 years ago; I changed a lot about myself. I have gradually fixed my bad habits (“kulturang kalye”, the negative aspects of living life on the streets). I hope that in this new chapter of my life, I will be accepted by the people who once loved yet judged Melvin Bobis, the child...”

### Caged like an animal

Often complaining, stubborn as a mule—as he himself admits, Melvin is often described as a troublemaker because of his way of rubbing people the wrong way. While his peers, the other formerly homeless members of batch 5 who underwent the Foundation’s 3-month KALINGA values formation program, have already started working or have returned home to their respective families, Melvin couldn’t quite transition yet.

During his extended stay at the Arnold Janssen Bahay Kalinga (BK), however, the full horrifying details of his traumatic childhood experiences came to light.

At 11, Melvin was sent to a juvenile center in Tanay, Rizal.

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**MELVIN (EXTREME RIGHT) SMILES AS HE SPENDS TIME WITH HIS LONG-LOST RELATIVES. VENICE NARISMA**



**MELVIN HAD SEVERAL VIDEO CALLS WITH HIS FAMILY IN ALBAY BEFORE FINALLY MEETING THEM AGAIN IN JANUARY 2024. VENICE NARISMA**

# The Director's Message

## 9 YEARS OF 'KALINGA': A JOURNEY OF LOVE

It has been nine years! Nine years of an exciting journey since the doors of the Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center first opened on July 16, 2015...

Born of a desire to be of service to the neglected, abandoned, and forgotten, KALINGA has, indeed served as a beacon of hope, especially to those who embrace Kulturang Kalinga. More than caring for physical well-being, Kalinga has, by recognizing Jesus in every person's heart, provided, not just food but also clothing, showers, and more importantly, the affirmation that we are all "kapwa"—beloved in God's eyes.

According to one of our youngest student volunteers, a 12-year old girl, this is "grace". Indeed, there is gratitude,

respect, affirmation, and Christ in everyone. Hope touches those who share the meals, as well as those who volunteer to serve them.

I have witnessed some of those experiencing homelessness heal and in gratitude, develop the desire to be part of the mission by offering to serve those who are left living on the streets. KALINGA welcomes everyone—Christians of every hue and persuasion, non-Christians, and even are non-believers, never expecting a conversion, simply because we are in this, not out of generosity, but because of love.

With gratitude and love in our hearts, together, we face whatever challenges the future holds. ■

Tessam Castillo  
Managing Director



A STREET DWELLER PEERS INTO THE ARNOLD JANSSEN KALINGA CENTER DURING ONE OF THE "KAIN-LIGO" DAYS.

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*Indeed, there is gratitude, respect, affirmation, and Christ in everyone. Hope touches those who share the meals, as well as those who volunteer to serve them.*

# REUNITED AT LAST: MELVIN'S HOMECOMING

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MELVIN'S RETURN TO HIS CHILDHOOD HOME WAS CAUSE FOR A CLAN-WIDE CELEBRATION. TO WELCOME HIM, HIS RELATIVES GATHERED FOR A BEAUTIFUL MEAL TOGETHER. [VENICE NARISMA](#)

There he experienced many physical beatings, the first of many others he would suffer in various prisons later on. But before these, he first experienced physical, emotional and other kinds of abuse at the hands of his own uncle. "I remembered that my uncle used to lock me up in the dog kennel and tie me up...I was even fed in that cage," he shared.

Orphaned from a young age, Melvin never knew the care of his parents.

## No one to trust

After his release from the juvenile center, Melvin had nowhere else to go; Luneta and the streets of Manila became his home for 31 years. On the street, he learned to fend for himself despite having no one to trust. Hunger pangs is what urged him on.

He found himself behind bars again after getting involved in crime.

After a few years on the street, he contracted pulmonary tuberculosis. The polluted city air did him a lot of violence; often, Melvin, who was also asthmatic, struggled just to breathe. God obviously had other plans for him when he joined the KALINGA formation batch 5 in January 2022 after being extracted from Lawton, Manila. Melvin would also get much-needed treatment for his tuberculosis with the assistance of the foundation.

## 'Faces from his forgotten yesterday'

January 25, 2024. This was the day Melvin stepped back into the land of his young self.

It was also the date he would see for himself if his relatives would finally accept him. This day would dictate a new path for him.

Tears fell from his eyes when he saw people who loved him as a child waiting for him, faces from his forgotten yesterday. It's like the Biblical story of the Prodigal Son.

Today, Melvin has his own place, near his aunt's house. He also raises pigs and sells them as his means of livelihood, while his uncle sends him a monthly allowance to start his new life.

Many things can change; we can change, but home remains home. The place of one's nightmares can become the setting for one's dreams. ■

# AJ KALINGA FAM HEADS TO THE BEACH

by Nirva Delacruz

“We work hard; we play hard.” It’s the mantra of the driven but also of those who practically pour out, not just their energy, but their heart and soul into the service of others. This thinking inspired the Arnold Janssen Kalinga staff outing on April 10 – 13 in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro—where else?—to the beach!

Generously welcomed by Divine Word College – San Jose, Occidental Mindoro president Fr. Felino Javines, Jr., upon their arrival, the staff then set out to a secluded island in Sitio Iyungkay for two nights of rest and recreation by the seaside. At the Coral Beach House, twenty-one staff, as well as two of our media friends, Raffy Lerma and Vincent Go, one of our most beloved donors, Hedy Lee, and several Paghilom facilitators swam, played games, shared stories, kayaked, and even had an intensely competitive “AJ Kalinga Got Talent” musical showdown, which was



**TESSAM CASTILLO, ALBERT RAÑESES, AND CHUCK SAYSON POSE WITH THEIR PRIZES AFTER WINNING ONE OF THE INDIVIDUAL GAMES ON DAY 1 AT THE RESORT. [VENICE NARISMA](#)**



**THE GROUP ALSO VISITED THE MASSIVE CATHEDRAL OF SAN JOSE, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO, WHICH WAS NEAR THE DIVINE WORD COLLEGE. [JL ORQUE](#)**



**THE OUTING WAS ALSO TIME FOR THE STAFF TO BOND, CATCH ON SLEEP, SING SONGS, AND SHARE JOKES. [VENICE NARISMA](#)**

won by Josephine Moria in first place with her winning Visayan ballad “Himayang Nahunlak”; Fatima Fernando in second place; and Albert Rañeses in third. Heading back to downtown San Jose, the last day was spent interacting with the bright Mangyan scholars of the Mangyan Education Center (“Mangyan Balay Adalan”), an in-house formation house for Mangyan scholars. The day tour of the town also included side trips to the town’s World War II war memorial; a San Jose marker by the sea; and the San Jose cathedral. Some staff also went for a food trip at the local night market to buy trinkets and listen to some live band music.

We were all reminded of the graciousness of our Lord whom we serve and whose “yoke is light.” Recharged for the mission, the AJ Kalinga fam headed back to Manila on April 13.

Truly, “anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from His.” ■

# PAGHILOM'S SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS: CONFIDENCE IN GOD & ONESELF

by Tin Bartolome

“Para magkaron ng bagong kaibigan” (To find new friends);

“Para makipag-bonding” (To bond with others);

“Para makakain” (To be able to eat)...

These were just some of the responses we got from the EJK youth and orphans who joined Program Paghilom's second youth camp, held on May 17-19. These reasons, especially the third one, are all candid and poignant but may not mean much to those used to comfortable lives. These could, however, be an eye-opener as regards the realities of the drug war's most vulnerable victims.

Twenty-five young people, aged 13 to 24-years old joined the first youth camp for the year at Ciudad Christia in nearby San Mateo, Rizal on March 22 - 24. UP Psychology Professor Jay A. Yacat designed the modules of the camp, which carried the theme “Pakikipagkaibigan” (Friendship). I was surprised by their response to the activities prepared for them. From the self-introduction activity to personal boundaries, and even planning their future—the girls, most especially were eager and willing to share. I also saw how much they needed to move—to play ball, to swim, and to have fun.

## Connections established

The camp, as expected, was not without challenging situations. One 14-year old had the team on edge as he engaged in all sorts of attention-getting behavior. I felt deep-seated anger in his heart as I asked him about his daily activities, his thoughts on what we were doing, and most especially, his family.

Generally, the boys in the group were mostly shy and some simply played basketball every chance they got. As expected, the swimming pool drew all of them in like a magnet, so we included swim time in the daily schedule.

Meanwhile, on May 17-19, the Paghilom team welcomed 27 youth to the second youth camp themed “Establishing Connections”, held at the Falcon Crest Resort in Norzagaray, Bulacan, this time with Prof. Yacat himself as lead facilitator. They made their own rules, and many said they enjoyed the mindful walking exercise. The venue also allowed them to pick fruits to eat, so they had mangoes and duhat to their hearts' content!



**THE YOUTH OF PAGHILOM CHALLENGE THEMSELVES THROUGH AN OBSTACLE COURSE DURING THEIR CAMP HELD IN BULACAN ON MAY 17-19.**

**AMÉLIE DUMORTIER**

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*I felt deep-seated anger in his heart as I asked him about his daily activities, his thoughts on what we were doing, and most especially, his family...*



**THE PAGHILOM YOUTH ALSO GENERATED LIFE INSIGHTS DURING TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES AND GROUP DYNAMICS. [AMÉLIE DUMORTIER](#)**

### Trauma + stigma

Many of these young people come from families so different from ours. For some of them, daily struggles are unimaginable—and added to these struggles are the trauma and stigma of losing their loved ones. A few years ago, in the days when the widows and victims’ mothers were allowed to bring a child or grandchild to our retreats, a boy (whose father was an OFW) told another child whose father was a victim, “Tatay mo, adik! Tatay mo na-tokhang! [Your father was an addict! Your father was a Tokhang case!]” The latter tried to fight back in tears and was visibly distressed.

### ‘Peace of mind’

For 19-year old Lovely Ramos, who joined the second camp, the activity helped her and her fellow EJK youth have “peace of mind.”

She said, “Bilang isang orphan na may trauma sa nangyari sa aking mga magulang, ako ay nagpapasalamat sapagkat napakalaking tulong ito sa akin ang camp...Napakarami kong natutunan.” (As an orphan who has trauma because of what happened to my parents, I am thankful because the camp is such a big help to me...I learned so much.)

Today, we do not ask our youth who among them experienced bullying. We talk about it only when they

mention it. At camp, another form of bullying happens: the quieter ones are sometimes made the butt of jokes or are discriminated against, often ending up in a separate table, or in chairs far from the larger group. We take note of these details, but gently nudge them to join the group, while asking the others to help make them more comfortable.



**THE PAGHILOM YOUTH ALSO BONDED WITH AJKFI STAFF FATIMA FERNANDO (IN WHITE) AND BELGIAN VOLUNTEER [AMÉLIE DUMORTIER](#) (IN FOREGROUND). [JL ORQUE](#)**

## Confidence in God & in oneself

According to Lovely, who lost both of her parents in 2016, her favorite topic during the camp was the one about having self-confidence. She explained: “Sapagkat minsan ako ay nawawalan ng confidence sa sarili, lalo na ‘pag may nagsasabi sa akin na ‘Hindi mo naman kaya ‘yan.’ ...Kaya ngayon, unti-unti ko natutunan na dapat gawing motivation ang mga sinasabi nila.” (Sometimes, I lose confidence in myself, especially when someone says, ‘You won’t make it’ ...That’s why now, I’ve been slowly learning to turn their words into my motivation.)

These young people have so much potential. Having survived the odds, some are even flourishing. Quite a few are academically gifted, while others excel in sports and dance; some are able to balance work and studies well. There are strong indications that they are resilient. With some help, it can be transformative.

For Lovely, the strategy is quite simple, “Magdasal palagi at magtiwala sa Panginoon at sa sarili.” (Just pray always and trust the Lord and yourself.) ■

## KITCHEN MANAGEMENT 101: EMPOWERING OUR RESIDENT VOLUNTEERS IN THE KITCHEN *by Ludy Duran*

“Dasal-Aral-Gawa”. This is the framework guiding Arnold Janssen Kalinga Center’s resident volunteers’ 6-month formation program. Simple yet powerful, it even echoes the rule of life of the early monastic orders. While forming the soul, the program also aims to upskill the resident volunteers, who have chosen to leave their life on the streets and start a new chapter in their lives.

As part of our dedication to serving the homeless better, Kitchen Management 101 is part of their training to become healthy, reliable, and productive members of society, equipping them with essential skills and knowledge to effectively run the ever-busy and sometimes unpredictable AJ Kalinga kitchen, which serves an average of a thousand street dwellers a week.

### From food safety to staff management

“Maraming nagbago [because of the kitchen management training]. Natuto silang kumilos na hindi na kailangan utusan, (A lot of things changed because of the kitchen management training. They learned to work without being told),” shared Christian Punzalan, one of the Batch 9 resident

volunteers who have undergone 4 sessions on cooking and food preparation basics as part of the kitchen management module.

According to Punzalan, he finds the session on the proper measurement of ingredients particularly valuable. “Yung mahalaga talaga ‘yung sa panimpla, tatakalin, para maayos mo ‘yung lasa. ‘Yung pagluluto kasi diyan mano-mano, tulad ng ginagawa amin, tantsyahan. (What’s really important

is the measurements so that you can calibrate how it tastes. Because we just usually do things by hand, we just estimate when cooking),” he explained.

### Delicious & nutritious meals

One important topic in the training is menu planning, where volunteers learn about creating balanced and diverse menus that cater to the nutritional needs of our dear street dwellers. By planning the meals,



**EVERY “KAIN-LIGO” DAY, THE CENTER PROVIDES A FULL MEAL OF VIAND, RICE, AND A VEGETABLE SIDE DISH FOR THE HOMELESS. NATISHA WEST**



**THELMA, ONE OF THE KALINGA CENTER'S BATCH 9 RESIDENTS HELPS PREPARE THE MEALS FOR THE CENTER'S "KAIN-LIGO" DAYS FOUR TIMES A WEEK. NIRVA DELACRUZ**

volunteers can ensure that meals are not only delicious and satisfying but also nutritious. Inventory control is another crucial component of the program. Volunteers learn why it's important to maintain inventory records, to set optimal levels for ingredients and supplies, and to effectively manage stocks to avoid shortages or wastage.

Of course, a kitchen isn't a kitchen without warm bodies. Through the sessions on staff management, volunteers learn about fostering a positive and productive work environment; effective communication; and proper delegation of tasks.

Moreover, food safety and hygiene protocols are covered in the training. Volunteers are trained on proper food handling practices, sanitation procedures, and compliance with food safety regulations to maintain a safe and

hygienic kitchen environment.

### **Empowered in the kitchen**

Volunteers also familiarize themselves with equipment maintenance practices to ensure that kitchen appliances are properly maintained and in optimal working condition. By understanding the importance of regular maintenance and cleaning schedules, volunteers can prolong the lifespan of kitchen equipment and prevent unexpected breakdowns.

In any setting, skill isn't everything. Attitude and values tie everything together. The integration of values formation, team building, and the development of Christian values in work enriches our volunteers' training experience. A values-driven orientation equips them with the moral compass and necessary interpersonal skills to put their technical know-how to good use.

Another AJ Kalinga first, Kitchen Management 101 is an essential component of our volunteer training program, designed to empower resident volunteers in the kitchen. By equipping volunteers with the tools to effectively work in a busy kitchen, we uphold our commitment to serve hearty, home-cooked meals to our dear homeless—with lots of heart! ■

## **Be a partner-in-mission!**

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The 5Ps of how to help: **Pesos, Products, Presence, Promotions, & Prayers** help the most vulnerable sectors of society, the homeless & the wounded re-create themselves.

“*...Skill isn't everything. Attitude and values tie everything together.*”