

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DepEd chief lauds volunteer teacher's exemplary service to community

Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Jesli Lopus commends Dr. Edwin Ferrer – a mobile teacher under the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS) of the department – for having been chosen as 2007 National Awardee in the Search for Outstanding Volunteers.

“Our mobile teachers’ contribution to alternative education is, indeed, invaluable,” Lopus said. “They serve as bridges for the department to reach out to all kinds of learners,” he added.

By hiring Education graduates to become mobile teachers, BALS seeks to make education accessible to out of school youth and adults, especially those who live in remote areas.

Unlike regular education where students go to school, mobile teachers seek out the learners. Learning sessions – with the aid of learning materials that are user-friendly and indigenous – are held in Community Learning Centers (CLC) which may be a barangay hall, church, factory, reading center, or a house.

Dr. Ferrer was chosen among 38 entries from both public and private organizations. He has been teaching for eight years as a volunteer, and has been covering eighty six barangays in Pangasinan.

“Dr. Edwin Ferrer’s achievements attest to the transformative power of education in the lives of even the most downtrodden person,” Lopus explained. “We can see how an entire community has changed through one man’s courageous efforts, and for this, he deserves commendation,” he added.

After his teaching career in a private school in San Carlos City, he was hired by DepEd, through BALS, to work as a full time mobile teacher in 2002. At present he serves as regional ALS coordinator and heads the Mobile Teachers’ Association of Region I.

In 2003, Secretary Raul Gonzales of DOJ appointed Ferrer as Volunteer Probation Aide of San Carlos City Parole and Probation Office. His teaching experience prompted him to conceptualize the *Prisoner Reformation and Improvement through Development Education* (PRIDE) for DOJ.

He taught prisoners in San Carlos City, where 90% of inmates are illiterate. He also visited the homes of prisoners who received parole and pardon. The plight of these illiterate prisoners – who were unjustly convicted because they agreed to sign documents they could not even read – inspired him to go beyond his job

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as teacher. Aside from teaching, he attended hearings to defend the inmates by proving their illiteracy.

Unable to satisfy himself by just serving one sector of the community, he moved on to teach literacy to street kids through his *Karunungan Para sa mga Batang Lansangan* (KBL). He tapped the assistance of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and religious organizations in soliciting books and food for the children.

From prison to the street, he went to the market to teach illiterate vendors basic reading, writing, and numerical skills during their free time.

He also conceptualized the *Senior Citizen Operation Program for Education* or SCOPE. Its program components include literacy, with the 3 Rs – relax, recreation, and rest. He started with 50 students in 2002 and this has since grown to 225 senior citizen learners.

Lastly, he created the 5K Program – *Karunungan, Kasanayan, Kabuhayan, Kalusugan at Kagandahang Asal* – that aims to teach these five components to prostitutes, *istambays*, members of indigenous groups, and barangay health workers who put people’s health at risk because of their illiteracy.

DepEd-BALS’ Mobile Teacher Program seeks to improve the quality of life in communities by raising the level of literacy in target areas. Target areas for this program are those with high illiteracy rate, a huge population of out of school youth, and Strong Republic Schools (SRS) where learners are displaced due to insurgency.

There are 1,381 mobile teachers to date. These mobile teachers are deployed to deprived, depressed, and underserved (DDU) communities all over the country where literacy is most wanting. DDU communities are determined by the mobile teachers themselves who go from house to house to determine the number of non-readers in each household.

“Our primary goal is to provide education for all, and DepEd is undertaking the necessary steps to actualize this goal,” Director Carolina Guerrero of BALS said.

To further intensify DepEd’s efforts to “bring education where the learners are,” Secretary Lapus worked for the increase of the budget for alternative learning from 76 Million Pesos in 2006 to 230 Million Pesos in 2007. This has enabled BALS to hire 300 more mobile teachers.

Dr. Edwin Ferrer will be awarded on December 12, 2007 at 2 pm at the Palawan Hall of EDSA Shangri-La, Mandaluyong City.

Next year, Ferrer will represent the Philippines in the search for International Outstanding Volunteer for Literacy and Community Extension, which will be sponsored by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

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The Search for Outstanding Volunteers was launched by the Philippine National Volunteer Service Coordinating Agency (PNVSCA) and the National Volunteer Month-Steering Committee (NVM-SC). The Search Committee comprises officials from the Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), and National Economic Development Authority (NEDA).

Presidential Proclamation No. 55 mandates the celebration of National Volunteer Month in December of every year. To supplement this initiative, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has also ratified Republic Act 9418 on April 10, 2007 – also known as the “Volunteer Act of 2007” – which institutionalized volunteerism as one of the strategies for national development.

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