



OUR SOCIAL MISSION

BY CARITAS SINGAPORE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Singapore youth reach out

From washing laundry at a home for the elderly to reaching out to slum-dwellers in the Philippines, young volunteers of acts29 learn what Christ-like service means.

EVERY Lent and Advent, members of acts29 make weekly trips to the Gift of Love Home for the elderly, run by the Missionaries of Charity, to do the laundry.

They sort the laundry, before washing each item by hand. Doing this helps the young volunteers develop a sense of humility, and teaches them the basics of servant-leadership.

Said the group's coordinator, 34-year-old Sherlyn Khong: "Service is the most challenging thing for youths. How do you re-engineer yourself to be a walking, moving example of Christ?"

In addition to their work here, members of acts29 – a youth-centred mission group based at the Church of Christ the King – makes regular trips all year round to Payatas, a slum in the Philippines.

The Singapore volunteers stay at the Paaralang Pantao (School for Humanity) which helps children who are deprived of formal education.

A lot of work goes into preparing the youth for their first trip to the poverty-ridden slum.

acts29 team member Daryl Spykerman said: "It's not just a one-off voluntary trip. It's a personal journey, and we hope that the youth can continue to build a relationship with the people there."

To do so, the young volunteers must learn to develop a sense of solidarity with the Filipinos they are reaching out to, so that they can communicate hope, he added.

During the weekly group sessions to prepare the volunteers, the youth learn how to pray and put God above everything else. They also learn to communicate, lead and serve.

Facilitators also discuss how they can set aside a part of their day for prayer and



Young Singapore volunteers learn to develop a sense of solidarity with the Filipino slum children they reach out to, in order to communicate hope.

a percentage of their allowance as a tithe.

"We hope that the end product is a contemplative youth, able to understand how he or she can serve in the world and contribute to society. Without contemplation, our youth won't be aware of the present-day realities," said Ms Khong.

The preparation was put to the test during a two-week trip to Payatas in December 2009. The trip proved challenging, as part of the itinerary involved visiting, praying and reflecting with families whose homes had been completely wrecked by the devastating Typhoon Ketsana only a few months earlier.

The indomitable spirit of the villagers left the Singapore team open-mouthed. The community had begun picking up the pieces and rebuilding their homes, although it was clear that people were still haunted by their loss.

Some families wept as they recounted the day the storm broke, and children burst into tears at the first rumble of thunder.

"To them it's just another day, another problem. Yes, they lost a lot, but to them, that's life. They move on," said Ms Khong. "It was good for our youth to see such resilience."

The December visit followed an earlier mission trip in October when Ms Khong and Mr Spykerman took almost 300kg of dry clothing and basic supplies to the Philippines to help the relief efforts. In November, acts29 also managed to get two volunteer doctors to fly from Singapore to help the medical mission there, at a time when many were sick with lung infections and diarrhoea.

The group has now turned its focus to raising money to build a house for some former orphans who attend the school in Payatas. Currently, the three siblings live in a rented house and are being looked

after by a team of volunteers. acts29, together with the team from the Philippines, have already managed to find a full-time caregiver for the children. They hope to raise S\$12,000 to buy the house.

As part of the fundraising effort, team member Timothy Ho, 20, will be running the Adidas Sundown marathon this May. All proceeds pledged to his effort will go towards the home for the orphans.

Said Mr Ho: "When you're running for a cause, it pushes you to keep on running."

acts29 also hope to start a monthly prayer group for young adults from February.

"We are more or less settled on the programme for our youth, so now we can direct our energies to adults and help them see where God fits in, so that they can make life more meaningful," said Ms Khong.

About acts29

acts29 is a member organisation of Caritas Singapore. It believes that every baptised person is entrusted with the mission of Christ in responding to the call to give and serve the poorest of the poor. Mission is a sign of our faith and of His love for us.

About the name: acts29 is the continuation of the Acts of the Apostles which ends at Chapter 28. Jesus Christ told His disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, and the apostles were sent to the whole world, assured that the Holy Spirit would be with them.

Programmes

acts29 has a variety of activities planned for young volunteers. There is work to do in Singapore, as well as on mission trips of short and long duration. Its main programmes include:

- **Dream beyond the dumpsite (Payatas)**
Regular mission trips are organised to the Payatas Dumpsite of Quezon City in the Philippines where volunteers work with Paaralang Pantao, a school

for the poor providing free non-formal education for the children living there. They help the children dream of a life beyond the dumpsite by organising field trips and conducting a photography workshop all year round.

- **Food Project (Payatas, Erap City)**
acts29 also provides nutritional and well-balanced meals for the people there.

Who's Who at acts29

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