

A portrait of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a black graduation gown with a blue velvet collar and a circular blue and white medallion. The background is a dark, textured grey.



..... WAS A BLESSING BECAUSE SHE HAD SIMULTANEOUSLY CONTINUED HER SECONDARY EDUCATION WHILE BEING OF HELP TO HER FAMILY.



The journey of education should be taken with pure determination and diligence. Struggles will surely come in the way, but the learner who continues to go on with the help of the Almighty is ensured of success!

Such fine words from such a fine woman, in the person of KEZIA KEREN AMBAG who amplified a jaw-dropping jubilee when she grabbed the most coveted TOP 1 rank amongst the scroll of Batch 2019 takers in the Board Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (BLEPT).

Being a graduate at Philippine Normal University-Mindanao where excellence means a duty and a commitment) as Cum Laude, would casually draw high expectation from others and people would tend to assume normalcy should she succeed in her professional journeys. But the crash-course shall take everyone into full knowledge that her other passport to being admitted to college was through Alternative Learning System, tagged as "ALS" by many.

In 2009, her parents heeded God's call and pioneered a church ministry in Talacogon, Agusan del Sur where she had also attended her secondary education for two years at the town's National High School. Then, in 2011, her parents opened a school ministry where human resources were yet limited. As a budding entity, Kezia – as the only child in the family – voluntarily filled the gap and s

Barely 15, she decided to enroll at Alternative Learning System and proudly recalled how ALS taught her to be an independent learner who is resourceful and wise enough to manage her life's endeavors.

She added that ALS was a blessing because she had simultaneously continued her secondary education while being of help to her family. She passed the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test for Secondary Level in 2013.

Eventually, she enrolled at PNU-AC with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education. As a collegian with a searing passion to finish education at all cost, Keziah moved heavens and earth to excel in almost all endeavors she got involved with.

Fast forward post college graduation, her young yet idealistic mind had actually scribed her dream of becoming a Topnocher in a pink sticky note to boost her spirit whilst in wait for the board exams. The rest was history!

Now At 24, KEZIA KEREN AMBAG is already a self-made individual though she is not employed and so far has no plans to be employed in the Department of Education. Nevertheless, her way of giving back her services to the government is by addressing her pupils' literacy and numeracy difficulties.

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM - DEPED CARAGA
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2022 VOLUME 1 NO. 1



...these
are our
AI Stories

Becoming 'OUT-STANDING'

With their compassionate hands that guide the out-of-school youths, adults, and children in special cases, Alternative Learning System (ALS) Teachers deserve to be recognized and appreciated.

For sure, no amount of plaques and certificates can equal the heroism of our ALS Teachers in dealing with learners in difficult situations, but, the Bulawanong Sulo Awards and other division-led initiatives that honor their contributions to the once underserved sectors, are manifestations that the department values their services. The ALS Teachers of Caraga are untiringly serving the so called 'the least, the last, and the lost' so they are worthy to be honored.

This maiden issue of Caraga JournALS is dedicated to all the ALS Teachers who have been instrumental in transforming the lives of our out-of-school youths, children in special cases, and adults. This is for the extraordinary educators who have given hope to the attainment of the aspirations of our fellowmen to learn despite life's difficult circumstances.

For this School Year, there are 424 ALS Teachers in the 12 School Division Offices of DepEd Caraga. These dedicated and committed public school teachers who are instrumental in extending the ALS K to 10 Curriculum to the marginalized communities are actively facilitating the Basic Literacy and Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Programs for Elementary and Junior High School. As nonformal education teachers, their sacrifices in their learning centers are not to be overlooked.

It is a 'kudos' and a big tap on the shoulders of our ALS Teachers. Their great works are appreciated and their desire to bring about positive change in the society is worthy of emulation. As long as they are supported, they will continue to be outstanding - 'out' there and 'standing' at the forefront of the battle against illiteracy, unemployment, and insurgency.



Educating the 'losts'



RECALIBRATING

NILO C. ZOLINA
Division ALS Focal Person

Even before the creation of Republic Act 11510 or the Alternative Learning System (ALS) Act that stipulates the participation of other government agencies in the implementation of ALS Programs, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) through the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) in Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur, and the Department of Health - Drug Abuse Treatment and Rehabilitation Center (DOH-DATRC) in the municipality of San Francisco have long been a partner of DepEd - Division of Agusan del Sur in educating the ALS-qualified learners who were once considered to have walked astray.

As part of our monitoring and evaluation activities of ALS-related activities in the division, I happened to visit the RRCY in early December of 2022 during a skills training facilitated by one of our ALS Teachers. Through the funding given by the Local Government Unit, a three-day training on Beadmaking was participated by the learners of the center that makes use of holistic approaches in the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law (CICL). Aside from the said activity, the ALS Facilitator in this facility also spearheads several learning tasks such as welding, gardening, and other life skills training to prepare the children for their future reintegration to their families and communities.

For years now, the RRCY has become a safe haven for minor-aged boys coming from different provinces of Caraga Region. I personally witnessed how the children in the center participated in that training with diligence and motivation. The center is very successful in integrating several life-changing activities in veering the children to the future they deserve. The presence of a very understanding and passionate ALS Teacher too accelerates the process of attaining a better quality of life.

Another worthwhile collaboration for education is happening between the DOH-DATRC and DepEd-Agusan del Sur. Here, the ALS Teacher is dealing with Persons Who Used Drugs (PWUDS). With age ranging from 19-57 years old, the learners in this facility enjoy literacy programs together with several activities that will drive them away from substance dependency. With few clients under the Basic Literacy Program, ALS Programs in his facility seeks to help the learners prepare for their lives outside the center. Learning literacy and numeracy in this point of their lives is very significant because it will provide them more opportunities in life.

The RRCY and the DATRC as government institutions will help more clienteles in the future. With the effective implementation of reintegration programs such as skills training and literacy-driven activities facilitated by our ALS Teachers, we will be able to help the government in its desire to help those, who, at some point in their lives, were lost due to difficult circumstances.

ALS AND THE COMMUNITY IN SYNERGY

The RA 11510 also known as Alternative Learning System Act provides for strong partnership between DepEd and Government Agencies. In Caraga Region, the Local Government Units strongly support the ALS Learners through the provision of Community Learning Facilitators, school supplies, and cash grants.

PROPELLED DREAMS

DANIEL'S STOPS AND STARTS IN LIFE

MARIE FE C. DULTRA



Enthusiasm for learning is a valuable trait that can help students to succeed in their studies and career. It has always been the great motivation of Daniel Sagay, an ALS learner from Barangay Puting Bato, Cabadbaran Agusan del Norte.

Daniel's elementary teachers were incredibly amused by his eagerness in participating in school curricular activities. These expressions of delight are evident every time they share about him.

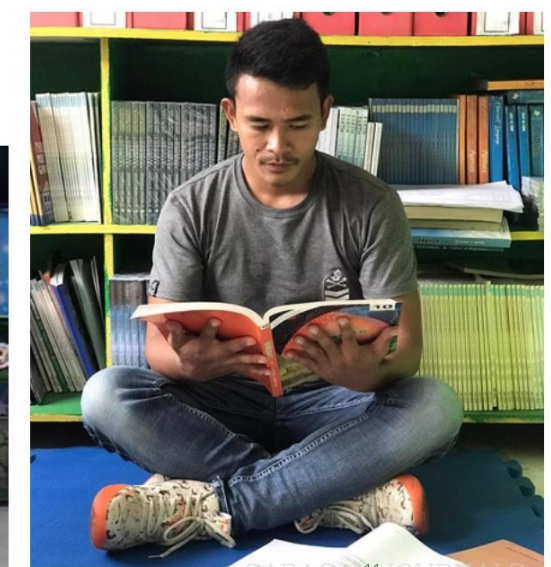
BLISSFUL LEARNING. Recipients of five thousand pesos Cash Grant from the City Government pose with ALS Implementers and city officials.



But his life is not a bed of roses. Unlike other students, Daniel's family has struggled on their finances. This caused him to lose his focus on his studies. At some point of his life, he chose to skip from classes and work just to earn a penny for his whole family. The saddest part happened in 2011, when Daniel decided to work and earn more money for the family rather than finishing his schooling - he is supposed to be Grade 6, then.

Despite all uncertainties, fate has always been generous enough to Daniel. His elementary teachers continued to support him all throughout his life's journey. The shown support has become his strongest propeller to continue his studies in the Alternative Learning System (ALS) in the City Division of Cabadbaran. To Daniel, a fresh new start has started to unfold.

As support to the programs, projects, and activities of DepEd Cabadbaran City - Alternative Learning System, a City Ordinance is passed. This City Ordinance grants an educational assistance worth of Php 5,000.00 cash to all ALS Graduates like Daniel whose enthusiasm to learn and to achieve his ambitions are burning.



TOWARDS A HEALTHIER LEARNING CENTER Green goes on ALS

BY: WENDEL C. FEDERICOS

As a proverb says, “an apple a day, keeps a doctor away,” but this concept will remain as it is without someone who will be taking the lead in advocating and promoting the importance of eating healthy and nutritious food.

In the Schools Division Office of Bayugan City, the Alternative Learning System with the leadership of Mr. Jerry P. Salino as the ALS Focal, has started the advocacy in adopting and intensifying Gulayan sa Community Learning Center (GCLCP) Program.

Gulayan sa Community Learning Center Program (GCLCP) is an initiative of ALS Bayugan City which is patterned after the National Greening Program of the Department of Education's (DepEd) Gulayan sa Paaralan Program (GPP). The GCLCP is one of the mechanisms of the ALS Bayugan to encourage and increase awareness to address malnutrition in the 43 barangays within the city.

“This GCLCP is close to our heart as community program implementers. We see the real scenarios in the field, and we cannot deny that one of the factors that our learners failed to finish the course it is because they need to attend if the not living condition but also the health conditions of their family members,” Salino admitted.

“Through the GCLC Program, we teach our learners two important things – learning the lessons and planting vegetables productively,” Mr. Cordera one of the ALS Teachers remarked, adding its opportune, especially during this pandemic time.

As a response to this, many generous ALS stakeholders have shown and extended their full support to the program. The Department of Agriculture (DA) have donated 200 packs of assorted vegetable seeds which were distributed equally to the different Community Learning Centers.

Some of the barangay officials have lend their vacant lots or areas in the barangays and were temporarily utilized as ALS garden. Furthermore, the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) inked partnership with ALS Bayugan in the provision of skills training relative to land preparation, and the like.

With high hopes that this program can benefit the whole ALS community, the Curriculum Implementation Division (CID) conducted monitoring and visitation on the implementation of the ALS classes and innovations.

“I know that education is important. However, you must also ensure that you are always healthy. During this health emergency, I believe that we must give a premium to both. For you to finish your education, you must be healthy every day,” Chief Vicariato stressed out during her monitoring of one of the CLCs.

Indeed, a good quality education is tantamount to good health. Inspired by the mantra of the Alternative Learning System that states, “Sa ALS May Pag-asa,” DepEd Bayugan City Division ALS Implementers together with their supportive and generous internal and external stakeholders will continue to provide hope to their ALS learners.



WE ACCEPT THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF AREAS NEEDED TO BE IMPROVED, ENHANCED, AND ENRICHED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALS EDUCATION, BUT WE HAVE HIGH HOPES



Shared values

LIFE AND LESSONS

JOSEPHINE CHONIE M. OBSENARES
Regional ALS Focal Person

What does it take for cooperation and partnership to succeed? What circumstances would make that success possible?

As ALS implementers, these posted questions are of significance to balance the equilibrium of learning. Active engagement of partners and stakeholders in ALS activities will give positive impact on learner's performance likewise to the implementation of the program.

Undeniably, our educational system has been threatened not only by the virus but also with a number of observable challenges that we have in our Community Learning Centers in the whole region. No need to enumerate, for we know the specifics of those.

Then, surrendering was never an option to every ALS advocate of Caraga. The regional office and all division offices have intensified our unique mechanisms in inviting stakeholders and partners to extend their support for the future of every ALS learner. With their concerted efforts, both the ALS implementers and stakeholders, are almost at the peak of championing ALS education.

“
WITH THEIR CONCERTED EFFORTS, BOTH THE ALS IMPLEMENTERS AND STAKEHOLDERS, ARE ALMOST AT THE PEAK OF CHAMPIONING ALS EDUCATION.”

Still, we accept that there are a lot of areas needed to be improved, enhanced, and enriched in the implementation of the ALS education, but we have high hopes that our strongest pillars in the Central Office, Field Offices and Barangay levels will continue to provide relevant and quality education for all ALS learners.

On my personal note that successful partnership is a matter of shared values. These are matters that we, the DepEd and our partners and stakeholders, are valued.

OPINION

Shelters for hope

ON POINT

WENDEL C. FEDERICOS
EPS-II



Imagine yourself attending classes in the waiting shed, at the bus terminal, at the market, or at any places where classes can possibly hold. These scenarios are tremendously challenging to both the learners and the teachers of the Alternative Learning System. These are also the clear picture of ALS education in some places, if not all in the country. However, everything changed on June 20, 2022, when the Joint Memorandum DM-CL-2022-231 (Conduct of Inventory of Alternative Learning System Community Learning Centers in the Schools Division Office) was released.

Personally, I am thrilled with the announcement of the Curriculum and Instruction strands and the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE). In my heart, a feeling of relief and excitement were dominating at that moment. The long dream of establishing a safe, conducive, and permanent learning hubs for our ALS learners is about to commence.

From time immemorial, although ALS classes were conducted in communities and places where physical structures are sub-standards, still the passion of ALS teachers to deliver their lesson are laudable. The ‘unpleasant’ environment had never been considered as a hindrance to do their tasks as catalyst of change of our out-of-school learners. More to add, DepEd had continuously enriched the curriculum to ensure that education in ALS is of relevance and quality.

Although finding perfections in everything is hard, yet the efforts done by all ALS advocates from the Central Office down to the Community Learning Centers made the ride worthwhile. A physical structure of a safe, inclusive, and secure shelters of hope, days from now, will surely be enjoyed by our beloved ALS learners. Truly, no ALS learner will be left behind for ‘there is hope in ALS’.



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Breaking BARRIERS

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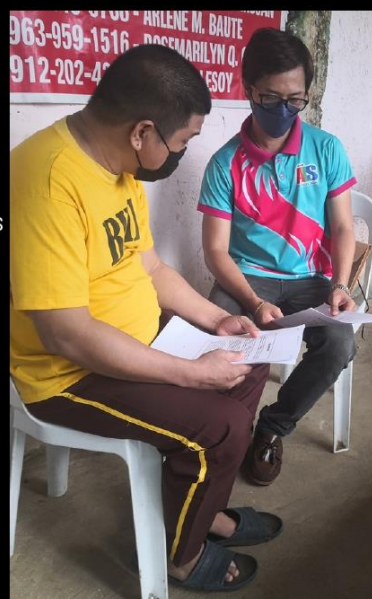
GOAL SETTING. To help the PDL Learners in their learning tasks, ALS Teacher Al Ganto explains the procedure written in the Self-Learning Module.

Despite these challenges, my desire to fulfill my purpose outweighed the inconveniences. I knew that education was the key to breaking the cycle of crime and poverty. My passion for education and my desire to make a difference in the lives of my learners kept him going. As time went by, I saw the positive impact that education was having on my learners and that was enough fuel for me to persevere in my quest.

Through my hard work and dedication, I was able to inspire many of my PDL learners to pursue their education and turn their lives around. I saw them grow and succeed, and I felt a sense of pride and accomplishment knowing that I had played a part in their success. And as I continued to dedicate my life to giving my learners the skills and knowledge they needed to become responsible and productive members of society, I was also rewarded with meaning and purpose in life. My dedication and commitment were an inspiration not only to my learners but also to the prison staff and the community as well. My work helped change the perception of prisoners as hopeless and beyond redemption. Hence, with hard work, dedication, and a willingness to make a difference, even the most difficult of situations can be overcome.

Indeed, education, as a basic human right, can be a powerful tool for rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and therefore, should be accessible to all regardless of their circumstances. Hence, it provides hope, a sense of purpose, and chance for a better future. With the right support and opportunities, even those who have made mistakes can transform their lives.

Deprived of Liberty. Dungeon of oblivion. Quiet Desolation. Regardless of these all, education has the potential to break the barriers that impede them to learn, grow, and make a positive impact in the world. And it takes one brave, determined soul to serve as catalyst in breaking these barriers.



Deprived of Liberty. Dungeon of oblivion. Quiet Desolation.

These are the dark realities of the convicts confined in Surigao City Jail. For varied reasons and circumstances, these persons deprived of liberty (PDL) have different and unique stories to tell - stories of offenders and ignorance in the eyes of society; of spiritually sick in the sight of the Church, and of a prisoner whose soul is in grief and loneliness to share the same hopes, aspirations and liberty as experienced by others.

And it takes one hero to light up their lives tarnished by the curse of yesterday. Clad not with capes and supernatural powers, but with the heart and compassion to lift the spirits of the PDL learners, I respond to the challenge of fighting beguiling villains of illiteracy and ignorance that seek to threaten the fibers of society. Then, my story of being an ALS teacher inside the jail started.

When I first received the assignment to teach in prison, I was filled with fear and hesitation. As I entered the gates of the prison, I couldn't help but feel a sense of apprehension and fear. I heard the stories of violence and danger that lurk within the prison walls. I heard stories of the difficulties that teachers face when working with PDL learners. But as I made my way to the ALS center, I was reminded of the purpose -to educate and empower those who have been deprived of their freedom. So, I decided to take on the challenge and put my fears aside.

I could not forget how my first day of teaching in prison was filled with joy and inspiration. I was greeted by a group of curious individuals whose cups for learning need to be filled. I could see that they had a thirst for knowledge and a desire to improve their lives. As I began teaching, I quickly realized that my PDL learners were not so different from other learners. I saw that they have potential, and with the right guidance, I believed that they could achieve great things.

However, I also faced many challenges while teaching in prison. The environment was not conducive to learning, and the learners often faced distractions and disruptions. One of the biggest tests that I faced was the lack of resources. Many of the prisoners did not have access to books or other educational materials. Thus, I sought the help of the community and was able to gather enough books and other educational materials to start a small library within the prison.

I also faced challenges in terms of discipline. Many of the PDLs have been in prison for a long time and have grown accustomed to a certain way of life. They were not used to being in a structured learning environment and had to adjust to the new rules and regulations. I managed to balance imposing discipline while not undermining respect and compassion toward my learners.

Lured not to Fall

PROJECT TULONG AND ALS LEARNER'S
JOURNEY TOWARDS PERSONAL CHANGE



I was inspired by the ALS Programs and the guidance of my BP-OSA Teachers to go back to school.

ELLMAR C. MENESES

JULIETA P. ERAZO

“You’re too old to catch up”, Ellmar heard his mind said to him one fine afternoon as he was relaxing in the hammock at their veranda while blowing his cigar.

Bottoms up. Ecstatic smoke. Nightly jams with friends. This was the kind of life he enjoys and doesn't want to give up. It liberates him and gives him the adult feel. As the youngest, an easy life was all he wanted- free from obligations (including school) and dramatic stories that would ring his ear as he passed by his neighborhood. To him, alcohol, cigarette smoking (sometimes weed) and getting together with friends is what makes him happy not until when his father became ill- the only breadwinner for a large family of 8.

Ellmar would cry in secret seeing the hurt and pain his father felt when he was unable to move his extremities. He would pity his mother who has been working double time to feed them and take care of his husband as well. This commiserating scenario knocked on his heart a thousand times until he came to a concrete decision of going back to school. Halt! “I’m too old. My friends and batchmates have all graduated in high school and are starting their college degrees. It’s a shame to be called kuya by my classmates. No way!”

That obstacle didn't discourage him. He took the ALS (Alternative Learning System), had head to head lessons with his instructors and was granted success with his A & E Test. He took his studies very seriously because he wanted to prove to his family that he deserved the second chance he'd been given. After graduating in ALS, he took his dreams to college where he finished his degree in Criminology. He passed the Board Exam and eventually became a Patrolman of the Philippine National Police.

FAILURE

Ellmar learned that it could become a great fuel to achieve what you wanted. You may pause for a while but not for long. You may stumble but not remain kneeling on the stones. It will challenge you to go farther and reach your dreams. To Ellmar, Project Tulong intensified his desire to become an example that no matter how low you had been, there is something greater and grander in the surface. Project Tulong lured him not to fail again.



ALS AGAINST DRUGS. Educating our learners on the ill effects of illegal drugs is one of our interventions in our learning centers.

DepEd, other NGAs bolster drug-free learning community

ALEXANDER D. DAPAR JR.

Carrascal District - In celebration of the Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Week, the Department of Education - Alternative Learning System (ALS) through the joint effort of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and Philippine National Police (PNP) have gathered 75 ALS learner-participants within the Carrascal District for the program on “Community Awareness Campaign on Anti-illegal Drug” held at Barangay Baybay Session Hall on November 23, 2022.

Other attendees during the activity are personnel from the Bureau of Learners Support Services (BLSS) school health offices.

Education Committee Chair Servando R. Cuajiao, on behalf of Mayor Vicente H. Pimentel III, stressed in his message that youth shall have an active participation in all community activities and shall focus themselves on engaging in sports activities and other relevant activities.

During his talk, PLT Nick L. Antallan, Officer In-charge of Philippine National Police Carrascal, enumerated to the participants some helpful tips in refraining themselves from illegal drug use.

Likewise, he highlighted the strategies and practices that his office is doing to combat illegal drug addiction. On the other hand, PSSgt Kristy Mae I. Frias shared the ill-effects of illegal drugs and the science of addiction. She mentioned also about the types of illegal drugs and its effect in the human body particularly on the dangers it brings to the human brain.

Meanwhile, the Department of Health (DOH) personnel with the collaboration of DepEd Nurses rendered medical and dental services.

Discussion on the School-based Feeding Program (SBFP), School Dental Health Care Program (SDHCP), Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) in Schools (WinS), Adolescent Reproductive Health, National Drug Education Program (NDEP), and the School Mental Health Program were also discussed during the activity.

THE MOST OUTSTANDING ALS TEACHER
IS THE ONE WHO IS INNOVATIVE AND
MOTIVATED TO EFFECT CHANGE

INSPIRED STRIDES Dawned

MARIFE S. BONTIA
ALS TEACHER,
BISLIG CITY DIVISION



Remember how far you've come, not just how far you have to go. You are not where you want to be, but neither are you where you used to be.

These words exactly describe my reverie about my journey as ALS (Alternative Learning System) teacher.

It was in 2015 when the item as an 'Abot Alam' teacher was offered to me. At first, I was hesitant because I really did not know anything about teaching ALS learners. How am I going to deal with those who are called the 3Ls (The Last, the Least, and the Lost)?

My turning point came when one of the pillars of Bislig City Division affirmed this calling with words that both challenged and encouraged me.

"Fe, good luck! Do your best to ensure that our ALS learners will continue to perform well in the Accreditation and Equivalency test." I was moved by the sincerity and compassion of my superior's voice.

The first year of teaching was hard because I didn't have learning resource materials for teaching ALS learners. So, I sought help from my co-teachers in the formal school. I began to complete the activities and worksheets in different learning strands. I also collaborated with my fellow ALS teachers. Indeed, we worked as a team!

I have encountered many challenges over the course of my career as an ALS teacher. One of those was the need to adjust the schedule of our learners since most of them are working. But what struck me the most was the challenge of devising a strategy to use in teaching youth and adults because some of them had academic problems. We adjusted our lesson and tailored it to their learning needs.

However, these did not hinder me from doing my job and even exceeded the minimum requirement as an ALS teacher. As the years went by, I engaged in initiatives and innovations. I was one of the teachers who made use of a Radio- Based Instruction program with canned lessons for me to reach-out the learners who are working without a day off. In addition, we implemented the Project LEAP-Up (Learning English Application for Pinoys) improving the learners' performance in terms of grammar, comprehension, spelling and verbal skills to cope with the lessons. This raised our division banner being awarded as an Outstanding Tech4Ed Center for the 1st semester of 2019 in Regional Level in which I am the Tech4Ed Manager. I also crafted Learning Activity Sheets just to cater the needs of our learners. As a result, we produced high performing honor students in Senior High School and academic awardees in college.



Since I want all my learners to become proficient readers, we steadfastly implement the ALS - MORE (Meaningful Opportunities for Reading Enhancement). This is the support project of the ALS Team to intensify the THRIVE (Teaching Harmoniously via Reading towards Increasing literacy instruction through Valuable activities for Excellence) division reading program. As a result, last school year, 8 out of 10 (80%) learners under frustration level went up to independent level. I got 100% A & E Passers in SY 2015-2016, 2017-2018 and SY 2019- 2020 to 2021-2022. At present, ALS-MORE in tandem with the THRIVE reading program, continue to hone proficient ALS learners. Its assessment tools are also established.

" To educate the out-of-school youths may be a Herculean task, but looking back to the hardships I have surmounted made me see how blessed I have been to be an instrument for the upliftment of my fellows' lives"

As advocates of collaboration, we tapped the barangay LGU of Mangagoy. Last SY 2021-2022, it sponsored a Php20, 000.00 worth of program for driving skills training. All 40 learners who enrolled completed the training. Recently, we received another Php 20,000.00 from our Barangay LGU. As of now, we have 40 learners enrolled. This training will start in February 2023. Our Memorandum of Agreement with other local partners exists also with the provincial government through the office of Board Member Margarita Garay and other partners.

To educate the out-of-school youth may be a Herculean task but looking back to the hardships I have surmounted made me see how blessed I have been to be an instrument for the upliftment of my fellows' lives. The desire to help them, I believe, has been planted by God in my heart. And yes, I still have miles to go, yet the fact that I have come this far dawns the track I must tread on.

ALS AGAINST THE STORM

SECOND CHANCE BUT NOT SECOND CLASS

ANIESOL C. LASALA



It has been a tumultuous year for all Siargaonon learners due to the mixed challenges posed by the pandemic and the wide-scale impact of the recent calamity, Super Typhoon Odette's devastation. While others consider education under this daunting circumstance as a race full of dramatic changes, stretches, and challenges, for Rosalie S. Gerarcas, 42, a mother of four children, education is something that should not be treated as a competition. As long as one is determined, remains firm, and has the resolve to achieve academic goals and purpose, everything is possible. Rosalie strongly believes her current standing being an Alternative Learning System (ALS) student could not be labeled as "behind". In life, no one is too old enough for a person with a determined heart to succeed, especially the out-of-school youth and adults, who are now given a second chance in life through quality ALS education.



In one interview, Rosalie narrated that she could not be any prouder of herself learning new valuable inputs every day at her local ALS Community Learning Center (CLC), a conducive learning facility that she fondly calls a place of hope and inspiration. Although dynamism and enthusiasm are equally significant factors toward a sustained learning interest, the functional and accessible learning facility in itself, according to her, contributes an immense impact on her learning progress as well.

Like all other ALS learners in the island, Rosalie is grateful enough to the overflowing support extended by the national and local government units and non-government organizations. She thought that the challenging task of recuperating from the ruthless devastation and the gradual transition of learning continuity would have been that far from realization. In the same manner, DepEd Siargao, on behalf of all their learners, is proud to have a constellation of reliable support systems through the linkages that it has made with its proactive stakeholders.

There is no magic wand to expedite the advocacy in promoting literacy and in providing the out-of-school children, youth, and adults on this island with the quality education they rightfully deserve, but through concerted efforts and initiatives, this is where education can be strengthened.



One great manifestation of a synergistic partnership between DepEd Siargao and its valued stakeholders is the provision of the PHP5M-worth Community Learning Center (CLC) donated by APEC Party List through Representative Congressman Sergio C. Dagoo on July 11, 2022, which was constructed in the 250 sqm lot sponsored by the Local Government Unit of Dapa under the dynamic leadership of Mayor Elizabeth T. Matugas. Just like an author who has finally found a home for his book, a painter who found shelter for his masterpiece, Dapa-ALS CLC has finally found a home in the hearts of those people who have extended their philanthropic gestures and charitable acts to their constituents.

Through the joint efforts forged among community stakeholders, the Schools Division of Siargao stands proud and loud, boasting the accomplishments of empowering and producing ALS graduates like Rosalie whose desire to finish education is driven by commitment, determination, experiences, and motivation.

Tough times forge men and women to build strength and character. Then with renewed commitment, one can navigate the turbulence in the ocean of life. There are more challenges ahead, but then again, ALS dreamers can surmount all of them because DepEd Siargao and its support system are good at finding solutions and breaking the impediments that come their way.

CARAGA 5 JOURNALS

ON BATTLING ILLITERACY

Caraga Region's IP Communities are situated in deprived, depressed, and underserved communities. Also known as Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA), access to government services like health and free education is scarce. But with the far-reaching initiatives of DepEd Caraga, these communities are not anymore deprived with education due to the expansion of formal schools and community learning centers managed by the Alternative Learning System.

DATU SA TRIBO:

Datu sa Kaalam

ERIC C. CABALUNA

Education is life.

"Alas tres na sa hapon apan wala ko gihuna-huna nga muabot ang kagabhion sa edukasyon, Kamo pa ba kaha mga kabatan-unan nga ana- a naglatas sa sayong kabuntagon," quipped by the 77-year old proud indigenous person and one of the A&E Elementary ALS graduates.

Datu Ricardo Astodillo Salazar is the chieftain of the Manobo from Sito Banahao, Barangay Maitom, Tandag City. Datu Kardo served as the elder of their community while closely collaborating with DepEd Tandag City. He never stopped believing in the importance of education in everyone's life.

"Do not be contented with what you are today," he challenged his fellow completers in his inspirational speech during the ALS Graduation and Completion Ceremony at Jacinto P. Elpa National High School Covered Court last August 2022.

He stressed that our only hope for today is that the next generation will value education as they value life itself. He also pointed out that character and manners will always define the essence of education.

"Damo na mga taas ang yaabot na paga eskwelahan, pero mataro gihapon ang pamatasan, way gihapon kapuslanan." (There are many who have higher educational attainment but don't have manners; they are useless professionals.)

Beating the Odds

For 10 months, he conquered the challenges of completing the modules amidst the threat of COVID-19 and geographical location. Sitio Banahao is the farthest hinterland community and is considered to have the most challenging terrain among the 21 barangays of Tandag City. He particularly mentioned the ALS Mobile teacher, Sir Eric Alegado who persisted despite the difficulties he had to go through traveling up and down just to reach their community.

"I am grateful to DepEd especially to the Alternative Learning System (ALS) because this program of the government helps the young people who have lost hope in finishing their studies," Datu Kardo stated.

He further said that because of the Alternative Learning System, there were young people there who continued their education. In fact, they had already graduated from senior high school. Those who couldn't read were able to read.

"Dili lang kini dakong garbo sa akong kaugalingon apan labaw sa tanan, garbo alang sa among tribo Manobo nga aduna usab pangandoy sama sa iban." (It's not only my pride but the pride of our Manobo tribe which like others, have dreams also.)

"The only for today is that the next generation will value education as they value life itself"



Welding

Broken Paths

Sewing

Dreams

GIVING HOPE

TO CHILDREN IN

CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

ANAMARIE L. CENIZA

To be born in this world has never been anyone's choice. Living with great privilege and being able to pursue the things anyone desires is a luxury that not everyone could afford. And to enjoy the life that someone has, in whatever life status, is highly influenced by his or her thoughts, actions, and environment.

Education comes with a price of either effort or money, and though every child has the right to be educated, not everyone can afford it. According to statistics in individual terms, in 2022, two out of five Filipinos are considered poor. Another study also showed that one out of six children is either abandoned, neglected, or orphaned. That's where the program "Project ANAK" came to exist.

Project ANAK (Amumahon Natu ang Kabataan) aims to bridging the gap of ignorance, advocating education, realigning the children from becoming law abiding individuals, and providing them basic skills and knowledge in acquiring stable jobs.

In 2018, "Home for Boys" in Baranggay Antongalon, Butuan City was created through ALS Butuan City Division in partnership with the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD). This project is largely supported by internal and external contributions and donations from the following stakeholders such as the CSWD, Baranggay Local Government Unit of Baranggay Antongalon, ALS, DepEd Butuan, and the Local School Board.

From the same year, DepEd ALS has helped a total of 67 beneficiaries to be enrolled in the 10-month long program of Accreditation and Equivalency, and 170 in the livelihood skills training. Although the pandemic was at its height during the time, it never hindered our ALS advocates to continue what has been started.

Many of the beneficiaries of Project ANAK succeeded and completed the Accreditation and Equivalency Program and Livelihood and Skills Training Program. They also passed the National Accreditation and Equivalency examination and completed their basic education. Some are currently in Senior High School, and others are employed and are working to help their families.

The success of the implementation of Project ANAK led to the opening of many doors of opportunities in attaining a spot in the ten best programs during the National Literacy Awards. It also became a model that has been benchmarked by other ALS implementers in the neighboring barangays of Butuan City.

Truly education is not for free. Yet there are these people who serve as instruments to make both ends meet. Project ANAK will continue welding and sewing the broken paths of children who will come into its shelter.

"I enrolled in ALS so I can finish my studies and learn new skills before I can go out from Home For The Boys. Now, I am a working as a lineman and I am earning."

(Translated from original Visayan Version)

KATE JIM CORAL
A&E PASSER

