



The official publication of the Pimentel Center for Local Governance and the Pimentel Institute for Leadership and Governance

BATANG TRANSFORMERS

Transforming Youth To Become Nation Builders



B.T. Nat'l HQ Inaugurated

By Nene Pimentel

The Batang Transformers now have their National Headquarters.

It is located in the idyllic Ensign Phillip Pestaño Sanctuary in Antipolo City at the Eastern edge of Metro-Manila barely 50 kilometers away from Manila.

The 16-hectare site is fully planted to trees, has natural creeks, man-made ponds and swimming pools, and the so-called obstacle courses that lovers of nature find irresistible.

Named after Ensign Phillip Pestaño, who offered his young life at 23 in defense of the ideals

Turn to Page 4

Batang Transformers Camp 2: 'Haraya'

By Liza Ting

'Haraya' was the batch name selected by these 62 Batang Transformers. They said it spoke of 'rebirth', 'reincarnation' or 'pag-papatuloy' and they announced it to us on the last day of the camp, at the same time joyously singing and dancing to their batch song.

The decision to hold the 2nd camp before the end of March had come just a few weeks before, and the PILG staff and core group launched into a frenzy of pulling all the details together. From confirming the availability of super-high caliber speakers for the 9 lecture sessions, 6 inspirational speakers for the prayer/sharing sessions, to coordination with the different school heads for the selection of the campers and their travel arrangements from all over the coun-

Turn to Page 2

Youths want part in Bangsamoro gov't

By Jay Dejaresco

Sixty two youth leaders aged 14 to 17 years coming from various religious and cultural backgrounds prodded government officials involved in the peace building process in Mindanao to ensure youth participation in the affairs of Bangsamoro government.

The gathering of youth leaders from different schools came through the second Batang Transformers conference held at the Ensign Phillip Pestaño Farm and Sanctuary in Antipolo City.

Batang Transformers is a gathering of selected student leaders in various schools all over the country, particularly from schools with a significant population of Muslims and indigenous groups.

Turn to Page 4

Batang...

From Page 1

try, to the selection and orientation of the 15 student leaders who would handle the games and the breakout sessions. **Ptr Hugh Nguyen** was tasked with the role of re-crafting the module and providing the extra push to keep everyone on track.

Day One to Day Four were handled expertly by the staff, headed by **Clarisse Aquino**, as all the participants converged in UMAK for the journey to the Pestaño Farm in the hills of Antipolo. Everyone received their kits, group assignments and dorm assignments upon arriving at the camp, and immediately after our lunch, we launched into the day's activities.

Tatay Nene's welcoming address and inspirational talk on the 3 C's of servant leadership, character, competence and courage, set the tone for the camp. The participants felt 'chosen' and were awed at being served by a history maker.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz' easy going rapport with the campers subliminally supported his lessons to them on 'Commonalities', and the breaking down of barriers due to religion, culture and generation.

The cultural presentations by delegation came after dinner, climaxing to a fully costumed regalia of 'Singkil' by the participants from MSU campuses. And at the breakout session, we began to see the growing respect and appreciation that the delegates had for one another, and their energy and excitement for the coming days.

Day 2 started happily with the



Archbishop Oscar Cruz



Tatay Nene Pimentel welcomes the participants.

Ms. Pauline Bautista guiding them through a process where they would craft their personal mission/vision statements, employing their imaginations to peer into the future they could have.

Dr. Rey Echavez shared with the campers how they could use their knowledge and friendships as a force to counter the dream-killers in society – namely drug-users/pushers.

The afternoon started with the trek up to Phillip's Museum, a moving tribute to a courageous young man and his enduring legacy. Then the different color teams went on to do games, and have an after dinner bonfire and storytelling session with **Dr. Norma Camunay**.

As the bonfire began to reduce twigs and branches to embers, the campers sat in quiet contemplation with their facilitators and teams. Then stories poured out; tales of their personal experiences of the conflicts in their own communities. First

hand accounts of being held hostage in schools, of witnessing their father cut in two by a hail of bullets, of seeing bodies of families crushed by the illegally-cut logs unleashed by Typhoon Sendong, of being terrorized by next-door drug pushers coddled by police and local politicians, of losing parents and siblings in the cross-fire between left and right, of the enduring multi-generational hatred brought about by 'rido', etc. In the cool darkness, in the presence of newly found friends, the pent-up fears were eased, the hidden wounds were salved with tears.

The first speaker for Day 3 was **Commissioner Senen Bacani**, a presidential adviser on the peace process. He came fresh from the signing of the Peace agreement just two days prior. The campers listened to his speech and peppered him with questions. Even after the session, the facilitators received several questions in writing concerning the peace agreement and its possible impact on the nation.



Pauline Bautista



Dr. Reynaldo Echavez



Pepe Pestaño

Bai Rohaniza shared her own experiences with conflict, and the seven steps-to peace, The campers took her challenge to heart. Rising above their own painful experiences, they crafted their messages of peace and with commitments to actions for peace.

At the breakout sessions, the Batang Transformers resolved to build peace and infect others with peace.

Sen. Koko Pimentel directed the campers to focus on achieving excellence as students, and thereby impact their own circles of influence in the school and community. He also reminded them to seek out involvement in the programs for the youth and to give the youth sector an active voice for peace.

The evening's 'Peaceformances' were absolutely amazing, as the inter-cultural teams of participants shared the expressions of their heart



Prof. Norma Camunay

in their artworks, songs, declamations, original poetry, dances, and dramas. As **Tito Pepe Pestano** later declared, "They were not only terrific, they were VERY TERRIFIC !" The message of the Batang Transformers was upbeat, hopeful, energetic and inspiring, so opposite from the harsh realities of the conflict.

On the last day, **MSU President Dr. Mac Muslim's** message reverberated, not only through his words, but mainly through his life and then presence in the camp. The leaders were touched by the stories he shared of those who broke the grinding chains of poverty in their own lives and then went on to give generously back to society and MSU. The Batang Transformers were also touched that this man who currently oversees programs for 72,000 students, would come a great distance just to spend the morning to encourage them.

The the campers also planted



Commissioner Senen Bacani

trees. By doing so, they also planted their future visions for themselves and the nation's peace. As they watered their saplings, they also declared their blessings and prayers over their own future – to grow, be established, be at peace and be fruitful.

My four days encounter with these 77 young leaders was enriching! My calloused and burdened heart was moved by their selfless sharing of their energy, their creative expressions and their forgiveness. They were willing to give up revenge, anger and hate and instead infect others with compassion and peace. They had chosen to be reincarnated as peace-builders and because of them, I too am reborn.

As the pick up line goes:
 "Batang Transformer ka ba?"
 "Oo, Bakit?"
 "Kasi binago mo ang puso ko!"
 Haraya!



Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-USman



Senator Koko Pimentel



MSU President Macapado Muslim

B.T...

From Page 1

of public service, the Sanctuary was developed through the dedication of his father, Pepe, and the devotion of his mother, Evelyn in the last 14 years.

Senator Koko Pimentel, Bai Rohaniza Sumndad-Usman, and Dr. Macabangkit Ati cut the ceremonial ribbon to formally open the HQ last March 29 in the presence of the Muslim, Lumad and Christian youth participants in the 2nd Batang Transformers Seminar that was held there.

“As their headquarters, Batang Transformers from all over the land,” Pepe Pestaño informed those who witnessed the inauguration, “will now be welcome to use the facilities of the Sanctuary for their functions.”

**Youth...**

From Page 1

In the wake of the recent signing of the peace agreement between the government and the Bangsamoro people, the youth leaders asked concrete undertakings to ensure that the voices, concerns and interests of the youth will be heard in the development of the areas to be placed under the authority of the Bangsamoro government.

Former Agriculture Secretary Senen Bacani, who is a member of the peace panel welcomed the inputs of youth leaders and assured that youth concerns must be fully addressed in the framework of the Bangsamoro government.

Senator Aquilino “Koko” Pimentel III meanwhile, assured that there will be youth sectoral representation in the Bangsamoro government that will be established.

He said he will make sure that among the sectoral members in the Bangsamoro government will be youth representatives.

He acknowledged that the youth



Senen Bacani explains to our young leaders about the peace process.

constitutes a significant fraction of the population, such that youth concerns must immediately be addressed in government.

Many of the Muslim youth leaders that participated in the Batang Transformers workshop recounted their first hand trauma being caught in the crossfire in the war in Mindanao.

In the workshop sessions, the youth leaders opened up and shared

how their lives had been torn by the armed conflict between government and rebel forces.

Some of the participants shared that they lost many of their relatives to violence in their areas of conflict.

The youth said they are hopeful that the recently signed peace accord between the government and the Bangsamoro people would finally end the violence in Mindanao.

PICTURE PICTURE PAG MAY TIME!

Day 1, March 27, 2014



Day 2, March 28, 2014



Day 3, March 29, 2014



Day 4, March 30, 2014

