

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 15, 2009

DepEd takes into its fold children with autism

The Department of Education (DepEd) and the Autism Society of the Philippines (ASP) spearhead this year's observance of Autism Consciousness Week to raise public awareness and provide the learning environment for children with special needs.

"In partnership with other government agencies and the private sector, it is the mandate of the DepEd to come up with means to provide early diagnosis, therapy, education and treatment to persons with autism," said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

The Education Chief added that "DepEd fully supports activities that make children with special abilities visible in our society with the end goal of eventually making them productive members of the community.

Children born with autism have difficulty in social interaction, verbal, and non-verbal communication.

DepEd is currently strengthening its Special Education programs to cater to children who have special learning needs. This is part of the department's thrust to democratize access to public education services since many parents cannot afford to send their children to private schools that accommodate kids with special abilities."

The ASP and the National Council for Disability Affairs (formerly known as National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons) will join DepEd in the celebration. Teachers and heads of special education in public and private schools are also encouraged to participate in the activities.

This year's Autism Consciousness Week will be observed from January 18 to 25, 2008 with the theme "ASP@20: Sharing Hopes, Building Dreams".

Together with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the House of Representatives, DepEd will sponsor an on-the-spot art contest to be held at DENR Social Hall on January 23, 2008, from 9AM to 2PM.

Some of the activities lined up for the third week of January are lectures at DSWD on January 20, educational trip and free therapy sessions on January 21, and a tree planting session on January 24.

Support group meetings for the families of children with special abilities are also scheduled on January 24.

DepEd under its wing has 217 SPED Centers that cater to the needs of children with special abilities. The department issues Braille textbooks to help especially visually impaired children.

Lapus stressed that “DepEd has now more SPED teacher items that serve the needs of our more than 180,000 children with special needs.”

Proclamation No. 711 declares every third week of January as Autism Consciousness Week. Other government agencies involved in the activities are the Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of Interior and Local Government. These agencies are encouraged to hold informal discussions on autism during their flag-raising ceremonies.

END

For more information, please contact DepEd SPED Division Chief Mirla Olores at (02)6319993.

PRESS RELEASE