



CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Story & Photos By Katherine Saucier

About 2.4 million elementary-age students did not attend school last year in the Philippines, according to Department of Education figures. Due to the private ministry efforts of organizations like Kids International Ministries, today 226 elementary-age students are not among these statistics. The following tells the story of how vision and heart to somehow help can make a difference.

For two decades a hollow structure sat near the edge of six subdivisions. Many locals referred to the vacant building as the “haunted house.” As the grass grew taller, many doubted the facility would ever be of use. Little did they know that its soon-to-be revitalization would bring new hope to both the children and parents of the Cuatro community.

This once empty building is now filled with 226 students and has taken life as the Cuatro Christian School. Five years ago when Jeff Long, President of Kids International Ministries, proposed the idea of the school, he never expected it to grow as it has.

Since the school began in 2006, it has doubled every year, morphing from a few dozen students to hundreds. Parents indicate it’s the simple things from the free uniforms to the convenient location that have made it possible for their kids to stay in school.

Today one-third of the nearby squatter community kids attend the school. Despite

the influx of students, Long says they are not into the “numbers game” but about educating kids well. The classrooms in the school were purposely built to only hold 15 to 16 children so the classes would not be overwhelming. Parent Virginia A. Maderazo praised the value of the small classes and the education her 10-year-old son is receiving, recounting her son’s ability to correctly answer high-school level questions posed by his older brothers.

Kim Courtright, CCS headmaster, said she has seen a spike in parental involvement this year, whether it be in helping in the school with cooking or cleaning, or meeting in other parents’ homes for Bible studies. Parents also attend school-sponsored seminars on subjects like nutrition and discipline, and parents and school staff alike are seeing the fruit of this knowledge. “They [the kids] are looking better because of the nutrients that they are getting from meals, and their behavior is getting better as well,” said Courtright.

Faculty and staff believe that prayer is another reason for the big changes occurring in the students’ lives and for the smooth functioning of the school. From day one the teachers have prayed for the school, the students and each other.

Teacher and reading specialist Verna Lyn B. San Felipe says she has seen changes

in many aspects of the students’ lives, especially in their comprehension. Many of the students started the school year not understanding any English but have quickly accelerated. Courtright hopes this propulsion continues, enabling the students to skip the first or second years of high school and move straight on into the upper levels. Teachers and administrators agree that the most satisfying part of being involved in the school is seeing the continued growth of the students.

The students are not the only ones growing. KIM President Jeff Long says the ministry is expanding as well. “As God allows us the space and the timing, I can see our commitment growing to be able to educate children all the way through high school,” Long said. Also underway is a building that will house a library, computer lab, and a vocational trade licensing program. This program will allow students who cannot attend college to have an opportunity for a better job.

The goal for these programs is to educate as many people as possible. However, Long adds that the only way any of this has been possible is through people’s willingness to get involved. Whether it is sponsoring a child’s education or coming to help with construction, he believes everyone can help. For more information visit www.kidsinternationalministries.com. 