Bidlisiw Foundation, Inc.

Community Based Recovery Program for Children Drug Users/Surrenderees (A Pilot Test)

**Stories of Hope & Success**

**John Ray Mapait**

 When he was seven years old, Johnny Ray's father was shot and killed by a friend whom the family knew and had admitted into their family circle.  Johnny Ray remembers very vividly that his father had gone out of the house to buy viand for supper from a nearby neighbor's karenderia when several shots rang out.  Everyone in the place rushed out to see what had happened.  Were they surprised to see their father lying on his back - lifeless.

    He recalls the anger that surged in him. His whole family cried without inhibition. Their neighbors had their opinions about their father's death and their family did not add to or subtract from the talk that went around during the wake and afterwards because they knew the truth.

    Their father was a drug pusher.

    He tried very hard to convince himself that his father was a good man, but their neighbors knew how he earned his money to feed his family.  He sometimes saw his father accept money in exchange for the small packets of white substance from people he did not know.  All he was sure about was that they were not their neighbors.  He was a very little boy when his father began what he was doing, but Johnny Ray did not know what it meant.

    After his father's demise, there was only his Lola, his grandmother whom he could look u to.  He remembers rushing home so he could snuggle up to the old woman who often had to shove him away because she had much work to do.  In hindsight, he admits that his father, Leopoldo Mapait and his Lola were his only true friends and his inspiration.

    He had just turned nine when he became part of a "barkada," a gang.  He remembers being the smallest one among them, and the older ones always pushed him around, physically.  Nevertheless, he liked being with them because he forgot his loneliness when they belted out their contagious kind of laughter.  Besides, a few of them treated him like he was their baby brother.  He longed for that attention because he never got it from home.

    Slowly, unnoticed by him, they introduced him to drug dependency by allowing him to share the fragrant paste that they sniffed every time they got together.  When he found the courage to ask them what it was. they told him it was vulca seal, an adhesive that is a staple in the construction industry.  They told him that if he wanted to remain their friend, he should do as they do and not tell anyone about it.  That was their bond of unity.  He promised to keep their secret. Being identified with them made him feel important.

    Once, a boy from another gang bullied a cousin of his.  He fought for his cousin not realizing that he would be facing bigger boys.  They hit him with an empty bottle and rained down blows on him.  His nose bled and he had to run for cover.  When he told his gang about the incident, they told him not to go into a fight until he had gone to them for help.

    His life became very messy but it got messier when his Lola died. He felt there was no more hope for him.  By then he had realized that he could find an escape from his loneliness except by sniffing with his friends.  By then, he had progressed into smoking marijuana, at the instance of his friends, of course.  They told him he should be brave enough to try anything so that nobody could call him "ignorant."

   His siblings knew what he was in to, but they did not tell on him.  When he would get high, they shielded him from trouble.  His classmates were friendly and they were not afraid of him.  They did not know he was sniffing vulca seal.

    In the elementary school, he was quite tame.  But when he got to grade eight, he adopted a different coping style.  He began to cut classes and lying to his teachers. That was when he became a menace.  He was fierce and fearless.  He hit and grappled with anyone who crossed him He did not listen to advice and admonition from anybody.  He as under the full influence of his gang.

    Together, they would go to the emission testng enter in their neighborhood and steal cans which they sold for P200 or steel brackets for P500. With their money, they would indulge their appetites and when they had had their fill, they would go home.

    When his mother first heard about his wrong doings she whipped him but he pushed her aside and ran away.  This became a regular occurrence between them and it caused a big to-do in their neighborhood at first because they could not believe that gentle Johnny Ray would get to the point of fighting with his mother.  Soon their neighbors got used to his bad habits, dismissing his wild behavior as something he had inherited from his father who himself was a character in the underground.

    When his mother remarried, it became a very big issue for him.  He felt bad that his mother quickly found a replacement for his father.  Their relationship deteriorated some more and because of the disturbance they were causing in the neighborhood, his mother decided to move to another place with her new family.

    Leo Jay, his eldest brother, had to stop studying to become a construction worker to help support his siblings.  He encouraged Johnny Ray to continue his studies.  His class adviser spent much time encouraging him to study hard so that later, he could have the means to plan his life and live it without anybody dictating on him.

    His Auntie Leonor saw how thin and weak he had become from lack of sleep and poor nutrition.  He was dirty and foul-smelling.   Food did not attract him at all, no matter how hungry he was.

    Being a worker in their barangay, his aunt sought the help of Bidlisiw.  The staff responded quickly to the request, taking the necessary steps so Johnny Ray could participate in the recovery program that was soon to begin.  Thus began the relationship between Johnny Ray and Bidlisiw.  Under the guidance of Ate Rachelle and Kuya Ben John, he is now walking a path different from that which he tread with his gang mates.

    When he finally decided to turn his back on his addiction, he obeyed the suggestions of his Ate and Kuya very carefully.  Slowly, he got back his appetite for food and personal hygiene.

    He is now back in school.  He has found that reading the bible boosts his resolve to change his ways. He has decided to stick to his new-found practices.  He does not want to fall by the wayside.  He has hitched his wagon to a star and his efforts are all meant to reach it.

**Nino Carl Lofranco**

Nino Carl Lofranco was quite popular in their community at Paknaan Zone Hous in Mandaue City.  His siblings looked up to him and they enjoyed their togetherness - what with theiate CindyJoy already employed in a call center in Banilad.  She was boss. Meaning: she took the tab during their occasional "banka," their get together among the siblings which usually took place after pay day.

    Nino is naturally outgoing.  His gregariousness earned him the admiration of the mothers in their community because he did bother to talk to their little children, sometimes even playing with them.

    His friend ways brought him to the attention of a group of older boys who seemed not to have any care in life at all.  Nino found them interesting because they seemed to agree on everything - where to go, what to drink, who to talk to - and the like.  He admired them and even envied them for their courage to do things not commonly done by teenagers and for daring to go anywhere they thought of going, unplanned, without the permission of their parents.

    It was they who taught Nino to keep calm in the face of danger.  For example, when in the course of a caper they had planned, a policeman would suddenly appear, they taught him how to keep calm, staying put, simply looking like he had nothing to do with what was going on.

    He was afraid that his family would find out that he was keeping company with this new group of boys, but he managed to keep his activities with them secret from his family.

    Before long, he had become a regular participant in their escapades.  They stole from people - in the streets and in their private homes - all to make money for the purchases they had to make.  He did not realize that he had become a regular thief who was addicted to prohibited substances.  What they stole, they sold.  All for the purchase of the prohibited substances that was their constant craving.

    Nino says that he went through a unique transformation when he was with these new friends of his.  After a session, je would feel a strange kind of elation - like he had great energy and a strength to do big things.  He felt the surge of power so that he did not want to

close his eyes.  He must not skip or miss anything at all and so as not to miss anything, he should not even wink, much less close his eyes.  He must keep his eyes open so he does not miss anything.  He did not realize that he had become a frightful sight - wide-eyed, pale, unkempt.He did not feel sleepy at all.  The energy in him urged him to keep walking. He did not realize that he had lost weight and he had forgotten to clean himself up.  He did not even get hungry.  He had to keep moving towards something that he could not name.

    His parents' reminders did not move him at all. Inside him, however, was a deeply-rooted sense of shame.  He could not face his father.  He was simply ashamed.

    His mother's nagging and the high-pitched clucking of his sisters did not stop him. In fact, he had become unafraid of everyone and everything. This belief in himself took him to places he ordinarily would not go to.  One time, he was away from home for a whole three months.  His family looked for him, but they did not find him.

   One day, he challenged someone to a fist fight.  The man, bigger and older than he, stood calm and cool while he called him names and cursing him.  The man stood his ground and when Nino came close enough to him, he simply grabbed him by the wrist and locked the hand cuffs that he kept hidden under his jacket.  The man was a barangay tanod.

       So Nino was taken to the police station and because he was a minor, his parents had to be called.  How embarrassed they were. They were ashamed of his appearance and his bad manners. The barangay officials lectured on them about parental guidance and responsibility.

    NIno was questioned about his companions and their activities.  He was careful to protect this friends' identities but the skillful questioning from the authorities revealed them after all.  Nino felt despondent.  He felt like a traitor, but there was no escaping the consequences of their ill behavior.  Needless to say, he cried and bawled before, during and after the investigation.

    Now that he can look back to the past in calmness, he admits that he felt a very deep remorse because he had put his parents, especially his father, to shame.  This incident showed Nino how ungrateful he was to his father - Basil Lofranco - an honest, hardworking man who for years had sacrificed as a security guard in a department store, a job that required him to be on his feet the whole day, standing because his job description said he must not sit down while on duty.

    It was exactly one year ago when Nino Carl Lofranco was invited to attend a session for surrenderees at the offices of Bidlisiw Foundation in Looc, Mandaue.  He went there, tongue in cheek, just to see what the rest who were invited were doing.

    Well, he has stayed.  He takes note of the admonitions given them.  He is very careful about reminding himself that he must be fully aware that is still very vulnerable because the temptation is all around him and it takes only one moment of weakness to fall back.

    But Nino Carl is careful.  He is sincere, He has found strength in his Bible-reading.  He has resolved to hold on to the Word of God for sustenance.

    He has made a statement of his long-time dream of becoming a seaman because he wants to see much of the world while providing for his family in gratitude for what his parents have done for him.  He has gone back to his family.  He now helps keep their house clean by taking on some duties.  And once again, he is part of the occasional "banka" from his ate Cindy Joy.

**Mike Angelo Bagamaspad**

 His name is a beautiful combination of the names of his parents.  His father is Michael Rose. Thus, Mike Angelo, now 17 years old, and the eldest of three children.

    Life is difficult in the Bagamaspad home.  His father is a laborer who also deals in the sale of scrap.  Their family income is unstable.  There would be income only if scrap metal or wood is thrown away by government and sometimes by the private sector.

    Their mother is a housewife who is on call from households nearby that need extra help.  The wages that she brings are meager; nevertheless, she contributes to the family upkeep.  There is never enough for the needs of the four children.

    For 17-year-old Mike Angelo, everyday life has been boring.  There is nothing to do in their house.  He is the eldest child but instead of helping out with house work, he chose hanging out with the neighbors' children who were more or less interested in popular songs so they may sway and sing to the tunes popular in their day. Their parents usually talked about their work and the people they encounter during the day, but there is nothing in their conversation that would entice Mike to stay.  Therefore, life to him was a succession of one boring day to another.

    But young as he is, his energy had to be spent and he chose to join a barkada, a gang.  Most of the boys in the gang were much older than he and he listened to them recall their adventures in the narrow streets of Umapad.  He did not realize that more and more, he was moving away from his family because he found excitement and enjoyment in their stories and their doings.  Among their activities was sniffing shabu.

    He was only that high when he heard about shabu from the people around him - how frightful it is, how people who indulge in it get crazy, how they lose control of their nervous system and their senses altogether. How weird its users become.

    So Mike grew up scared of the substance.  He knew a few people who indulged in it in their neighborhood, he dared not go near them because he had seen the go wild. But when he saw his gang mates engage in the actual sniffing, when they asked and later forced him to try one sniff, he lost control of himself altogether because that first sniff gave him a very big high.

    He felt so light that he thought he could float like a feather in midair.  He felt light, all right, but at the same time, he felt a wave of strength engulf his person.  He felt the power sweep over him and told himself he would win over anyone who would cross him that very moment.

      That stupor lasted for quite a while and he felt victorious.  Over what?   He could not tell when the sensation wore off, he went homey form but he decided to stay away from his siblings and his parents.  Of course, staying away is not such a big thing.  Their house is small.  He just did not talk much with them; when his parents tried talking to him, his answers were brief; in fact. Abrupt.

    In the beginning, his mother did not notice anything strange in her son but soon, she knew he was in to something suspicious. That's because in the days that followed, he became hot-headed at one time and in the next moment he would burst into laughter.  His younger brother thought he was crazy.  In fact, he was right.

    Mike Angelo had lost control of himself. Shabu was readily available to him in the neighborhood.  The introductory doses were cheap. In fact, they' were given to him free when his gang mates were still enticing him to try it.  But when he began to crave for it, the price increased tremendously. He did not always have the money for it because he was dependent on the lunch money that his mother gave him.  That was not much.

    So he had to find ways to obtain money.  At first, he borrowed from his colleagues and when no one would give him what he wanted, he helped himself to the few things that his mother had.  Then he stole things and sold them at very low prices just so he could buy even just a little bit of shabu - for the flitting satisfaction - the high that he needed for the moment.

    When he could not get what his body said it needed, he was like crazy. He dared anyone to fight.  He became very obnoxious and nobody wanted to have anything to do with him - even his own brother. He told himself that something was wrong with him, but he could not voice it out.  He wanted help, but he was too embarrassed to say so.

    Even if his mother never got tired of scolding him, he knew that she would not stop caring for him.  So when talk got around in the community that Kuya Ben was inviting troubled and disturbed teenagers to a meeting, he attended, but was sheepishly cautious. He decided he would sit for a while and leave quietly.

    That meeting was a big eye opener for Mike Angelo.  He appreciated the friendly atmosphere in the meeting.  Of course, the other boys put forth their best jokes.  They boasted of their adventures, even how they tried to put one over those who caught and investigated them.  How everyone laughed (in fact, howled) but when Kuya Ben laid out the strategy to help them out of their illness (yes, addiction is an illness), they all became very attentive and quiet.  Mike thought he was not sure whether he really could junk the habit or not, but he listened and told himself that he would try.

    The rest is history. Mike Angelo attended Kuya Ben's sessions, not wanting to miss anything at all.  He has been faithful to the program.

    His parents, his siblings and he are happy because he is no longer the cantankerous trouble maker that he had become when he was with his gang.  He has even become helpful in the household.

    It has become part of his routine to attend the ALS sessions in the barangay hall.  He is actually in grade seven, but he hopes to recover the year that he had lost by taking the examination from the Department of Education.

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    Mike Angelo wants to become a mechanic someday.  He wants to be able to repair cars and trucks and as many appliances as he can.

    He hopes to be able to put up his own repair shop when he has become competent in his craft. He is very confident now because he feels at home with Bidlisiw, his bastion of hope.

**Bryl Lim**

 Bryl Lim was born on June 12, 2001, His parents were Han Sue Nilo Lim and Corazon Paler.

    Being the eighth and youngest in the family, Bry admits he is quite spoiled.   His four kuyas have settled down to their own professions and businesses and his three ates are very affectionate and generous towards him.  So were their parents. Bryl says he was their "pet," their favorite.  So that when their parents passed away within months of each other, Bryl was caught off guard.  He was confused. He lost his bearings all together.  He completely lost his self-confidence. He told himself that he could not live without his mother.   He could not appreciate the messages of condolence that he received from their neighbors and friends because he thought he would not be able to recover from his loss.

    After his mother's funeral, he felt a gloom set on him.  He needed people around him.  He looked for his friends and found several of them.  They were afraid he would do something drastic.  They stayed on with him, regaling him with funny stories in their effort to make him laugh.  Bryl agreed with them when they suggested that they walk around to meet other friends.

    Bryl did not know that his small circle of friends had many friends from th other sitios in Mandaue City.  He was happy to meet them.  He enjoyed their company so much that he forgot to go home for days, also not remembering that he had to go to school.

    Bryl did not suspect that among the things that these boys made him do was smoke the dreaded marijuana. He did not understand why each puff gave him the feeling that he was floating and that he could go anywhere without much effort.  He felt very comfortable.   After a few exposures to the experience, he developed a cough that gave him a backache everytime he had to expectorate.  He was uncomfortable with this, but he still continued puffing because each puff gave him a high, a feeling so good that he forgot his problems.

    He thought he had become so powerful that he could do anything. So he became loud and daring.  He thought his physical strength was far beyond he could imagine.  In the eyes of those who knew him, he had become vulgar and impolite.  Those among their neighbors who saw the change in this once clean-cut, polite young man pitied him.  They, however, could not do anything for him because they had their own families to look after.  Besides, he had his own brothers and sisters who could attend to his needs.

    Left to himself, Bryl became like his companions - a nuisance.  Mothers advised their sons to avoid him, and their daughters to be afraid of him.  His siblings did not know that their brother had been identified with the boys who have been considered dangerous by the law enforcement agencies in Mandaue.  His name was in the PDEA files which means that he was being watched by the authorities.  He was among those who could be arrested and investigated anytime an alarm was sounded in their community.

    It did not take much time for Bidlisiw to find Bryl because of its agreement to work with PDEA in its campaign to save minors from the drug menace.  When the staff talked to him, he was pleasant and good humored.  He attended the sessions faithfully, taking in the lessons seriously.  He is friendly with his companions and he has expressed his desire to go back to school.

    Having been dependent on marijuana for two years, he now feels that he had had enough of it and even just thinking about himself during his period of dependency makes him shiver.  He now realizes that he had allowed himself to be a victim but he does now blame his friends for the experience.  He said he got into that frightful period in his life because he could not handle his reaction to the sudden loss of his parents. He especially misses his mother on whom he relied for all the decisions that he had to make while growing up.  He now looks back to that period in his life as a nightmare, but he has awakened from it. He knows he should be more circumspect when faced with choices.  He is grateful to Bidlisiw for showing him how.

    He has become a helpmate to Bidlisiw.  He learned much from the classes given them by the staff and the invited educators.  He was sent to San Francisco in Camotes to help Kuya Edu conduct the sessions for the clients there.

    Bryl recalls that during that dark period in his life, his siblings tried very hard to lure him away from his habits by their constant reminders which he took as scoldings and downright condemnation.  His Ate Ivory had plenty to say and her voice was the loudest.  During that critical time, he saw her as his archenemy and he avoided her as much as he could.  Today, they have become close friends because Bryl has realized how his Ate had tried to save him.  He admits now that her admonitions were reminders of their parents' teachings.

    Bryl can now be reasonably proud of himself because it took a big measure of humility to submit to the conditions set by Bidlisiw, much more the demands of his present relationship with the staff and the volunteers.  He feels that with the assignment given him in Camotes, he had become a helpmate.  That, he relishes with reasonable pride.  He considers his activities with Bidlisiw now as the training ground for the fulfillment of his ultimate ambition in life.

    Bryl wants to be a fireman!

**Dino Angelo**

 Dino Angelo is the middle of the five children of Ruel Sungahid and Aljeneth Daria.  Their ages range between 13 and 21.  Their neighbors are aware of the closeness among the five children, many of them looking at them with envy because they do not see such camaraderie among their own.

    This family stands out because they grew up in a house that was known to all in their neighborhood as a shabu den.   For years, people came and went to that house to sniff shabu, often leaving with a packet or two, a la "take out" in a restaurant.

    The turnover of supply and demand was brisk; the father of the family, however, very strictly prohibited his children from having anything to do with the stuff because "It is  dangerous!"  Of course, he could not supervise his own family because his concern was earning from his business enterprise.  It would not be surprising if one or two of his children would soon be involved in it.  In this case, it was Dino.

    When he was in grade six, Dino Angelo decided to stop studying.  Despite his father's warning and admonition, he had become both a pusher and a user.  He started by trying out only a sniff, just for kicks!  No, he said he may not like the stuff, but the stuff liked him.  So they developed a relationship.  On his own, he also indulged in gambling.  He had to push drugs to subsidize his vice,

    Dino was about 15 years old when his father staged a very dramatic episode which involved the police and the media.  He took his entire family as hostage in their own house.  It was a friend who pried the door open so the children could escape.  Their grandfather reported the incident to the police.  Their father was imprisoned with their mother testifying against him.The burden of supporting the family quickly shifted to their mother.   Even if life was difficult, the children managed to visit their father in jail.  In the beginning, their mother accompanied them during these visits.  Sometimes, however, their father's girlfriend would be there during their visit.  Their mother would give way by leaving to avoid further trouble.  Later on, she did not visit him anymore.

      When their father was released from prison, their mother would not have him in their house.  The rumor was that their mother also had a boyfriend of her own.  These things complicated the children's lives. The rift between their parents gave them serious insecurity.  They did not know whether to side with their father or their mother.   It was especially difficult for Dino Angelo because he had a special attachment to his father.  They were all confused.  They found consolation when a group of born-again Christians visited them, giving them religious instructions with the promise that if they believed in Jesus, they would experience peace in their lives.  They took in the teachings of the group.  Their mother also changed, but their father did not.

    It goes without saying that when they took in the teachings of their new religion, they also had to change their lifestyle.  Dino had to abandon his indulgence in drugs, but it is not as easy as that. He already had a record for the use of prohibited substances and he had to face the law for this.  There was drama in this.  Dino surrendered to a local councilor who took him to the Mandaue Police Station 5.  He is still a minor so he could not be taken to jail.  His parents would have to take on their responsibility under the law.  In their particular situation where father and mother are estranged, this would be difficult to comply with.  A neighbor of theirs took the initiative of informing Bidlisiw about the circumstances that the Ompad family was in.  Ate Apple and Kuya Ben looked into their case.  They made a formal invitation for them to establish a relationship with Bidlisiw.  Under the guidance of the Bidlisiw workers, Dino slowly veered away from his life of vice.  The family is now experiencing relative peace and their religious involvement conveniently fits into the Bidlisiw program.  Their religion requires them to do Bible reading daily.  This is a big help in Dino's effort at change.

    Dino is now a regular in the Bidlisiw confines because it is there that he finds the right atmosphere for his resolve to leave the world of drug dependency.  There in Bidlisiw, he is away from the tension that the presence of so many pushers and users surrounds him.  He has new friends, too.  All of them are together in their struggle to be free from the clutches of evil pushers who would pounce on them the first chance that they have,

    Rest.  That is what Dino needs.  He finds it in Bidlisiw.