



Photo courtesy of Zar Javier

## PNOY APPAREL

# Clothing Poor Pinoy Kids w/ Hope

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Poor and needy children in tattered clothes. Ellezar “Zar” Javier saw them wherever he went in the Philippines; in major cities, towns and barrios, outside shopping centers, parks and public places, along the roads and highways. And it moved him so much to see so many poor kids walking around barefoot and hungry, with hardly any hope for a bright future.

He was barely in his teens when Zar first visited the Philippines in 1993, after migrating to the US at the age of 5. “I saw how different life was in San Diego, California where I was raised, from life in Iloilo, our hometown. Before that trip, I did not fully appreciate my lifestyle in America. But after seeing so much poverty in my homeland, I realized I have been so blessed to live in California,” Zar told Asian Journal in an exclusive interview.

That image of countless needy Filipino children has been stamped in Zar’s mind and changed his perspective forever. So much so that fifteen years later, in 2008, he decided it was time to do something about it. By then, as a young entrepreneur with a successful clothing business called Pnoy Apparel, Zar was in a position to give back something to the land of his birth. So, Zar launched the Shirt the Kids Charity Campaign, with the aim to give 10,000 distinctive t-shirts to needy Pinoy children.

“I’ve always wanted to give back something to the Philippines. So, last year, I was thinking, ‘What can I do? How can my company, Pnoy Apparel, not only raise awareness for needy Pinoy children but help them and give them hope?’ Then, the idea hit me. Since I was in the clothing industry, manufacturing and selling shirts, the most natural thing for me to give is a t-shirt. So, I created a design for the shirt, giving it a purple color, and calling it “Sammy the Sunshine” t-shirt,” said Zar.

Thus began the Shirt the Kids Charity Campaign, with the mission to provide 10,000 shirts for 10,000 underprivileged kids in the Philippines, where every \$5 donated buys a “Sammy the Sunshine” purple t-shirt for a child.

Pnoy Apparel started releasing and selling the Sammy the Sunshine shirts last year for \$5. Supporters of the campaign were invited to simply buy the shirts, but not for them. All shirts purchased will be donated to a child in the Philippines via the Philippine Children’s Fund. At the end of every month, Pnoy Apparel will tally, pack, and ship to the PCF’s Philippine offices in Pampanga, where the shirts will be distributed among the children. As an added benefit, fifty cents of the Shirt The Kids \$5 tee will also go the PCF to help with any financial need such as school supplies, food, and/or extra clothes for the children. Pnoy Apparel also acknowledges that our current home away from home is the United States and cannot overlook the millions of underprivileged children within the country. Pnoy Apparel will also donate another fifty cents of the Shirt The Kids \$5 tee to American Kids Cancer Fund here in the United States.

“For the price of a cup of coffee, a bag of chips and/or a gallon of gas, people can put more than a priceless smile on a child in the Philippines and benefit children fighting cancer. As a free gift, for each tee purchased, Pnoy Apparel will include a Pnoy Apparel Shirt The Kids wristband, as a reminder of your selfless donation,” Javier tells people.

Pnoy Apparel worked with the Philippine Children’s Fund of America for the campaign. PCF is a non-profit organization registered under the state of California and is duly recognized by the United States Federal Government. It is based in San Francisco, CA., with a Philippine office in Clark Field, Angeles City. Philippine Children’s Fund of America is the most widely supported Filipino-American

non-profit organization in the United States.

The Shirt The Kids Charity Campaign quickly gained supporters, especially among the FilAm community, from the West to the East Coast. Last November 2008, the PNOY Apparel/ PCF team gave away hundreds of Sammy the Sunshine t-shirts to needy children in Pampanga. The Philippine Children’s Fund contacted the help of the Philippine Air Force to help transport the local kids to the Paradise Ranch of the PCF.

“I can’t describe the feeling of actually seeing the Shirt The Kids Charity Campaign come to life and bringing Sammy The Sunshine into children’s lives! A few times I literally had to step back as the full magnitude of Shirt The Kids finally sank in. All the hard work, people’s selfless donations, and support have brought this simple idea to fruition,” Zar said with emotion.

Fresh from the successful campaign in Pampanga, Zar went back to San Diego and started another fund-raising event to raise awareness for the campaign, working in partnership with Alpha Psi Rho Fraternity Inc., an Asian/Pacific Islander based fraternity whose foundation is based on brotherhood, academics, prosperity, and strength. Dubbed *A Sammy Thing*, a free concert was held Dec 9, 2008 in the Montezuma Hall at the San Diego State University. The full-packed concert featured the band, Supreme Soul and was hosted by Joy Bisco and Hula from 93.3. Also performing were Geologic from Blue Scholars, Son of Ran, Kiwi, Bambu, Ashley Robles, iDK, Trish Guevarra, Angie Girl, Hi-Fi and aftershoolspecial. Proceeds all went to Shirt The Kids Charity Campaign.

This coming Saturday, April 25, 2009, another exciting fund-raising event has been organized for the Campaign. San Diego’s Chef Larry and Pnoy Apparel will be hosting Sammy’s Wine & Dine to raise awareness and contributions to Pnoy Apparel’s Shirt The Kids Charity Campaign at Sushi On A Roll at 1620 National Avenue San Diego, CA 92113. Sammy’s Wine & Dine will feature top executive Filipino American chefs that include Chef Larry of Channel 10 and Chef Larry’s Cuisine, Chef Jeffrey Roberto of Sushi on a Roll and San Diego’s 2009 *Chef of the Year*, Chef Xavier Mendoza of Villa Manila and Chef Mark Cabulagan. The fundraising gala is an elite and extravagant event with the Who’s Who from the Fil-Am community; congressmen, diplomats, business owners, musicians, actors, actresses, family, and friends with actress Joy Bisco and Chef Larry as host. It will feature a variety of enticing dishes made by the top area Filipino chefs and fine wine provided by Philippine’s own Haliya Wine and VuQo Vodka. Other cuisines will also be provided by some of San Diego best restaurants. In addition a live auction will be held with a chance to have an executive chef cook a dinner of four at your home.

Javier’s Pnoy Apparel Company sells clothes with a touch of Filipino history and culture. He started the business on his mother’s kitchen table, creating designs and then learning to sew the shirts himself. The graphic tees collection have attracted so many loyalists who find them “really cool street wear”. Zar explains the philosophy behind his company. “The Pnoy Apparel Company is about history, culture, tradition, politics, pride, sacrifice, our parents and all our ancestors. This is about identity and the lack thereof: “No History, No Self, Know History, Know Self”. We bring forth knowledge and appreciation of culture through high-quality products, impeccable service, and customer satisfaction. Our products are for the young, the forever 19 at heart, the ever-wise, and for those who will always honor the legacy of the Philippines,” he said.

For those who want to check out Pnoy Apparel and Shirt the Kids Charity Campaign, just visit their website at [www.pnoyapparel.com](http://www.pnoyapparel.com).

“I originally thought of the campaign as a limited one. But now, I can say that for as long as Pnoy Apparel is around, Shirt The Kids Charity Campaign will be around to keep helping put a shirt on poverty in the Philippines,” Zar declared with conviction. ■

Publisher’s Note

## A Ray of Sunshine

Seeing a child smile is, perhaps, one of the most sublime and elating moments in life. And this is Ellezar Javier’s mission in life -- to bring a ray of hope to the lives of impoverished children in the Philippines. The Shirt the Kids Charity Campaign is truly a remarkable gesture --an altruistic act that will hopefully move and inspire others to do the same. The Asian Journal MDWK Magazine supports Ellezar Javier’s cause in the fight against poverty and brings you his story in this week’s issue. ■



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