

PRESS RELEASE

Students shine as they pay tribute to teachers

Two fourth year high school students from San Pablo City in CaLaBaRZon and Lanao del Sur in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao emerged as the winners in the landmark essay writing and poem writing contests which extol the virtues of teachers.

The contest which was organized by the Department of Education and sponsored by Smart Communications is in recognition of the very important role teachers play in the lives of students and in nation building. It is in line with the Teachers' Month Campaign and the World Teachers' Day celebration which had the theme "*My Teacher, My Hero.*"

The essay writing contest winner is Fatmah Amarah Balindong, a 4th year student of Curahab, Malabang, Lanao del Sur, ARMM. In her essay entitled "*A One-in-a-Million Act,*" she talked about how her teacher, Mombao "Bambi" Balindong, fulfills her duties as a teacher amidst the risks she faces given the peace and order situation in Malabang.

DepEd Chief Armin Luistro expresses his appreciation to the students who participated not only in the contests, but also in recognizing the hard work their teachers put in performing their duties. "I'm happy to know that many students now see the nobility of the teaching profession and that they appreciate the sacrifice of the teachers." Luistro added that, "the contests were also a way of enhancing the writing skills of the students while developing their critical and imaginative minds."

In her winning entry, Fatmah describes life in Malabang as difficult since it is one notorious town in Lanao del Sur where killings happen and gunfire are common almost every day. Political clans struggle for power, leaving people with nothing but fear. A simple misunderstanding can cost them their lives. "But all these did not stop Teacher Bambi from giving the best possible education to her students and to remain strong even in difficult situation."

For Fatmah, Teacher Bambi's "commitment for the better glory of Malabang and the students of Malabang National High School" is truly remarkable. "She is the kind of person whom you can entrust your kids with. Even if she herself fears for her own life and that of her family, leaving her students behind is not an option for her," Fatmah continued.

Fatmah considers teachers as "the prime molder of good leaders of tomorrow who will once again rebuild this damaged world and make it a better place to live in. With Teacher Bambi's outlook in life, Fatmah and the rest of her students are hopeful that someday Malabang will flourish again.

Princess Fernandez, a senior of San Pablo City Science High School in San Pablo City is the poetry writing contest first place winner for her *Soaring With You* entry. Princess beautifully describes the remarkable transformation her teacher, Madeline Rivera, has brought to her life.

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Describing herself, Princess wrote: she “was like a plain piece of paper with no folds, no curves, and no signs of wonder. From the beginning, no one ever tried to bother, but the moment you came, I started to become another.”

Princess shared that Teacher Madeline has unfolded her potentials and has brought confidence in her. From “a piece paper”, she has now turned “into a plane”. The student owes everything to her teacher especially that she has become stronger now, saying, “the plane has been taught how to fly and survive through the rain. Whenever it crashes and feels a dose of pain, you pick it up, and let it fly once again.”

Princess endlessly thanks Teacher Madeline for believing that she “could soar on her own.” She is now ready to face life confidently because her teacher has “opened my eyes, shook me from daze. For now, I fly with the jest of your ways.”

Luistro applauded the way the winners put into words the inspiration and influence their teachers have to their students. “Teachers are here to touch the heart and open the minds.”

Luistro likened teachers to bridges. Quoting Greek poet and novelist Nikos Kazantzakis, Luistro said “true teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.”

Other winners of the essay writing contest are 2nd placer Renaldo M. Timanono, Grade III pupil of Katipunan National High School, Zamboanga del Norte for his entry *Teacher Mai, My Hero*, inspired by Teacher Maimiti Bael Carangcarang; and 3rd placer Louise Nicole Cantago Ramirez, 4th year student of Quezon City Science High School for her entry *Donning A Super Suit*, inspired by Teacher Jonna Cantago Ramirez.

The runners-up in the poetry writing contest include 2nd place winner Louise Nicole Cantago Ramirez, 4th year student of Quezon City Science High School for her entry *Behind*, inspired by Teacher Norma Angco Ramirez; and 3rd placer Agnes Charity A. Ybañez, Grade 4 pupil of Catadman Elementary School, Catadman, Ozamiz City, for her entry *My Teacher, My Everything*, inspired by Teacher Joy T. Bantilan

Grand prize winners get one set desktop computer, one Smart Bro pre-paid Plug It and one Talk ‘n Text mobile phone for the student while the teacher who inspired the essay wins P3,000 plus a Smart Bro pre-paid Plug It and a Talk ‘n Text mobile phone. Two runners-up will receive Smart Bro pre-paid Plug It and Talk ‘n Text phone for both contests. On the other hand, teachers who are the inspiration of the student winners will receive P2,000 and P1,000, respectively. Teachers will also receive Smart Bro pre-paid Plug It and Talk ‘n Text phone.

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