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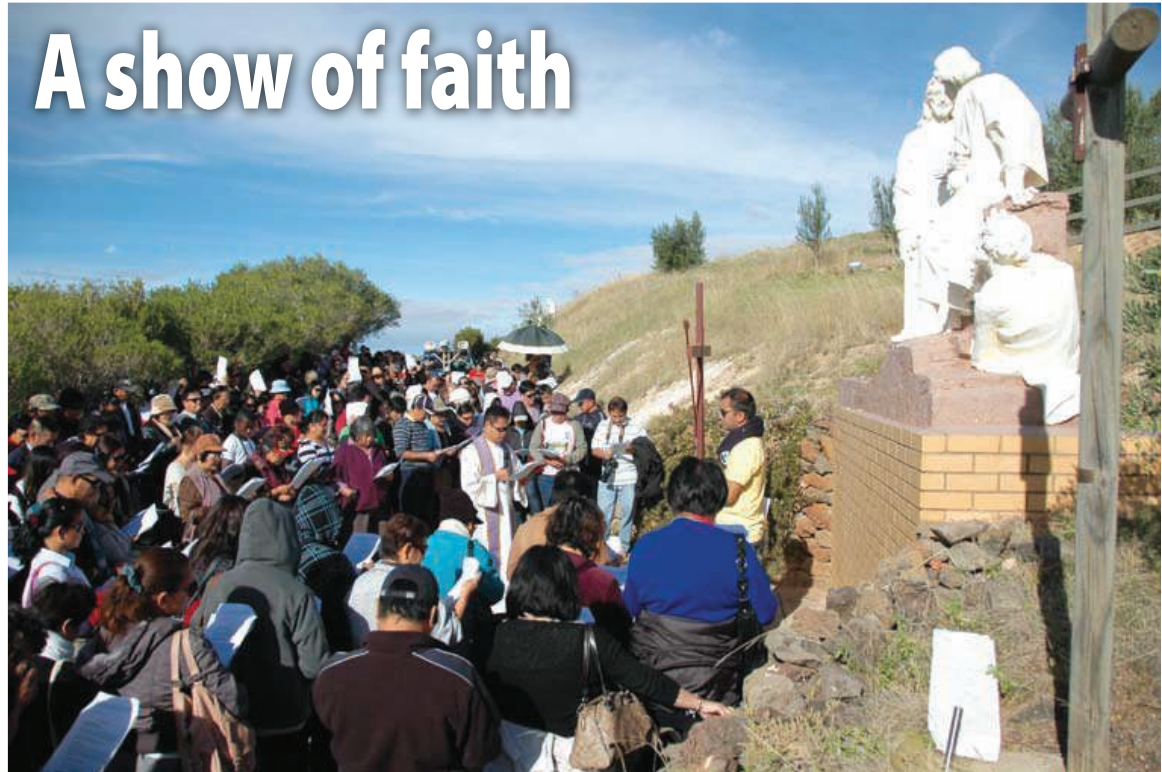
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## A show of faith

Filipinos in Melbourne stand in one of the 14 life-sized Stations of the Cross at Ta Pinu Shrine in Bacchus Marsh on 6 April to commemorate the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ. Read more Holy Week activities on page 13. (Photo by George Gregorio | www.ggoryopictures.com)

## Filipino Festival in May

Cultural shows, concerts, parade add spectacle to celebrations

IT WILL definitely be a big event for the forthcoming Filipino Festival on 4-5 May 2013 with expected 5,000 revellers to attend, according to Ed Guevarra, Director of EMG Sports and Entertainment Network. "We are actually in the process of preparing for the Flores de Mayo at the moment which is proving to be quite a task with so many things to prepare like Sagala or the queens of the parade or processions," Guevarra told *The Philippine Times*.

The two-day celebration, to be held at the Croatian Catholic



Centre Sunshine, Fitzgerald Rd and Whiteside Avenue in Ardeer, will present religious and cultural tradition of Filipinos with Flores de Mayo as its main highlight. K-La Rivera, one of the five finalists of ABS-CBN's Star Magic Talent will be the Reyna Elena together with other Filipinos based in Melbourne.

Guevarra said on the first day, there will be variety shows (from cultural to modern dancing), musical events from local talent, and imported artists, comedy

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# Working with deaf children in Cebu

Mila Cichello

WHEN MY husband Peter Cichello was first approached in 1990 by an unknown Italian priest, Father Savino for support in setting up a Deaf School in Cebu, Peter and I were sceptical. He said deaf kids there could not attend the local primary schools because they could not hear in class, communicate with other people and their families simply could not look after them. We said that we are a young family juggling two jobs, my university studies and very young children; worried about the house mortgage, a rust bucket of a car; and trying to renovate our dilapidated house. Surely, there were others who could help him. Father Savino did not ask for money, he simply asked if we believed in the dream. He then laid the foundation for a school in Cebu while we asked Filipino organisations in Melbourne to support this dream, but all the groups offered fundraising dinner dance, no ongoing commitment.

In 1993, the Mission Deaf School was built but the local teachers were struggling without specialist

training. That year Peter had just left his stable job to strike out on his own audiology practice, I was heavily pregnant with our third child, still madly renovating the old house-but God must have tapped us on the shoulder because it felt right for Peter to go away and train the teachers. There were varied reactions from friends and strangers: many advised us to just send money and that's more than enough; some said the timing was bad when we should be concentrating on starting Peter's business; a few asked me how I could allow Peter go on his own, where women would tempt him? But we heeded the call for help, and it was the beginning of a wonderful relationship with the School and families with deaf children on an island neither of us had visited before.

And so it was Peter's involvement that led to years of phone calls between Father Savino, the Little Sisters for the Deaf, the School community and our own family. There were donated equipment from

various sources, donations of old hearing aids from an Australian Commonwealth department, gifts of expensive batteries from other professionals, audiologist friends who volunteered their time to work in the School, building links with ENT specialists from Manila, meetings at Philippine General Hospital and yearly visits to the School. Funny, no one at the School ever talked about money, but we found that people stepped up and always gave generously of their personal time, skills, knowledge – the very essence of *bayanihan* at work.

The School continues to grow, credit to the nuns, priests, benefactors and volunteers. They now have 100 pupils of different ages and abilities enrolled. In February 2013, Peter spent a week working at the School with another Australian Audiologist Peter Harrison, who runs his own practice in Brighton, Melbourne. They tell me that highlight of this trip was when a 16-year old high school graduate from the School visited the teachers to proudly

tell them they got into a university. The younger pupils looked at him in awe- they too, would have the opportunity to get an education, thanks to the School. *Indeed, God works in mysterious and wonderful ways.*



## Kapit-bahayan coop receives State award

THE NSW Federation of Community Housing Associations Inc during its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference in the Menzies Hotel Sydney on 11 and 12 March 2013 highly commended Kapit-bahayan Co-operative Ltd (KCL) with the Excellence in Housing for Building Communities and Tenant Engagement award. The award cited KCL for its continuing outstanding performance in the provision of housing and many achievements in the areas of community development and community participation.

About 500 delegates coming from some 100 member housing associations, companies and agencies with interests in the housing and accommodation industry: housing providers, housing-related services, government agencies and commercial companies throughout NSW attended the conference. The community housing sector includes housing associations, churches, Aboriginal housing, co-operative housing, local government providers and supported accommodations. Except for coop housing which is generally voluntarily managed by tenants, all the other social housing providers are managed by paid professional housing managers and housing workers.

Only KCL was nominated

for an award among the 45 housing coops affiliated with Common Equity NSW. There were about 48 nominations submitted by 19 organisations for the eight awards of excellence categories. It was like a David vs Goliath contest but again KCL proved itself as the top housing coop and at par with the best social housing providers. Kapit-bahayan had been consistently winning industry awards that are performance-based since shortly after it received its first housing allocations in 1997 with about 10 state level housing sectoral awards.

KCL is one of the flagships of the newly formed but now obviously dominant state peak Alliance of Philippine Community Organisations Inc. (APCO) where Dr Cen Amores is the founding President, while KCL found-

ing President Ruben Amores and Sedwick Housing Coop Dr Jimmy Lopez are advisers. APCO is currently led by Visayan-Australian Jhun Salazar as president.

KCL is the winner of the inaugural Global Bayaning Pilipino Award for Australia by ABS-CBN and Ateneo University-based UGAT Foundation in 2012.



Conference delegates Delia and Joe Caballero (founding member and maintenance manager, respectively), Ruben Amores and Cen Amores, (founding president and membership development chair, respectively) proudly display the NSW Award of Excellence they received on behalf of Kapit-bahayan Co-operative Ltd during the NSW Federation of Community Housing Associations 20th Anniversary Conference at Menzies Hotel Sydney.



KCL tenant-members after one of their bi-monthly general meeting.

## 56 years of blood donation

LES RAWLINSON (centre) was featured in *The Sunday Mail* for being in a group of elite donors who have given blood at least 300 times to the Australian Red Cross.

Les, 77, has been donating blood for 56 years now and, to date, has donated 520 times. Les lived in Melbourne for so many years and is now based in the Gold Coast.

"I'd like to make it to 600 donations. I've been lucky. I've had very good health all my life which is the reason I've been able to donate for so many years," he was quoted telling *The Sunday Mail*.

