

## DepEd Story

### A reading warrior and her quest to combat illiteracy



*September 8, 2019* – Leaders and heroes, like friends, are not known during joyful, comfortable days. They emerge in times of hopelessness and destitution.

Mary Ann Laguitao, 49, a solo parent, and Master II of Mabini Central Elementary School (MCES), is a leader and a hero.

Already saddled with the burden of raising a son (now 15 years old) diagnosed with severe autism, Ma’am Ann still managed to spare her valuable time to teach struggling readers and non-readers not only in MCES, but also in the entire province. Like a rare wild flower that radiates beauty and hope amid wilderness, Ma’am Ann brought colors to the once dim lives of 3,030 struggling readers in the entire Division of ComVal since 2013.

Fueled by her vision and advocacy to eradicate illiteracy, she wrote and published a book entitled “Beginning Reading,” hoping that it could make a difference in the lives of the schoolchildren of ComVal who do not know how to read yet. Because she believes in her heart that it is her calling to help little children learn how to read, she authored another significant book entitled, “Have Fun in Reading! Workbook for Grade 3 English” which is used throughout the ComVal Division.

The provincial government discovered her expertise in teaching reading and requested her to craft another substantial reading material — the “Summer Big Brother – Reading is Fun (SBB) for grades 2 and 3 to help the non-readers and out-of-school children in the ComVal.

Ma'am Anne's brainchild became the teaching resource used in the *Bayanihan Para sa Karunungan (BPSK)*, a program of the provincial government dubbed as "Summer Big Brother" which has significantly improved the reading competencies of the learners.

Because of the significant improvement in the reading proficiency levels of the learners brought about by her book, the Conrado and Ladislawa Foundation Inc. (CLAFI) adopted it and sponsored supplies distributed to the other public schools in Mindanao, specifically in Davao City, Iligan City, Zamboanga City, and Sarangani Province. After the implementation of the reading program in CLAFI-sponsored schools using the books, the number of non-readers and struggling readers dwindled from 1,739 to 40 non-readers. The books were also used in one of the schools in Thailand when her good friend and a former teacher of Mabini District introduced the books there. Ma'am Ann's books travelled within and across the islands and ignited learners' hopes.

This reading warrior does not craft books for recognition or appreciation. It is her own way of selfless extension of her skills to those in need. It is no surprise that Ma'am Ann was awarded a certificate of recognition as nominee in the Achievement of Great Instructional Leadership Award (AGILA) of Region XI Division Reading Specialist in 2018, which led her to become one of the national learning resource evaluators of quality Assurance and recently a recipient of Governor's Award for Excellence for her exemplary performance in the field of education.

Her usual workday consists of sharing knowledge in curriculum and leadership through mentoring and coaching colleagues, observing classes and administering implementations of special programs, maintaining linkages with stakeholders, and taking the challenges of ancillary services. Amazingly, she has also been serving as the school paper adviser since 1998.

As if her plate is not yet full, she still teaches evening classes at Maco Institute of Technology to financially augment occupational therapy sessions of her son. Despite all these, she has been sponsoring some 80 scholars since 2005. Many of them are now earning a living without knowing who sponsored their tuition.

On top of all these, she has also been serving as the coordinator of the Clean and Green Program of her *purok* in Barangay Binuangan, Maco since 2007 and has helped formulate the Local Climate Change Action Plan for 2017-2018.

Ma'am Anne's advocacy to alleviate illiteracy enabled every beneficiary of her acts to redeem themselves and be given a chance at a better life. She believes that teaching is a privilege, a gift from God to be shared. For her, when one is a teacher, one's influence is so far-reaching that it change people's paths, and eventually, their entire lives.

**END**

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