



May 10, 2006

Dear Friends,

I have much to report in this update. First, for those of you who do not receive my E-mail updates, I am delighted to tell you that on March 30, 2006, thirty-nine children moved into the new Lingap Center. It was a wonderful day for them, for me and all of you who helped to make this project a reality. It was the culmination of a dream. Since we now can accommodate them, the Lingap staff located those children who had been turned away in the past, due to a lack of space and funding and brought them in. As a result, within one week, seventy-one children were living in the new building, off the streets and in a place of safety and security, attending school and church, some for the first time in their lives.

April 20, 2006 marked the beginning of a three day celebration of the opening of the new Lingap Center. As you might expect, I was there, along with twenty-five others who traveled with me from Texas, Florida, Michigan, Manila and other locations. The visit was like a dream. First of all, the Toledo City West (Cebu) Rotary Club hosted a fiesta in our honor and to honor their counterparts from the Ann Arbor, MI and Jackson MI clubs who were with us. It was quite an evening with singing and dancing to celebrate their part in the project.

The next day (the 21st), was the official dedication ceremony. First, the group visited the old Lingap Center. It was interesting for me to see their reaction to this run-down facility that thirty-nine children had called home for so long. I noticed a number of tears in the group. Then, we went to the new facility and were met by the children. I must tell you that I am really at a loss for words to describe the emotion that I felt and saw among the children and our travelers. I will admit that I was overwhelmed with so many emotions that I can't begin to describe it. Fr. Raul Galego, blessed the new Lingap Center followed by a tour. It is a beautiful facility, with an open courtyard in the center, a boy's wing, a girl's wing, a commercial sized kitchen, a library (quiet study area with desks) and more. I am still amazed to actually see what we have all made a reality. This tour was followed by speeches, singing and dancing until late into the night.

The following day, the children came to Bingham Marine Park, where we hosted a children's fiesta for them. We had more food, singing, games, dancing and just spent time with the children. When I asked one of our travelers what part of the trip he enjoyed most, he said *"it was the hugs - the thousands of hugs!"* Another wrote after the trip, *"what stuck me the most was the love and affection they (the Lingap children) displayed. Hurt by those they trusted the most or should have been able to trust and yet, instead of withdrawing, they loved us and each other. This is what we all want - to love and be loved. That came through loud and clear. What a gift to share with us. I learned that kids are kids no matter where they are and in what condition they*

*live. That while they thanked us for our gifts and their new home, what they taught us was the greatest gift of all - to love one another, unconditionally, to show appreciation and give attention; to give of ones self, fully and freely."*

On Sunday, we attended the Children's Mass with them. Toledo City West Rotary served as the choir for this special celebration and then all too soon, it was time for us to leave. The farewells were difficult and the ride back to Cebu City and home was a very quiet one as each of us grappled with our feelings of joy and sadness and the sense of hope that these children have gained. Again, this is very difficult for me to describe.

I have been asked by many what I plan to do next. The answer to this is that I need to find a way to sustain what we have done thus far while simultaneously developing a plan to help transition the children into their social structure when the time comes for them to leave the Lingap Center. Recall that this is an area with an unemployment rate approaching 70%. My plan will be a combination of vocational schools, college or other training, depending on the interests and abilities of the child. I am in the process now of working on that plan and I can assure you that I will deliver. In the meantime however, my first priority needs to be sustaining what we have already accomplished. In short, this means securing the funding that keeps it going while building an endowment that ensures that the Lingap Center will thrive for years to come.

I have enclosed a brochure describing our "A Place at the Table" sponsorship program. Many of you have already sponsored children. To you, I say thank you again. For those who have not, I am asking that you give it serious consideration. We need your help. The significant impact that we have had on the lives of one hundred children thus far was very obvious on this trip. In fact, "significant impact" is an understatement. It is huge! This was only possible thanks to you and others like you. I will again remind you that the Lingap Center Children's Foundation has no overhead expenses, since these are all paid either by me or by other directed donations. Therefore, 100% of all contributions go directly to the children.

When I reflect on what we collectively have accomplished and how I feel about it, I can not help but recall a quote from Galatians 6:19, which says, "**Let us not become weary of doing good, for at the proper time, we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.**" We certainly have reaped that harvest. We did it and what a harvest it has been! Now we need to keep it going. Please visit the updated website at [www.lingapcenter.org](http://www.lingapcenter.org) for more information and photos (you may need to refresh your browser by clicking on "view" and then "refresh").

On behalf of the Lingap Center children and myself, thank you all so much.

Sincerely,

John Drake

