



ERDA Foundation Updates

May and June 2019 Special Edition

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Atty. Gem and Dr. Millennial *by Edlyn Ortega-Burgonio*

I was a volunteer for ERDA SaBaNa in the late 1990s. I tried to tutor children in Math. I became brave in assisting them to learn Math because I was having better grades in Statistics in graduate school than in my undergraduate course.

I also invited my boyfriend then who was a journalist to give a workshop on writing. We also brought children to Performing Arts workshops outside the SaBaNa Center.

SaBaNa stands for Sanayan ng mga Batang Nanambakan (training center for former child scavengers). The SaBaNa Center was at the Katuparan area beside the river when we were doing our volunteer work.

After graduate school, I applied for work at ERDA and was eventually assigned at the Social Marketing Unit (SMU). There, I began supporting the Filipino and foreign volunteers (as part of our work in SMU).

This was like a full circle for me.

Joana, Mabel and I (who is now part of the Executive Director's Office – EDO) have met many volunteers who did many good things for ERDA, the children, their families and communities.

But for this article, let me talk only about two of our Filipino volunteers.

Atty Gem Alegado was a law student when she was introduced to ERDA by Atty Charlemagne Yu, the ERDA Chair. She was the President of the Paralegal Volunteers Organization (PVO) of De La Salle University.

During her time in PVO, her organization conducted paralegal trainings on children rights and human rights in our areas in

Tondo, Manila and Bagong Silangan, Quezon City. She was also able to inspire the next leadership to continue the paralegal work in our areas.

PVO gave a training about the new laws that would affect the Filipino children. This took place in Baseco. The PVO members also facilitated Voter's Education in Baseco and Paco.

Atty Gem finished her law studies and passed the bar.

She got in touch with ERDA again in 2018. She relayed the good news that she and her friend would support the education of a number of children of the Foundation. In June 2019, she and another friend also joined the school supplies distribution in Barangay 20, Tondo, Manila.

About Dr Millennial, she was a one of the students in the Learning Experiences in Communities (LEC) program of the Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health (ASMPH). She said that she was looking for an organization to support but she wanted to remain anonymous. (ASMPH has been deploying students in ERDA for five years already.)



Atty Gem visits Brgy 20 during the school supplies distribution



Dr Millennial with the other ASMPH students as part of their LEC in SaBaNa



If I remember it right, she was a scholar herself. That was why she wanted to pay it forward. She and her continue to support two ERDA children.

I am happy to have met Atty Gem and Dr Millennial. ERDA is fortunate that they cherished their experience with us especially with the children and communities.

They might have decided to support the ERDA children because of their experiences with us. But beyond that, they just really have good hearts and memory as well.