



Tending old roads or making new ones and backyard gardening are among the projects being undertaken by the Community through the initiative of the young under the guidance of Mrs. Dolores H. Sison, executive vice president of the UNC.



THE YOUNG COMMUNITY EXPERTS

IN A LITTLE barrio in the Bicol region the tots are toothless and the oldfolks are always almost in a sleepy mood. The world (which actually is their immediate surroundings) is good enough as it is: hot and quiet. Nobody cares to notice anything else beyond the confines of their huts which, incidentally, seemed to have been built along the same design and concept, without sanitation facilities, with a combination living and dining room, and a gasless kitchen.

The arrival therefore of a boatload of clean-looking young girls and boys one Sunday morning several months back was hardly noticed. What could a boatload of uniformed girls and boys mean to them anyway? But somehow things started to jell and everyone in the barrio got involved in different activities. In no time, the whole little community was up and about, humming with a newfound life. The visitors had brought fresh tidings with them.

It was like that in the beginning for some hundred or so senior students of the University of Nueva Caceres in the historic and religious city of Naga. The students, trained widely in various aspects of community life, were being sent to thirty one barrios in Camarines Sur province on an internship on community development. They were to help shape a new life for the barrio people by utilizing the training and orientation that they

have gained from years of classroom education. Health and sanitation, good citizenship, basic household skills, child care, gardening, home beautification, government, religion, reading. These are among the varied and useful activities the students have opted to undertake. For all these undertakings, the basis for action was self-help. Motivational factors were introduced where they were considered helpful.

The students' enthusiasm was contagious. And that was a big count in their favor. In a very short while the barrio folks caught on with their bold community internship program and, consequently, had shed off their initial skepticism. Now the barrio folks have joined merrily in the undertaking. In one barrio, for instance, the shirtless children were gathered together and taught facts about health, citizenship, reading, and some rudiments of music; in the end the little ones were singing as lively as can be. In another sitio, the little girls, together with their mothers, were told that flowers can bloom even in the warm month of April and that flowers are the most inexpensive decor a small Filipino Community can well afford. Now the sitio is full of blooming flowers.

Other barrios were taught gardening and growing pechay and cabbages, eggplants and tomatoes. Still in another barrio, the old folks were collected under the

shade of a big tree (for lack of other accommodation) and there started what, eventually, became a continuing adult class.

Thus the students volunteer service for community development that started as an idea in the university has become a fullgrown undertaking for good. Even Dr. N. Albarracin of the bureau of private education was amazed at the students' enthusiasm and, much more so, at the reactions of the barrio folks that he volunteered to have the novel classroom subject applied in other schools and colleges throughout the land.

Mrs. Dolores H. Sison, executive vice president of the UNC (pioneer private university in Luzon outside of Manila), is of course pleased. The community internship program was the fruit of an idea that took too long to gain acceptance — that education is for community improvement.

"Community improvement or community development is a subject that has occupied the attention of government and private organizations," said Mrs. Sison. And quite a number of people have really been obsessed by it. In Central Luzon, where the problems of the barrio have taken sinister shapes, the government had mobilized its resources to bring about as fast as can be the uplift of this rural unit of our society. President Marcos has, in fact, acting with flying hopes, secured congressional approval of a P100-million rural improvement and community development program precisely because of the pleas of the barrio people. From this fund the chief executive had released P2,000.00 checks as aid to each barrio in the country. As of the end of March, the PACD said over 15,600 barrios in 590 towns in the country have received the barrio aid. In no other time has such attention been showered the barrio and its folks.

In a relative sense, the UNC project gains significance and relevance. Even now, in Naga City and elsewhere in the province of Camarines Sur, the people are still talking about the university's internship program. Actually, it is a local version of the American peace corps volunteers. But here lies a difference. Here is a germ of an idea growing to fruition to fulfill the dreams of the old that the young are the fair hope of the land. FM