

BETHLEHEM COMMUNITIES AUSTRALIA (BCA)

- changing the world one community at a time

Newsletter - October 2005

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BCA's vision is for every child to have a decent education; for every family, a decent place to live;
and for every community, a better way of life.

Bethlehem Communities Australia (BCA) - latest news and background

Welcome to Bethlehem Communities Australia!

To old and new supporters welcome to BCA!
Formally set up in January 2005, BCA's informal work began through fundraising for a new Day Care Centre in Cebu, the Philippines for the 120 children of families who lived by scavenging on rubbish tips. The new **Bethlehem Day Care Centre** opened in January 2004 and has since transformed the lives of these pre-school children.

All children have gone onto Primary school and their families have been given new hope through this and other BCA programs. The Day Care Centre continues to be effectively run through the efforts of Fr John Iacono, Patron of BCA and his team of supporters.



The entrance to the Bethlehem Day Care Centre

In 2004, an Australian benefactor, with a vision, provided funds to purchase land at Dumlog, near Cebu City. BCA's main focus is the building of new homes for 360 marginalized families from different local and 'informal' settlements including two dump sites, communities from poor fishing villages plus low income workers and volunteers of a Prison Apostolate and a local Cooperative.

The Project will permanently relocate them to decent housing, within a community, where members are taught to support each other in achieving a viable future for themselves and especially for their children. Currently, all donations go towards this program and to a rural program in Dulangan, Mindanao. (Latter to be featured in our next newsletter).

Thank you!

BCA thanks you for your continuing support. Your donations are always welcome and we are often humbled by the contributions that we receive.

New Program Manager

In September, BCA employed a new Program Manager, **Margarita Matheu**, (see P2) who will coordinate the Cebu program and liaise with all working partners. In early October, she will chair a meeting with all partners which will ensure greater clarity and effective cooperation between all parties.

MOAs

We are delighted to announce that Memorandum of Agreements (MOAs) have been signed between BCA and the majority of the partners.

Land rezoned

The land in Dumlog has now been rezoned for residential use. Although there are few more administrative hurdles to cross, this effectively paves the way for building to soon commence on the first set of houses and community buildings. We hope building will commence by early 2006.



Blessing of the land in Feb 2005

The program's beneficiaries (or Home Owner Partners) will participate in this program by helping in the *actual* building of the houses as well as repay the total cost of the houses over a number of years. BCA readily acknowledges their two Australian based funding partners: *Habitat* and *Communities for Communities*. Both organisations will assist in the funding of the houses and will use the repayments towards further house construction.

New name – San Pio Village

San Pio Village has become the new official name for this Cebu-Dumlog Village Project.

**Margarita Matheu –
New Overall Program Manager**



Marj Matheu, new Overall Program Manager of San Pio Village

We are delighted to welcome Marj Matheu to the BCA team. Marj comes with a wealth of legal and housing knowledge that will greatly assist this program. She has had many years of planning and administrative experience in resettling families as well as liaising with all levels of government. We look forward to working with her in the coming months. Marj told BCA, *“It is my great privilege to be part of this proposed San Pio Village, a project of BCA and a greater honour to join as its Overall Project Manager. I thank BCA for bringing the Project to my country with the Filipino people as the beneficiaries of this laudable undertaking.*

I am confident that the thankful Cebuanos community will measure up to the task of doing its share in assuring the success of this Project.”

Choir Tour – May 2005

The University of Visayas Choir (UV Choir) returned for a second tour in May 2005 which was even more successful than their first one in Spring 2004. This time the tour involved Sydney, Canberra and regional NSW including Armidale, Bathurst, Merriwa and Wagga. Congregations loved them and all were touched by their voices, grace, enthusiasm as well as their spiritual presence. Approximately \$20,000 was raised towards the San Pio Village Program. BCA's fundraising team continues to miss them but wishes them well in their continuing studies and work endeavors.

Their second CD titled *My Tribute* was a sell out with only a few copies remaining. If you missed out, send \$20.00 per CD plus \$5.00 handling. Available from BCA office.

Bethlehem Communities Australia Inc.

Formalities

BCA became an Incorporated organization in May 2005. We are non-profit making but all contributions are acknowledged and receipted. Tax deductible receipts are available on request.

Gifts can be sent to the BCA office at the address below.

The Board of Directors includes the following:

Fr John Iacono – Patron (based in Cebu)
Ron Natoli – Chairman/Executive Director
Max Raiola – Treasurer
Lance Brooks – Communities for Communities
Vicki Kassouf – Fundraising
Ros Bradley – Secretary

Promotion

A website is currently under construction. We will contact you once this is up and running.

Newsletters

Please let us know if we have the incorrect details for you or you would like to receive your newsletters via email instead of hardcopy. Please email us on rsbrad99@bigpond.net.au OR complete the attached form and return to
**BCA, 1A, Reginald St,
Wareemba NSW 2046**



The UV Choir performing in Canberra on the Filipino National Day, (June 12), for the Filipino Ambassador.