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Dear Friends,

Every day, the news has been revealing more heartbreaking stories about the impact COVID-19 continues to have on our world. The death toll is increasing and the world economy seems to be worsening by the day. People everywhere are suffering. But at the same time, there have been many wonderfully encouraging and inspirational stories about individuals becoming increasingly concerned about others and reaching out to help in any way that they can. It is truly gratifying that goodness seems to be emerging from adversity! This is true not only across the U.S., but throughout our world. Ever since the pandemic began, I have been receiving increasing numbers of inquiries from very concerned supporters reaching out and asking how the Lingap children are doing amid the crisis. Therefore, I thought it might be helpful if I gave you an update on the Lingap Center children during these troubled and difficult times.



The Philippines has been hard-hit by the pandemic just as most countries around the world have. The entire country is on a lock-down status, but it is being enforced even more strictly than it is in the U.S. Food in the metropolitan areas is in very short supply and the government simply does not have the means or infrastructure to provide it in the countless sprawling impoverished areas. The situation is very bleak for many.

Fortunately for us, the Lingap Center is located in Toledo City on the island of Cebu, approximately an hour and a half south of Manila by air. It is on the opposite side of the island from the nearest large city. However, the safety precautions being implemented are just as stringent as in the large cities. Travel is strictly prohibited unless people have an 'essential services' pass. Therefore, no one at the Lingap Center is allowed to come or go. No visitors are allowed and the staff has shifted to a one week on, one week off schedule, 24 hours a day even though most also have families of their own. Only our cook and driver are permitted to leave and then only to purchase enough food for the children for one day. Food is in very short supply so in some instances, they have had to go far out into the province to buy fresh vegetables directly from farmers - a luxury that city dwellers don't have. The Lingap Center campus is surrounded by an eight-foot concrete security wall which now (*unfortunately*) is reminiscent of the Alamo! Unfortunately, all of the kids' favorite summer activities have been canceled, including Honor Society and Homecoming, the much-anticipated summer camp, and things like the community 'Summerlympics' which was going to be held at the Center.



English comprehension lessons

Our campus covers approximately 2 acres and includes a full-sized basketball court, a garden and grassy park-like areas. We have two buildings, one with a new library. As a result, the kids have room to run, play and not feel too closed in. I continue to count our blessings about our new building, which provides us with the opportunity to house our staff members since they are unable to leave.

I salute the staff as they have been absolute miracle workers in keeping the kids involved, engaged, safe and happy. They have organized games, spelling bees, contests, competitions, movie night, reading, spiritual development discussions and church services. The children have been mopping and sterilizing everything in sight and airing their bedding each Sunday. The mornings begin with televised Zumba classes and once a week, our volunteer string ensemble instructors are providing ‘virtual music lessons’ over the internet. Gardening continues to be a very important aspect of the day, as the kids grow as many vegetables as they can for their own consumption. Life at the Center is going well and thus far we have only had one

broken arm! Probably the most important part of the day, has been the prayer services on the part of the children as they pray for the welfare of all of you, their benefactors, for those suffering from the coronavirus around the world, and for a quick end to the pandemic.

Our greatest worry now is for a sustainable source of food, as the city market is overly crowded with anxious people, desperately concerned about their own families. It is a worrisome situation to be sure. But, as of this writing, the Lingap children’s spirits are very high and everyone is safe. All that can be done to ensure everyone’s safety is being doneand more. All we need now is the patience and strength to persevere through these difficult times. I found a quote attributed to Helen Keller which sums things up quite well:



Virtual string ensemble lessons

“The struggle of life is one of our greatest blessings. It makes us patient, sensitive, and Godlike. It teaches us that although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.”

Through this pandemic crisis, the children are learning patience, sensitivity and in my mind, they are becoming far more Godlike. They are recognizing that the world is full of suffering, but thanks to the role models of the staff and their benefactors, the children are safe and filled with hope for a brighter tomorrow. I want to thank you all for your support and concerns. You are our inspiration!

Sincerely,

John Drake