



THE PROUD ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR JAN – APR '16

## Another School Year Completed

Time really flies by – it feels like it was just yesterday that the school year started. And now, we've reached the summer vacation!

It is not only another school year completed for many of our scholars – it is actually a milestone for them as they completed either Elementary School or Jr. High School! In fact, a grand 11 scholars – yes, you read that right – received their diplomas this year.

Many of them have been with A Million Voices for the whole extent of their Elementary School – meaning all six years – and that makes it an especially proud moment as well for the organization.

In addition to the graduating scholars, we also have 18 scholars who received awards or special recognition due to their outstanding performances. Some awards and recognitions being: model pupil, top 1 to top 8 students, best in attendance, 1<sup>st</sup> place winners in competitions, and most diligent. One of our scholars also received special mentioning in the school newspaper for her contribution to the school's softball team.

With that said, we feel just as proud of all our students regardless of their results. We know and we see how hard all scholars work with their studies, and while A Million Voices is helping to lay the groundwork for them, it is

each scholar (and parent) who puts up all the building blocks. We see how scholars who struggle in school actually improve their grades and still manage to go to school every single day. We stay committed to working together with them in ensuring that they can stay motivated and driven to achieve those magnificent dreams they are keeping close to their hearts.

We are, however, not doing this alone. We owe a great thank you to all those who sponsor our programs and projects. Without our corporate and individual sponsors, we would not have been able to take part in the strengthening of these treasured voices – and all those who are supporting us should take a moment to feel proud as well. It is an accomplishment you've been an important part of!

Although the school year of 2015-2016 is now completed, it does not mean that we are not keeping up the momentum at A Million Voices. The new scholarship period starts in May and the new school year in June. Another school year will start – which means another step closer for the scholars in reaching the life goals they have set for themselves!



### IN THIS ISSUE



### Penpal Writing

Our scholars now have penpals in Norway, something that has been quite exciting for both the Norwegian penpals and our scholars.

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### Good Parenting Skills - Part 2

The second part of the Good Parenting Skills from last year was held, this time focusing on sexuality.

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## Penpal Writing

Last year our scholars were in for a new experience. A Million Voices started a collaboration with a school class in a Norwegian elementary school for cultural and language exchanges.

It started out as a tough experience for many scholars who were shy about writing in their second language, English, and were afraid of expressing themselves grammatically incorrect. However, as the first original letters reached them, the fear turned into excitement. There were pictures from Norway and information about the lives of Norwegian students, all very different from the Philippines.

Separate penpal writing activities were initiated to ensure that the scholars would get time to focus on their letters, as well as getting inspiration from other scholars and assistance in any grammatical concerns.



## Holiday Packages

In December 2015, we had a fundraising for what we call Holiday packages. This is a food package, which is distributed to all our scholar families in December.

Even though A Million Voices is non-religious and our scholar families come from very different religious backgrounds, we do acknowledge the special season that Christmas is for many. It is a season for compassion, love and sharing. Moreover, one thing that is especially important in Filipino culture is the sharing of meals.

The food packages therefore consist of ingredients for meals that we know the families would normally prepare.

Generally, a package consists of spaghetti, corned beef, spaghetti sauce, coffee powder, juice powder and ingredients for the Filipino favorite, fruit salad.

Each package has a value of P500, and the full amount is spent directly on the Holiday package. With the help of individual sponsors, every single scholar family received such a package from A Million Voices last December.

We would thus like to extend a big thank you from ourselves and on behalf of the recipient families to all those who joined in to spread a little extra joy to a family across the globe. You may not know each other and probably will never meet – but somehow the world got a little bit smaller last December as your holiday celebrations were linked in a magical way.

SPONSORED BY G TRAVEL



## The Corporate Sponsorship

The travel agency G Travel is a long time donor of A Million Voices and is a full or participating sponsor of several of our programs and activities. These include:

- **Transportation Service**  
The School Transportation is for scholars who are in need of assistance with getting to school on a daily basis.
- **Vaccination Program**  
Our scholars received the flu vaccination this year, as well as a vaccine awareness seminar.
- **Health Assistance**  
Scholars receive a fixed allowance for medicine, laboratory and health check-ups, always paid for or purchased by AMV directly. A Million Voices has also welcomed a part-time Nurse this school year who provides medical monitoring of the scholar's health as well as holding necessary seminars.
- **Awareness Seminars**  
Health and protection seminars focusing on increased awareness among both parents and scholars. These seminars include important health and protection related matters, such as child protection, good parenting, HIV/AIDS, and disaster preparedness.
- **Travel Support**  
G Travel sponsors travel costs for one visit per year to the Philippines for an A Million Voices Norway staff. This is to ensure that proper monitoring can be carried out without using vital funds which could be better employed for projects.

## WANT TO JOIN HANDS AS A PARTNER?

We would love to discuss any potential partnership with you. Do not hesitate to get in touch! You can e-mail us at:

[amillionvoices@amillionvoices.no](mailto:amillionvoices@amillionvoices.no)



## The Scholar Development

It is normal when you reach a certain milestone in life that you start to look back at the road that is now behind you. This year, A Million Voices has done just that. Several of our scholars graduated from Elementary School, and many of them we have followed along the path since they started in Grade 1.

A Million Voices was established in the Philippines in 2009, and the same year we started a pilot project for a scholarship program with nine students. The following year, we had established a framework that enabled us to expand, and 33 scholars were accepted to our scholarship program in 2010.

A Million Voices has always been focused on not being stuck in old ways, and thus treasures change. We see it as the best way to ensure that we are always able to address things that are not optimized to the fullest and to enhance aspects that are working wonderfully. Therefore, the scholarship program has also undergone a lot of changes and has had its own development, just like our scholars.

Additional items provided for the scholars have been added as the years have gone by, and services have been added and replaced. For instance, when we started out, we had after school sessions for all our scholars. After we expanded to children living in various areas of Manila, this became difficult. Now, however, we have been able to focus even better on academic assistance to scholars who are in need of such support.

Academics is one of the areas where we have seen particular development among our scholars. We do not strive towards pushing children to have the best grades – of course, it's wonderful if that would be the case, but in all honesty we aim at our scholars doing their best and improving their grades. Moreover, this we have seen among all our scholars over the years.

Another area in which we have seen enormous change is in health. Health is one of the primary pillars of AMV, and it was early on incorporated in the scholarship program. We provide annual medical check-ups, along with support for medicine and consultations and diagnostic testing during the year. While many of our scholars were absent in school for medical reasons 6 years ago, this is now becoming more and more rare. If it is the case, it is more often for smaller medical concerns unlike prior concerns, such as tuberculosis and malnutrition.

One of the less compelling aspects of scholarship programs is for many sponsors the lack of immediate results. It can take years to really see how a scholarship program has an effect, and it is in many ways different for each student as every scholar's life has its own obstacles and challenges.

However, we find this to be a beautiful thing because you get to be part of the life journey of a child. You get to see a student grow from being a young child to a young adult, and it is an amazing journey to be part of!

# The Health Pillar

Although it has only been four months since the last newsletter, there are plenty of activities to report about. Just take a look at the various topics addressed by our team.

## Nutrition & Food Safety Seminar

In mid-December, we held a seminar for our beneficiaries on Nutrition and Food Safety. The seminar consisted of two parts. The first part covered the nutrition our body needs, as well as proposing meal plans for children. The aim was to increase the awareness levels to help alleviate nutritional deficiencies and ensure stronger immunity. The second part covered common health issues related to improper handling of food, and aimed at being a preventative measure to avoid such issues.

## First Aid Seminar

This spring we welcomed volunteers Marthe and Pepijn from the Netherlands at the Manila office. There they were assisting in health and IT matters.

One of the activities they were involved in was a seminar on first aid for all our scholars and their parents. The seminar was spearheaded by Marthe, a professional Nurse, and was conducted in an interactive and educational manner. The seminar consisted of a presentation on different first aid situations and how to handle these, followed by hands-on training for everyone to personally test out their new knowledge.

At the end of the seminar, all participants were gifted with a family first aid kit that the two volunteers had donated.

## HIV Testing

In light of last year's seminar on HIV/AIDS and the topics raised in the good parenting skills – part 2, all parents were offered a free of charge HIV testing. In collaboration with the Philippine General Hospital, we had two

separate activities where those parents who voluntarily signed up would get prep-talks with medical personnel before an actual testing took place at the hospital.

## Good Parenting Skills – Part 2

Last year we started good parenting skills seminars that focus on different aspects of parenting, may it be awareness of different topics or good practices in certain areas. Last year's topic focused on different parenting styles. The seminar in February focused on how to discuss sexual topics with your children. Especially seeing how many of our scholars are now young adults, this is a very timely topic to bring up. In addition to focusing on the parenting part, the participants were also challenged to reconsider their own knowledge on the topic of sexuality.

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*A Million Voices is not hesitant about addressing sensitive topics, and even has an open view on sex education. We wish to provide our beneficiaries with the skills and tools to make healthy decisions about i.e. sexuality and relationships, as they themselves as individuals must make their own choices based on the information shared with them.*

## HEALTH SNAPSHOTS



## Good Parenting Skills - Part 2

A seminar focusing on the sensitive topic of sexuality.



## Seminar on First Aid

An interactive and hands-on seminar for beneficiaries on medical first aid situations and the proper ways to deal with these.



## A Final Message from Us to You



## A Million Voices Newsletter

April 2016

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Or, click onto our website for more information about our projects.

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**Website:** <http://www.amillionvoices.no>

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