

Run on the streets for quality education

by ALLISON LOPEZ
Inquirer.net

MANILA - These Pinoy youth are still on the streets for a cause—but this time, instead of marching, they're running.

Iamninoy, a groundbreaking campaign to celebrate idealism and selflessness, has organized a group of runners who will raise awareness and funds for the 57-75 Movement, a private-sector-led initiative to reverse the public-education crisis.

The iamninoy runners, who presently number about 300, hope to raise a certain amount for every kilometer they run so the money will be used by 57-75 to help children stay in school, enhance literacy and improve test performances.

"In a way this is our new form of people power. In other words, it's not just anymore going to the streets and just rallying. We really get them towards positive action, without them realizing in a very little way, they're actually still part of the process of change," said iamninoy executive director Rafael Lopa at the tie-up's launch on Thursday.

A nephew of the slain Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., Lopa said as the country marks 25 years since the opposition leader was killed in 1983, the youth should be involved in education as a "lever of change" since it was what kept poverty thriving in the Philippines.

"Education definitely is very important. Imagine if we don't do anything about the education system, 25 years from now, you can imagine the profile of literacy this country will have," he said.

"So it's really important to get everybody to know about this reality, and really do something collectively," added Lopa.

The partnership with iamninoy, said 57-75 convenor Chito Sobrepna, would not only help raise funds but bring attention to the declining standards in public education—and how it may actually be "reversed."

"57-75 was inspired by the results of the National Achievement Test at that time. The number 57, the average at the time, symbolizes the current state of Philippine public education while 75, which DepEd refers to as beginning mastery, is the goal where we want to go," he said.

Sobrepna lamented the statistics showing that for every 100 children who enter Grade 1, only 84 reach Grade 3 while only 68 get to graduate from Grade 6. Only 43

manage to finish high school, and only 14 finish college, he said.

As for reading proficiency, he said a DepEd test for independent readers conducted in 2004 among 8 million children showed that less than 25 percent, even in the higher grade levels, could actually read and understand what they read.

"If children cannot read, their performance in subjects like math and science would suffer. If children cannot read, they lose interest and eventually drop out," he stressed.

Whether young or old, man or woman, Lopa hopes the public will share their advocacy by joining the runners' group (check out iamninoy.com), pledging money for each kilometer, or at the least, buy merchandise such as the iamninoy runner shirts that will be available next week in the Rudy Project store in Bonifacio High Street.

"The more runners participating in the races, if we're able to recruit more, then your multiplier just grows bigger. The multiplier for possible money to come in just becomes bigger. As you increase your base, you widen the platform for more funds to come in," he said.

"What's good is that you get the general public to participate in it. If the runner is your friend, you can chip in and put it your own in a very small way," he added.

Lopa explained that if there were 300 runners for a 5-km run, and each runner received a pledge of P300 per km—the funds raised would reach a fantastic P450,000.

The first official iamninoy run will be held either on Aug. 21, Ninoy's death anniversary, or on a weekend near it.

But if running isn't your cup of tea, buying the shirts in bright-yellow-Ninoy's signature color—ain't bad at all especially since a portion of the sales' proceeds will also go to providing workbooks in English, math and science, and feeding programs all over the country.

A catchy statement on the shirt's back says its all: "Build mileage. Build endurance. Build schools. I am running. I am a hero. Iamninoy."

"I guess this one is a matter of really getting the enthusiasm the iamninoy campaign has generated and attaching it to a group that's equally enthusiastic about what they're doing, and of course a very worthwhile cause. Hopefully we can excite more people," said Lopa. ■

Jobless maid in HK returns P2.1M

Grateful owner gives her can of cookies

by BLANCHE RIVERA
Inquirer.net

HONG KONG—Every night in Yuen Long, a far-off area in the New Territories, she rummages through garbage bins for soda cans, cardboard boxes, and other recyclables that can earn her HK\$38 (P228) on a nice day.

Poverty drove Mildred Perez, 38-year-old Filipina, like 126,000 other Filipinos here, to come and work in Hong Kong as a helper, leaving behind her two children in Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya.

But her dream to build a decent life for her family was crushed when her employer, a pastor, sexually assaulted her in 2007. She lost her job, and being a complainant in a pending court case, is barred by Hong Kong laws to take up employment.

She has since been unable to support her family, so her children were forced to drop out of school. There are days when her life, it seemed to her, was useless.

But on April 29, Perez found something that could have ended her misfortunes.

After renewing her visa at the immigration department, she noticed a thick packet just slightly bigger than an airmail envelope, in a trash bin on the corner of Pottinger Street and Des Voeux Road.

Cash and checks

Perez picked it up and handed it to her companion, a man

identified only as David, who opened the packet. Inside were cash and checks amounting to HK\$350,545 (P2.1 million).

There was \$176,000 in cash (in denomination of \$1,000) and four checks: one for US\$13,000, another for US\$5,000, a third for US\$3,250, and another for HK\$10,920.

One of the checks was clipped to the envelope, she said.

Instinctively, they called the Hong Kong Information Centre to get the number of the company indicated in the documents. Because it was past office hours, they just left a message on a recorder, saying they found the money and wished to return it to the owner.

"Of course, I couldn't sleep. It's money. That would have allowed me to go home. But I was thinking, who left the money? What if he is just another worker? He would lose his job. How many people depend on him? I couldn't keep it. My conscience would have bothered me no end if I did otherwise," Perez said.

The lost envelope

That person, it turned out, was Kitty (Perez did not get the full name—Ed.), an ordinary employee tasked by her company to deposit the money in the bank.

Kitty said she realized she had lost the envelope around 2 p.m. on April 29.

At noon on April 30, Kitty and her superior Yvonne Tsang met

Perez and David at Fairwood in Tin Shui Wai for the handover.

Philippine Overseas Labor Office officials, who got wind of Perez's exceptional deed through Perez's friend Merly Bunda, had wanted the turnover to be done at the Philippine Consulate for proper documentation, but Perez acceded to the company's request to have it at its premises.

Token of gratitude

"*Sobrang pasasalamat nila* (They were very grateful)," Perez said, adding that David even told the company officials that the Filipina was jobless and would never have that amount of money even if she found work again as domestic helper.

Tsang and Kitty gave Perez a can of butter cookies as a token of gratitude, and Perez quietly resumed her life. ■

Looking For The Perfect Career?

We'll Point You In The Right Direction.



The Annenberg School of Nursing presents a special open house.

Learn what it takes to become a vocational nurse and the generous financial aid available, including forgivable loans, low tuition, low loan rates and more*...

Reservations required.

For information and reservations, contact us at 818-757-4431
ASN@jha.org
www.jha.org

(*Based on eligibility, qualifications and the Home's recruiting needs.)

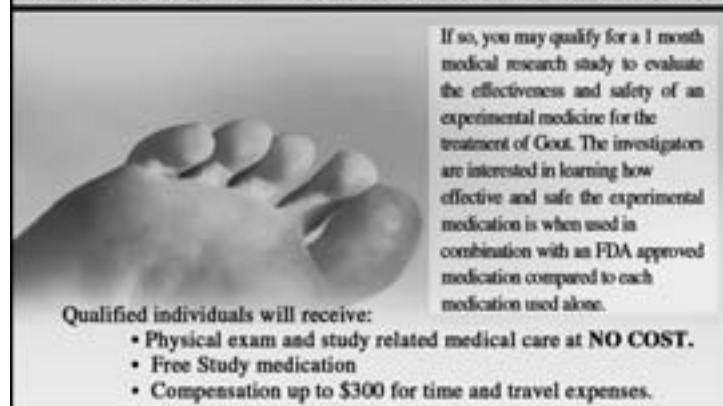


Tuesday, June 16

Three informational presentations about the Annenberg School of Nursing program at 4, 5 and 6 p.m. followed by tours of skills lab, computer center and classroom. Refreshments will be served.

Los Angeles Jewish Home Grancell Village
7150 Tampa Avenue
Reseda, CA 91335

Do you or someone you know suffer from GOUT ATTACKS?



If so, you may qualify for a 1 month medical research study to evaluate the effectiveness and safety of an experimental medicine for the treatment of Gout. The investigators are interested in learning how effective and safe the experimental medication is when used in combination with an FDA approved medication compared to each medication used alone.

Qualified individuals will receive:

- Physical exam and study related medical care at NO COST.
- Free Study medication
- Compensation up to \$300 for time and travel expenses.

To learn more about the study or to participate, contact:

Medvin Clinical Research
12291 Washington Blvd., Suite 300 Whittier, CA 90606
Ph: 562-945-7252
Email: info@medvinresearch.com
www.medvinresearch.com

HANLON LAW GROUP, P.C.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S #1 IMMIGRATION LAW FIRM



Daniel P. Hanlon, Esq.

California State Bar Certified Specialist
in Immigration & Nationality Law

Hanlon Law Group, P.C. has led greater Los Angeles area law firms in providing aggressive, expert representation and in client satisfaction for the past ten years.

Offering reasonable fees for the most aggressive and competent representation in the Los Angeles area. Specializing in all facets of US Immigration Law, Federal Litigation, Appeals and related matters.

Call (800) 976-5675 to schedule your FREE initial consultation with a qualified expert today!

HLG
HANLON
LAW GROUP, P.C.