

DEPED CARAGA News

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Featured

The Road of Compassion

A 601-Kilometer Tribute of Love for Ailing Educators

Marlyne Villareal, QAD Chief



13 hr 9 min
601 km



HOME VISIT: RD Asuncion at the home of Teacher Chelo T. Pagura of Doongan Integrated School, Butuan City, October 7, 2025

“

I would like to encourage them to have faith. Rest assured that the government and the Department of Education is actually thinking of their welfare. They should not hesitate to ask for help because we are very much willing to go the extra mile because we really love our teachers

RD Maria Ines C. Asuncion

”

In celebration of National Teachers' Day 2025, the Department of Education Caraga Region embarked on a meaningful journey through its initiative titled "DepEd Caraga National Teachers Month Tribute: Compassion for Ailing Teachers." (To page 2)



The two-day journey was a testament to DepEd's unwavering commitment to uphold the welfare of teachers and recognize their invaluable contributions to nation-building.

(Continued from Page 1: The Road to Compassion ...)

This tribute was more than an activity—it was a promise to honor educators who have devoted their lives to shaping minds, even as they now face serious health challenges.

With deep respect and gratitude, the team led by RD Maria Ines C. Asuncion with Dr. Jumer C. Carlon (RO Medical Officer), Marlyne M. Villareal (QAD Chief), Elaine N. Navarro (Finance CAO), and Pedro A. Tecson (PAU AO V) set out to personally deliver tokens of appreciation and assistance, ensuring that these teachers feel the warmth of the DepEd family during their most difficult times.



On October 7, the team departed from the DepEd Caraga Regional Office in Butuan City, carrying with them not just packages, but heartfelt messages of hope and solidarity. The first stop was Tindalo, Butuan City, where the first teacher-recipient was honored with care and gratitude.

From there, the team proceeded northward to Del Pilar, Cabadbaran City, continuing the mission to uplift and support. cluded in the celebration. (To Page 3)



LITTLE THINGS MATTER. An ailing teacher received cash gifts from RD Asuncion in the presence of SDS Imelda Sabornido, after which RD Asuncion engaged with the children in their classroom at Del Pilar Central Elementary School, Cabadbaran City. October 7, 2025.

(Continued from Page 2: The Road to Compassion ...)



GIVING BACK. In the company of Caraga's regional and division education leaders, RD Asuncion hands over cash gifts and grocery items to an ailing teacher at Jagupit Elementary School. Standing behind the teacher are SDS Jeannie Mativio and the school Principal. Agusan del Norte. October 7, 2025.

The route then extended further to Jagupit Elementary School, where RD Asuncion, Agusan del Norte SDS Jeanie Mativo, CID Chief Glorina Siclon, and other DepEd Officials comforted an ailing teacher not only with their material gifts but also their reassuring presence.

Following their visit at Jagupit ES, the regional team of RD Asuncion, this time accompanied by SDS Karen Galanida, proceeded to Sison, Surigao del Norte, to visit the home of an ailing teacher who was still recuperating in bed at the time.



CHEERS AMID ILLNESS. An ailing teacher in Sison, Surigao del Norte, cheerfully welcomes at her home RD Asuncion, SDS Karen Galanida, and other regional and division officials in Sison, Surgiao del Norte. October 7, 2025.



In Surigao City, October 8, Schools Division Superintendent Florence Almaden of Dinagat and Assistant Schools Division Superintendents of Siargao Roel Diamante received the packages on behalf of their respective beneficiaries.

(To Page 4)





(Continued from Page 3: The Road to Compassion ...)

This day marked the second leg of the journey, with the team heading south toward Tandag City, traversing the scenic Noventa route and passing through the municipalities of Carrascal, Cantilan, Madrid, Carmen, and Lanuza (CarCanMadCarlan) in Surigao del Sur.

In one of the most touching moments of the journey, the team visited the school of an ailing teacher who could only participate virtually while aboard a bus on her way home from Davao following medical treatment. Through a video call, the teacher witnessed her child, assisted by her husband, receive cash assistance and grocery items from Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion.



This gesture spoke volumes about DepEd Caraga's commitment to extend care beyond physical presence, ensuring that even in times of hardship, teachers and their families feel the embrace of the DepEd community.

After completing the visit in Tandag City, the team continued to Tarusan, Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, where the last teacher-recipient awaited. The day concluded with the team heading home via the Agusan Sur–Bayugan–Butuan route, hearts full from the encounters and stories shared.

This extensive route—spanning approximately 601 kilometers over 13 hours of travel—was not just a physical journey but a profound expression of care. It symbolized DepEd Caraga's determination to reach teachers in even the most distant corners of the region. Every stop, every handshake, and every word of encouragement reflected a deep truth: our teachers are the pillars of education, and they deserve to be honored, supported, and loved—especially in times of need.

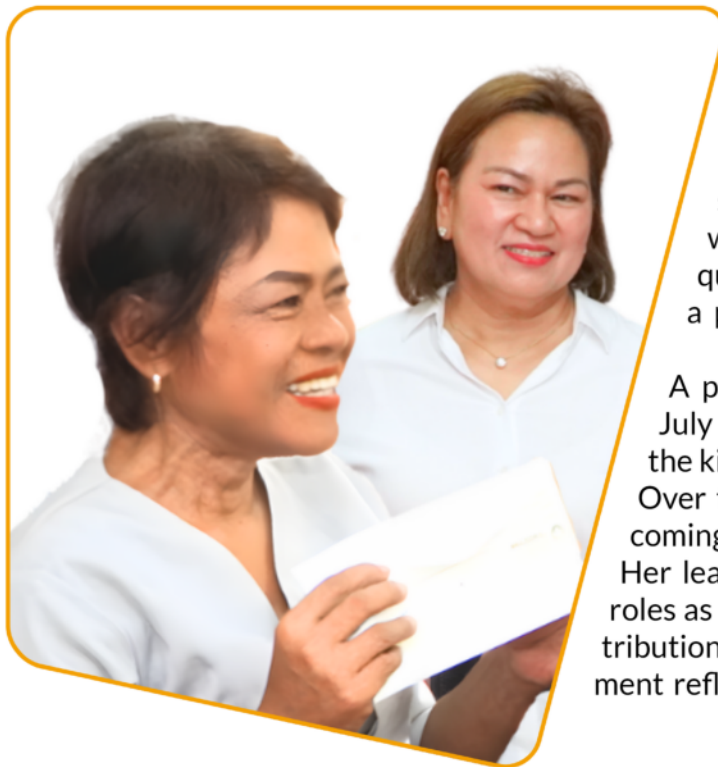
Recipients from Bislig City, Agusan del Sur, and Bayugan City were rescheduled as the identified teachers were unavailable during the visit—one undergoing dialysis and others in chemotherapy sessions. Their tokens and assistance were delivered at a later date, ensuring they receive the same recognition and support. ●



A Heartfelt Tribute

Honoring Teacher Rene Arquiza Songodanan with Compassion and Grace

Grace Christy Mae Lumanta
Project Development Officer I
Surigao del Sur Division



In the quiet corners of Tarusan Integrated School, where chalk dust mingles with dreams and dedication, one teacher's story rises above the ordinary—a story of resilience, service, and the unwavering spirit of an educator. Rene Arquiza Songodanan, 51, Teacher III, has been a pillar of Tarusan IS since its earliest days.

A pioneering soul, she began her journey on July 2, 2007, nurturing Grade 2 learners with the kind of care that only a true mentor can give. Over the years, she rose through the ranks, becoming Teacher II in 2020 and Teacher III in 2023. Her leadership as Officer-in-Charge in 2013, her roles as ICT and Feeding Coordinator, and her contributions to research and instructional development reflect a career built on passion and purpose.

Yet, behind the accolades and promotions lies a deeper story—one of quiet courage. Diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease Stage 5 on May 22, 2022, Teacher Rene has faced her health battles with the same grace and strength she's shown in the classroom. Despite her condition, her heart remains bound to the school, her students, and the mission of education.

On October 8, 2025, the Department of Education Caraga Region, led by Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion, CESO IV, brought the celebration of National Teacher's Month straight to her doorstep. "This

(To Page 6)



(Continued from Page 5: The Road to Compassion ...)



is our pahalipay—our heartfelt gift—for teachers who cannot join the festivities due to illness,” Director Asuncion shared during her visit to Tarusan IS. “We started this in 2023 with one beneficiary. Last year, there were four. This year, we honor twelve. And today, we honor you, Ma’am Rene.”

With the support of the division medical team, the initiative has grown into a movement of compassion towards an institutionalized effort to ensure that no teacher is left behind in moments of celebration. Teacher Rene received financial assistance and a grocery package, but more than that, she received the warmth of a community that sees her, values her, and stands with her.



DepEd Caraga Region

Her husband, Dennis Dajab Songodanan, and children, McDenrey and Francis Lauren, stood by her side as the school, the regional office, and the division office paid tribute not just to her years of service, but to the indomitable spirit she continues to embody.



DepEd Caraga Region

In a world that often moves too fast, this moment reminds us to pause—to honor those who have given so much, even when they have so little left to give. Teacher Rene’s story is not just one of illness, but of impact. She is a living testament to the power of compassion, the strength of educators, and the beauty of bringing celebration to those who need it most.



Bringing Hope and Healing

to Earthquake-Affected Learners in Davao Oriental

By the Public Affairs Unit

What began as a simple act of service became a powerful testament to solidarity and compassion when the Department of Education (DepEd) Caraga Regional Office, under the leadership of Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion, CESO IV, brought smiles, comfort, and renewed hope to earthquake-affected learners and teachers of Lucod Elementary School and San Victor Elementary School in Bagan-ga, Davao Oriental.

Dubbed Project Compassion, the outreach was the first part of the Psycho-social Well-being Activity held on

November 6, 2025. More than 30 volunteers from the DepEd Caraga Regional Office and the Schools Division Offices of Bayugan City, Bislig City, Butuan City, and Agusan del Norte braved the long Butuan–Bislig–Davao route, departing at 3:00 a.m. and traveling over five hours, to reach communities still reeling from the quake's aftermath.

A Journey of Service and Sacrifice

Despite packed schedules, the volunteers pressed on with one goal: to bring relief and reassurance to those who needed it most. The convoy carried go bags, learning kits, food packs, and essential supplies—along with something far more valuable: time, empathy, and presence.

Among those who joined the mission were Schools Division Superintendents Ma. Teresa Real (Bayugan City) and Gemma A. De Paz (Bislig City), whose hands-on participation exemplified Caraga's compassionate leadership. A medical team from Butuan City provided health consultations

To page 8

and first aid, while children engaged in psychosocial activities and debriefing sessions—gentle yet meaningful efforts to help them process fear and loss through play, conversation, and connection.

“Kumusta Kayo?”

When Director Asuncion met the children, her simple greeting, “Kumusta kayo? Kumusta ang inyong parents?”, drew smiles across the crowd. Her words carried warmth and reassurance, reflecting a leader who listens and cares deeply.

“Typhoons, earthquakes, and other calamities are acts of nature we will always face,” she said in the vernacular. “That’s why it’s important to always be ready and prepared.” Her message of resilience and faith echoed through the school grounds, reminding everyone that beyond the rubble, the Filipino spirit always finds ways to rise.



(Continued from Page 8: Bringing Hope ...)

Community of Compassion

The distribution of goods was facilitated by Davao Oriental Public Schools District Supervisor Manny Vallejo and School Heads Nora Bucu (Lucod ES) and Rufil T. Pellogo (San Victor ES), ensuring smooth operations. Hon. Mayor Kirk Asis of Bayugan City lent the city truck to transport relief cargo, and Mrs. Rachel Rendon, Principal of Lumbocan National High School in Butuan City, contributed books and learning materials sourced from U.S. partners.

Through Project Compassion, DepEd Caraga reaffirmed that education goes beyond the classroom—it is about reaching out with empathy, acting in solidarity, and showing that in every tragedy, hearts are ready to help heal and rebuild.

As Director Asuncion aptly puts it, this is “Serbisyon Makatao” in action: education anchored in love, service, and compassion. ●

Compassion Across the Seas

By the Public Affairs Unit

Compassion finds its greatest power when it reaches the people who need it most. For CaraCares, that meant taking support from Cebu all the way to the shores of Gibusong Island, Dinagat, proving that education thrives not just through lessons, but through care that extends beyond the classroom.

Generosity in Cebu

On December 10, 2025, CaraCares kicked off a major donation activity in Cebu, setting the tone for its outreach across the region. The initiative was made possible under the leadership of Regional Director Maria Ines C. Asuncion, CESO III, with the assistance of Ms. Michelle Lola, a private partner whose generous contributions formed the backbone of the activity.

Support was further strengthened by the Philippine Public School Teachers Association (PPSTA), under Atty. Salvador Virtudazo, and by the coordinated efforts of 12 Schools Division Superintendents, reflecting a strong culture of collaboration and shared responsibility in education.

Learners received assistance designed to meet real needs such as 300 go bags with school supplies, 300 Christmas loot bags. Teachers also received 100 bags containing bond paper, expandable envelopes, brown envelopes, first aid kits, mugs, pens and sign pens, assorted goodies, and towelettes.

Reaching the Islands: Gibusong, Dinagat

Building on the Cebu activity, CaraCares sailed to Gibusong Island in the Municipality of Loreto, Dinagat Islands. On December 12, 2025, at Tavern Hotel in Surigao City, Director Asuncion led the ceremonial turnover of learning and teaching resources.



(To Page 11)

Continued from Page 10: Compassion Across the Seas

The materials were formally received by Schools Division Superintendent Florence Almaden alongside school heads from the Gibusong community, ensuring that the support reached teachers and learners in a locality where access to resources is limited.

Support that Strengthens Classrooms

More than 200 learners in Gibusong received go bags filled with school supplies and chocolate loot bags, bringing smiles and reassurance to young hearts. Teachers also benefited from tools that enhance instruction and school operations, creating a ripple effect of care and preparedness that goes beyond the classroom.

Through these efforts, CaraCares showcased empathy, coordination, and purpose; demonstrating that even small gestures, when combined with thoughtful planning and collaboration, can transform lives.

Care that Leaves a Lasting Impact

From Cebu to Dinagat, CaraCares is a vivid reminder that education is sustained not only by policies and programs, but by people who choose to act with compassion.

Through meaningful partnerships with private donors, PPSTA, school leaders, and regional authorities, support reached its rightful recipients; strengthening classrooms, uplifting communities, and proving that kindness finds its way, no matter the distance.

CaraCares: where care, collaboration, and compassion set sail to make a difference.



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CONTRIBUTORS
Marlyne M. Villareal
Grace Christy Mae Lumanta

CIRCULATION
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