

JUNE 2018



ACAY NEWSLETTER

A second chance
for youth at risk



The school year is coming to an end in the Philippines and this year again, the efforts made have not been in vain: 90% of the girls finished their school year. One of our former girls has brilliantly completed her studies as a Social Worker, three girls have graduated from a prestigious school of gastronomy, another has completed her studies in Human Resource and Administration, one of the girls graduated from High School and finally three others passed their intensive government exam to validate their Secondary School. On the boys' side, a young man from the Second Chance Program (MVP) graduated from the same school of gastronomy and the others went on to study or were already hired.

What a joy, year after year, to see the path traveled by these young girls who, on their arrival, were insecure, worried about their future, broken by the rapes, tortures, mistreatments and violence they suffered. And yet today they are **standing up**. Yesterday shy and introverted, today a beauty consultant in a French company. Yesterday unable to say a sentence without shedding tears, today a leader for other young people and sought for her multiple talents. Yesterday desperate and hopeless, now capable of responsibility and initiative. **They have rediscovered the definition and direction of their lives.** They discovered the sacred meaning of their lives. The suffering that inhabits them will probably never completely disappear, but they are free from the grip of the venom of anger, self-denial and shame that might have stifled their potentials. Deep listening one on one, studies and socio-educational training received within ACAY secure them and prepares them to adjust to life in society, to know how to communicate and to adapt in the professional world.

A businessman standing beside me at a conference recently wanted to convince other companies to start coaching our teams and hiring our young people. He told them: "You recognize the young people of ACAY in three areas: they are punctual (remarkable fact with the usual "filipino time"), you can trust them and they know how to say "no" (another dimension usually non-existent)". A multitude of smiles appeared listening to these words but this work in the depths requires of our teams a glance of hope, the patience of an angel and dogged determination. It also requires flexibility in the constant adaptation of our concepts. That's why presently we are in the middle of updating the Second Chance Program in the Philippines. Society is changing, justice in the Philippines is evolving very quickly at this time, generations of young people today are changing too; there is an urgent need for us to remain flexible in our structure to match their needs. This year will be the opportunity to pilot a new, simplified and more adapted Program. When I returned to the Philippines last November, I found a tired team; today its vigor has returned to with this challenge to innovate. ACAY will not shine due to staggering numbers, however, I believe we bring hope to the world, young people who have become "inspirations" for today's youth. The path they have traveled from nameless distress to inner freedom is remarkable. It is written in the Bible "your name is God's victory". This is now their name. Thank you, thank you to everyone who has participated in this victory, the sponsors who support the studies of our youth, and all those who support the funding of our programs. The task is arduous, but how overwhelming it is from year to year to see the fruitfulness of these efforts!

Dr. Sophie de Joux

BE PART OF THE MISSION: VOLUNTEER!

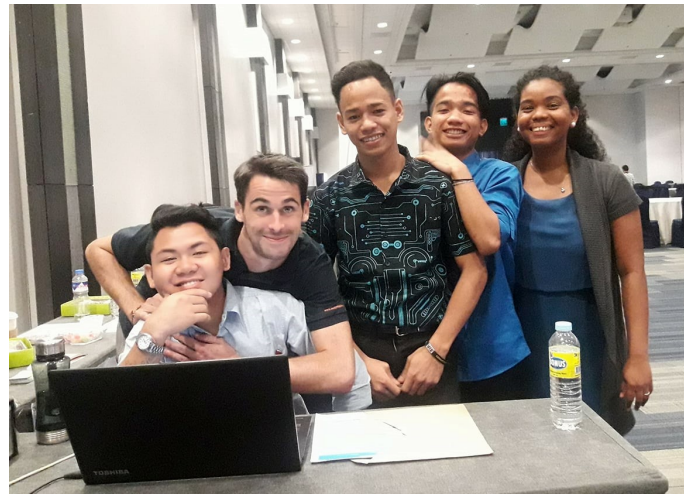
The presence of volunteers has been an integral part of ACAY's mission since the creation of the Association in Manila in 1997. At the time, the three sisters were already accompanied by two volunteers. Since then, every year, around 12 volunteers have joined ACAY teams in Manila and Marseille to support the mission. We welcome volunteers from various backgrounds and nationalities, who wish to give their time, their skills and their heart to young people in difficulty. An overview of volunteering at ACAY.

For years, ACAY has been welcoming volunteers in the Philippines with the status of **Voluntarism of International Solidarity (VSI)**, in partnership with Children of Mékong.

The VSI is for adults without age limit and is for a minimum of one year that can be renewed.

Here is the testimony of Luigi, a Children of Mekong volunteer within the Second Chance program in Manila:

« I am a sports educator and an animator of social events in France and my goals were to broaden my professional and relational horizons; I am already very satisfied but I have not finished evolving and discovering. I am particularly moved by the cultural differences that give rise to innovative and complementary ideas within the ACAY team. For 8 months, an inner joy continues to grow in me despite the difficulties. I am proud to be part of a mission that makes sense whatever one's beliefs may be and I feel that nothing is impossible. I decided to stay another year because I want to go further in journeying with these youth. »



Since 2017, a new voluntarism with our partner Eurasia net permits us to welcome volunteers in **civic service** first in the mission of ACAY in the Philippines and then for those who wish in the mission of ACAY in Marseille. The civic service is a voluntary commitment of 6 to 12 months to encourage mobility, the acquisition of new skills and the personal enrichment of young people from 16 to 25 years.

Amycie currently benefits from this arrangement and tells us about her experience:

« At the end of my Business School, I started looking for work, but I soon felt that I had something else to live first. Having witnessed how one of my best friends had been deeply transformed during the time she volunteered for ACAY, I did not hesitate in choosing the Association I wanted to commit to. It is also the very practical character and the concrete help given to the young people that seduced me. I have not been disappointed. The 6 months of mission for the School of Life in the Philippines was infinitely rich spiritually and humanly. I had a glimpse of the mud in which the human soul can drown, but especially of the way God is continually seeking to save us, especially through the immense work of the ACAY teams. He is only waiting for one thing, it is that the young people grab the hand he extends them with infinite love. There is always hope. This mission teaches me to accept my limits and to always seek first to love, to be a presence and listening before doing. This is something that you do not necessarily learn in business school ... I am now back in France with ACAY France in Marseille, for 5 months. A new adventure. »



Volunteer missions are rewarding experiences both humanly and professionally for volunteers but also for their entourage, as seen in this [testimony of the parents of Laure, a volunteer at the School of Life](#):



« We knew Laure to be happy among you, but we were able to see first-hand how the service and life in ACAY were fulfilling her, as well as the remarkable spiritual and human adventure she's living among you. Our understanding of life in ACAY took on a much more personal note, and we returned home keeping the memory of all those smiling faces, laughter and moving times (birthday party) that we have witnessed. We know that beyond these good times, the daily life is also strewn with difficulties and trials more or less burdensome for your young people. But we felt, especially in some of their testimonies during the Saturday evening, that many graces are at work, like the many manifestations of the superabundance of life and joy bursting forth on Easter morning. »

Examples of types of missions for volunteers:

- Educational Assistant at the School of Life (support the beneficiaries in the academic and educational component of the program)
- Training assistant (provide support in setting up socio-educational training for young people accompanied by the Association in the Philippines or in Marseille)
- Medical Officer at the School of Life
- Support for the implementation of income generating projects at the School of Life
- Communication and fundraising assistant ...

Who is volunteering for?

- Anyone between the ages of 20 and 35
- Available for a period of at least 6 months
- Fluent in English (oral and written)
- To any other profile with a specific project
- Having passed the ACAY selection process

We need you !

To apply for volunteer assignments from September 2018 in Manila or Marseille, please send your CV and letter of motivation in English to:

acay.volunteers@gmail.com



TESTIMONY

Rod Tongol, a young Filipino and former graduate of the Second Chance Program, has just been in Marseille for one month to **share his life story** with French youth in schools and juvenile detention centers. A change in ones life can change the lives of so many others!



TOWARDS REINSERTION

On March 7th, the youth of ACAY had the chance to participate in an **employment forum** organized by the French Embassy. They were able to participate in job interview simulations and because of their excellent performance, 3 young girls were hired for an apprenticeship at Novotel and 1 for a summer job at Décathlon.



WHAT'S NEW IN ACAY ?

GRADUATION

It's summer in the Philippines, the time for **graduation and school awards**. We are very proud of our young people for their success, fruit of their perseverance! We infinitely thank the sponsors who supported them on this road to success!



FRESH AIR

Summer was also an opportunity for our young people to share some **quality time** together with the Sisters and staff such as hiking in the Sagada mountains and team building in Balanga, Bataan to strengthen the bonds in the group. Some discovered the beauty of Filipino nature for the first time through these experiencing the fresh air outside of Manila.



TESTIMONIES

In recent months, several girls have graduated from the School of Life program in the Philippines. Three of them have gone back over their experiences to take stock of the help given to them, thanks to your support, and to the ACAY teams.

« My name is Lea*. I have just graduated from a course in Administration and Human Resource. After three years at the School of Life, I became independent while being sponsored in my studies by ACAY. My journey in the School of Life was not easy, there were many ups and downs, challenges and difficulties: I had trouble managing the different characters of the girls, their attitudes and personalities. And yet, in this new environment, I thought, "There are people here ready to hear my story." This story had kept me tied to the past, a past filled with anger, fear, a self-confidence almost non-existent, doubts, negative thoughts. In my youth, I lived in a small house with my father and my brothers and sisters. My father kept saying, "This house is hell." It's true: I lived there in fear, petrified and for so long. So to find myself at the School of Life with kind people was stirring up within me all that inner chaos that had inhabited my heart as a child. My hell was no longer in my house but in my heart. It took a long time, for me to dare to open myself to my guide, to the psychologist, to my social worker. It took a long time for me to believe that my life was important, that I could believe in myself. I spent hours crying during times of personal sharing, I did not know how to say what weighed upon me and how to dare to trust them. A fear inhabited me: will they believe me? I have for a long time kept everything to myself, well shut up in my heart, determined to solve everything by myself. ACAY helped me to dare to name my pain, then to open up to my parents. And the fruit of this long inner work is this love of myself, of all that I was, of all that inhabited me. I no longer have to chase after others' love because I am at peace with myself, I feel free in the face of my past, my fears are gone. ACAY became for me a family, a home. Thank you so much. »

« I come from a poor family. I am the fourth out of 7 children. Mom was home helper and dad drove a jeepney. To make it short, Dad abused three of his daughters and Mom was silent in the face of this family drama. As a result, I lost interest in studying and became extremely irritable. The slightest contradiction was a source of irritation. I came from another foundation and at first it was not so easy to open up, I was afraid of being judged. The day I dared to open, I felt fully welcomed as I was. Hope began to come back. This feeling of being enveloped in respect shocked me. But what I have achieved gradually is that the school of life is not a foundation that only gives food to the hungry, water to the thirsty and clothing to the people who need it. Their approach is integral. Beyond everything, they offer us the family spirit. Without even knowing them, the way they welcome us and live with us makes us realize that we have found a second family. Whatever the ups and downs, they are there, by our side, encouraging us, inviting us to surpass ourselves and believe that we can do much more than we think. As we go higher and higher. This love has helped me forgive the past, live the present and work for the future. Now I can say it: ACAY has shaped the person I have become. My last victory: I am now a graduate. The ACAY family is a hero who saved us from the nightmare of our past and helped us get up without fear and without hesitation and dream of a future full of hope and recognition. Thank you so much. Jennifer* »

« I spent three years in the School of Life. I had the time to immerse myself and feel a family in ACAY. They helped me to go back to my past, my painful experiences and to discover myself, to know who I am and what I carry within myself. With this new self-knowledge, my dignity was restored. My guide was also a mother to me; with her I rediscovered the love of God for me. This love is for me today a sword and a weapon facing all the challenges that I encounter in my life. As soon as I have some free time, I try to go back to ACAY and spend time with the new girls. Raphaëlle* »