

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## DepEd leads tribute to the blind

DepEd leads various agencies and advocacy groups in the celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> White Cane Safety Day in the Philippines on August 1, 2008. White Cane symbolizes mobility for blind persons.

This is pursuant to Republic Act No. 6759 or "An Act Declaring August 1 of Each Year as White Cane Safety Day in the Philippines and Other Purposes."

The full-day festivity aims to promote the physical, moral and social well-being of blind persons. The activities are likewise geared to instill awareness about the welfare of the blind persons, and to promote the White Cane as symbol of their mobility.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus enjoins all SPED centers, public and private schools with special education programs to observe this day with appropriate activities.

"We are committed in making our educational system responsive to the needs of our students who are blind or visually impaired," Lapus said. "We share in their dream to become productive and contributing citizens," he added.

Currently, there are 2,569 visually impaired students in mainstream and special schools

With the theme: "Rights: Access to Success," DepEd leads participating government agencies and advocate groups such as the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), Philippine Information Agency (PIA), National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA), Philippine Coast Guard, Parent Advocates for the Visually Impaired, Resources for the Blind, Philippine Blind Union, AKAP-Pinoy, and SM SuperMalls in the celebration.

Activities planned for Aug.1 include distribution of 150 white canes to visually impaired persons from Region 3, 4A and NCR. DOTC will spearhead these activities at DOTC Conference Hall.

A Battle of the Bands (Comballa) is slated at 2-5pm at SM Mega Mall. Seven groups have already signed up for the contest.

The National Vocal Singing Contest and the National Braille Reading and Essay Writing Contests will also be launched on the same day. These national competitions will culminate on January 4, 2009 in time for the bicentennial celebration of the death of Louis Braille, who invented the Braille, a global system used by the blind and visually impaired people for reading and writing.

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Recently, DepEd granted scholarship to some 198 public school teachers who underwent training in the care and mentoring of visually-impaired students. “We hope that this program will open equal opportunities to other differently-able children,” he quipped.

The training program held at the University of Southeastern Philippines, Philippine Normal University and the Cebu Normal University, was a result of an agreement among DepEd, the Resources for the Blind Inc. (RBI), and the universities for scholarship to teachers handling blind and partially seeing children in elementary and secondary levels.

For inquiries about the line up of activities, please contact Ms. Mirla Olores, Chief Special Education (SPED) Division, Bureau of Elementary Education, DepEd Complex, Meralco Avenue, Pasig City at tel. nos. (02) 631-9933 or (02) 632-1361 loc 2054.

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