Bata, Kaugmaon Mo, Awiton Ko: Art Exhibit and Christmas Charity Concert

By Jae Anne Asperin and Ranette Angot ODN

The Niña Maria Arts Hub, a component initiative of Niña Maria Scholarship Program in Tambo, Macasandig, Cagayan de Oro City, organized an Art Exhibit and Christmas Charity Concert with the theme, "Bata, Kaugmaon Mo, Awiton Ko" (literally meaning, "O Child, your future I will sing") on December 6, 2015 at the Ayala Centrio Mall from 9:30 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. The twofold aim of the activity was to showcase the ongoing activities of the Arts Hub and to invite interested collaborators and/or benefactors to the arts program.

The Arts Hub used to be the kindergarten classroom of Niña Maria since the school was already transferred to its new location in 10th-15th Street, Nazareth, Cagayan de Oro City. It is practically run by volunteers, mentor-artists included. All the modules are offered for free to economically disadvantaged but artistically gifted kids and youth. At present there are a mix of around 30 kids, youth and young adults, distributed in the different art classes on drawing, painting, note reading, guitar or ukulele playing, and poi dancing. Some of these students come from a relocation site for Sendong survivors, Indahag Habitat Village, an outreach extension community of Niña Maria Scholarship Program. The positive development of the hub since it started in April 2015 necessitates an approach that could facilitate

sustainability and institutionalization of the initiative. The Art Exhibit and Christmas Charity Concert was an attempt to respond to this need.

The day started blessed. Being the Second Sunday of Advent, it commenced with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with our own scholars in the choir. The day was dedicated to God, reminding each and every one that when God is put first, everything else falls into the right place. From the onset of the event, all were offered for His greater glory.

Next to the Eucharist, it was the scholars and their talents who took center stage.

The Nina Maria Arts Hub is primarily dedicated to strengthen the creativity, sharpen the mind, form discipline and values, and foster the holistic growth of the scholars who are under its music and arts program. As for the kids, they were excited themselves. They had a good time playing and running around, but when it came to show time, they all did their part and executed their

roles beautifully. I personally hope that they also become more aware of their situation and the opportunities that were made available to them. That they never cease to seek the beauty of life despite their struggles.

The whole day was filled with the hustle and bustle of music and art. There were workshops which not only showcased the kids' talents but also brought in support from the audience as more and more people participated in soil painting, poi dancing, and ukulele playing. Up until evening, music and art continued to flourish through the various artists who willingly offered their time and talent for a cause greater than themselves. The Christmas Concert indeed showed the scholars what talent coupled with hard work and discipline can create and accomplish.

It was great being a part of the whole thing as a volunteer. I am not really the best one nor the best member of the Lestonnac Flame Circle, an ODN youth organization in Xavier University, but taking part in a wonderful event for a great cause is fulfilling as it is. Time and energy were indeed well-spent as I saw everything fell into place. It was great working with fellow youth and young adult volunteers who also are willing to answer to the call of self-giving in the form of volunteering for the whole event. The knowledge that I am part of something that could help even a single child's future is already a good enough reward.

The event also gathered the rest of the community together. As they say, it takes a community to raise a child. Those who were around that day, especially

the organizing team, the volunteer artists and performers, donors, parents and families of performers and of the scholars, friends and the ODN sisters, were a great sight to behold. Everyone was excited for the event and all pitched in through their own big or small ways. It was a great opportunity for the community to provide and show love and support to the kids for what they do and for the Niña Maria Arts Hub.

Overall, it was an event of solidarity. It was a great avenue for the scholars – kids and youth - to showcase their talents and skills and for them to gain confidence in what they do. It is always important to show a child that he/she is supported and cared for and seeing the whole event and everyone who worked so hard for it did just that for them. And it was all for the greater glory of God!

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