



FUNDACIÓN PONFERRADA VAN STONE INC.

**Renewal and Revitalization of rural communities
in Eastern Visayas, Philippines**



FPVI Center

FPVI's vision is to optimize the potential of change-makers in remote rural barangays in Tunga, Leyte, Philippines, through personalized face-to-face fostering of productive and engaged mindsets.



***Lending a hand.
Making a difference.***

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

FPVI has its origins in the minds and hearts of a family with strong roots in Leyte, Philippines. The roots were planted by a young couple, new graduates in Manila, who got married in Barugo, Leyte in 1945, soon after World War II. They decided to build their future in their home province, not in the big city.

The couple obtained permissions and established the Leyte Institute Tunga, a secondary school in a barrio under the municipality of Barugo. It was the only learning institution in the area at the time that allowed students to continue their education interrupted by the war and the Japanese occupation. Leyte Institute Tunga flourished and produced graduates who also put down their own roots in the barrio. Ultimately, these graduates supported the move to make the barrio, in 1949, an independent municipality, which we now know as Tunga.

Domingo and Elena Ponferrada initially rented a large two-storey house for the Institute which also served as the family's residence and as dormitory for teachers. The house was formally purchased by the family in 1957 who made it their permanent home. Leyte Institute Tunga would cease operation in the mid-1960s when the government-supported local high school opened.

The house has undergone several renovations & transformations over the decades but in 2017, seventy years after the founding of the school, it would revert back to its educational function as the FPVI Center. FPVI exists to channel funds from the Filipino diaspora to the hometown and neighboring communities and by such means champion opportunities for young Filipinos.

FPVI underwrites opportunity where there was none; it acts for those impacted by poverty so that they regain a chance to live according to their potential; and it offers opportunity to donors who, in a like-minded way, believe in and wish to act in accordance with the tenets of social justice for all.

MEET THE FPVI TEAM



NONNA is the 2nd of five siblings of Domingo & Elena Ponferrada. She is a Tunga returnee, having spent a good part of her working life affiliated with an international development organization overseas. Nonna is now based in Tunga. She oversees the operation of FPVI as its President but also doubles as chef for all of the students' and guests' meals during sessions and events at FPVI.

LEONOR is the 3rd of the Ponferrada siblings. A nurse by training, her career has been spent much on research and conference development in nephrology. FPVI is her brainchild and she is instrumental in pushing it to its fruition. She serves as the Foundation's main fundraiser, operating from overseas. The Van Stone part of FPVI is her married name.



LINO & GILDA Lino, better known to all as Bimboy, is the 4th among the Ponferrada siblings. He and his wife Gilda joined FPVI in 2019 as members of the Board of Trustees. Based overseas, they regularly come to Tunga to keep community ties and support the Foundation.

ROWENA (Wen) is FPVI's Secretary/Treasurer. She is an accountant by training and, for a very long time, held a responsible position as an officer in a major bank until she opted for an early retirement. Currently, she is the Finance Officer and Corporate Treasurer of a pharmaceutical distribution company, but she ensures her cheerful self makes time to support philanthropic endeavors.



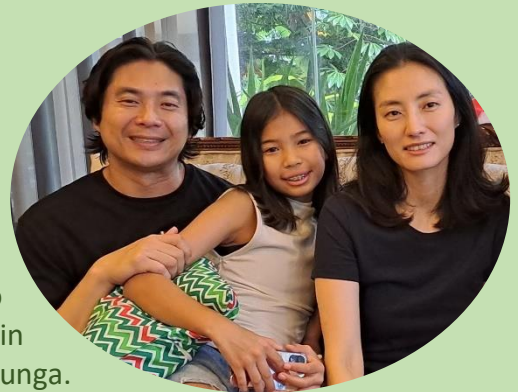
TONY is the overseer of the physical facilities of the Foundation. He ensures that FPVI Center is fit for purpose as a learning hub for the children and a good space for collaboration with community partners. He also assumes parental responsibility for FPVI children occasionally.

BELEN & ADRIAN Belen is the 5th & youngest of the siblings. She & her husband, Adrian, set up FPVI in 2016-17 on their return to the Philippines, and managed the initial year including recruitment of the first batch of children. Their experience in running a non-profit school for underprivileged children in Indonesia helped to jumpstart the Foundation operations.



SHIENA is an early FPVI Volunteer. Her background in community development is important in giving shape to the mission of the Foundation. With an unreserved compassion for underprivileged youth, Shiena is a steadying force in FPVI with her strong commitment and leadership and an exceptional aptitude in adolescent counseling.

NIKO is the eldest son of the eldest Ponferrada sibling, Agnes, and her husband Tony, and the first of the 7 grandchildren of Domingo and Elena Ponferrada. A marketing executive in a US telecommunication company for many years, he has since relocated with his wife and daughter to Seoul. His involvement in FPVI allows him to maintain the Ponferrada-Basilio link to Tunga.



MABEL is a physician with a specialization in pediatrics, but whose career is in public health. With formidable training and international experience, she presides over programs in emergency and disaster conditions, working in an international development organization. She brings to FPVI her expertise in nutrition and public health, and more importantly, her compassionate nature. She is a niece to the 5 siblings and shares the same surname.

YOU

Do you have a passion in community development and youth empowerment? Do you have resources, knowledge, and skills that you want to share towards the uplifting of lives? If yes, then we need and want you to join us in our mission.



HOW WE HELP

EDUCATION MISSION

Engaging young minds and the community towards holistic development



- *Cultivating young minds for the future*
- *Sparking creativity*
- *realizing the youth's full potential*

Remote rural barangays in the Philippines are not often considered dynamic. But by investing in education and supporting young Filipinos through their schooling, we help foster individuals who can act in ways that incrementally develop dynamic thought, behavior, and aspiration in their own lives. And by inspiration, in others' lives, too.

FPVI, to date, specifically supports access to secondary school for children, each selected as beneficiaries because they have experienced significant disadvantage yet showed resilience and promise.

"I graduated from Grade 12 in April 2025 and now studying at Visayas State University for a degree in Agriculture. For the opportunities and support, and for nurturing me throughout high school, I am grateful to FPVI. I am now focused on my personal growth without forgetting I am part of a larger community."--- **Marky**



Photo: Francis Guy

“When I first came curious and a little everyone saw me as FPVI was the most fun playground. There were toys, puzzles and books and the group did fun activities such as the open mic, theater arts and role playing. I also participated in several video projects which was fun and learned to draw and paint. Best of all, I learned to love books and FPVI lets me borrow books that I enjoy reading. I am now learning to write essays and recently contributed several pieces to the ebook which FPVI published during the summer.” ---**Manuel**



to FPVI in 2018, I was bit nervous because a child. For a 5-year-old, FPVI was the most fun playground. There were toys, puzzles and books and the group did fun activities such as the open mic, theater arts and role playing. I also participated in several video projects which was fun and learned to draw and paint. Best of all, I learned to love books and FPVI lets me borrow books that I enjoy reading. I am now learning to write essays and recently contributed several pieces to the ebook which FPVI published during the summer.”

Photo from the FPVI Collection

Get to know the young care (206)

GETTING TO KNOW THE FPVI STUDENTS (2026)

Through our Learning & Development Program, we empower local youths by providing support for a holistic education, proper nutrition, and values-development sessions to help them achieve their aspirations and build a better tomorrow for themselves, their families, and the community.



From bottom left: Gaby, Hannah, Lyka, Rudelyn, Alexandra, Hanna, Marky, Rhenz & Robert



ALEXANDRA is from Barangay Macalpi in Carigara, a neighboring and larger town but attends high school in Tunga. She is academically inclined, especially in math and sciences, and is in the STEM stream in senior high. She is from a blended family with an older father working as a contractual laborer and a mother frequently away for daily wage work. The maternal separation causes some emotional concerns where her decision-making is affected sometimes but it is also this separation that has made her a more resilient teenager. She has a sensitivity that allows her to reflect more deeply than others her age and it comes out in her writing, whether in her personal journal or in assigned tasks.



HANNA JOYCE is from Barangay Binibihan in Carigara municipality but because Tunga is closer in distance to her home, she attends the local high school in Tunga. She tries her best in everything she does and produces good work when focused. She has a supportive mother who is a child developmental worker. Hanna has a cheerful disposition but also self-reflective and an overthinker, sometimes too much for her own good. She is an avid reader which served her well during the two consecutive FPVI summer programs on reading intervention for elementary school students, the Reading & Rhythm Sessions, for which she excelled as a Reading Mentor.

RHENZ is from Barangay Binibihan, Carigara and is the eldest of 2 siblings. An enthusiastic learner and an avid sports player, Rhenz struggles to balance his school-related tasks and home responsibilities as he manages their household on a daily basis. To meet the needs of the family, the father drives an inter-island passenger vehicle that plies from Manila to Leyte and back, not always a harmonious family arrangement, and the mother an itinerant wage worker, leaving Rhenz to fend for himself and absorb and resolve family disputes. He relies mostly on FPVI for pastoral guidance as the responsibility sometimes overwhelms him. He struggles to cope with his personal and family challenges, and these are reflected in his work and assigned tasks. He requires close monitoring and support and relies on his FPVI friends and teachers and the all-important nourishing meals he needs on the weekly Sunday sessions at FPVI Center.



RUDELYN is a persevering student and is the eldest of 6 siblings with a very involved family dynamic. She is from Barangay Abango, part of Barugo municipality but closer in distance to the town of Tunga hence the decision to attend the local high school in Tunga. She is meticulous with her schoolwork and often gets called on to represent the school in debating competitions in the district and provincial levels. Her organizational and planning ability almost always lands her awards and recognition from these competitions. Even so, Rudelyn finds time to write verses and poems where she can best express herself and where her creativity shines. She is self-aware and can assess her strengths as well as areas where she can improve on, and her singular focus is to break the cycle of poverty in her family by studying to become a doctor.

ROBERT is from Barangay Amahit in Barugo, Leyte and is the youngest of 5 siblings. He is a sport enthusiast and has participated in many athletics competitions and won medals in track and field. At the start of his time at FPVI, Robert struggled with instructions given to him, and his writing revealed this. Over time, he learned to trust and rely on his own abilities even if they did not get him top marks. He is the most improved in his cohort, not just in academics but also in his way of doing things. He wrote something of interest before he started Grade 12: being 'hungry' makes you achieve, be hungry for what you want!'





BLESSY is a diligent student but very shy, especially at the time she started at FPVI. Her quiet demeanor belied her love for thrillers and horror books which she found, to her delight, in the FPVI bookshelves. She was able to share this love of reading and her interest in thrillers when she was a Reading Mentor to elementary school pupils in the FPVI's reading intervention program in the community during her first summer with FPVI. Her family lives in Barangay Astorga, Tunga and it is her father who is responsible for her and her 3 siblings on a day-to-day basis while their mother works as a nanny in another town in Leyte. Blessy dreams of becoming a nurse one day and she has the character to pursue that: serious, meticulous and reliable. She also shared an interesting insight halfway through her first year at FPVI: she is adamant that the friendships she has made in the foundation are stronger than those she made in school.

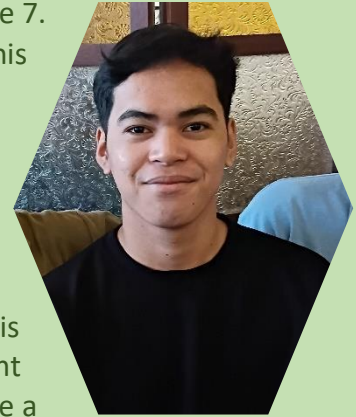


SEAN is the only student at FPVI from Poblacion Tunga. He is the second of 6 children and excels both in academics and extra-curricular activities. He is a member of the school band, and he carries and plays the drum on town parades. He is an exceptional chess player and participates in tournaments in neighboring towns and in Tacloban. Sean is quiet but is hardworking, innovative and has an independent streak. He produces outstanding compositions on canvas using acrylic as a medium but is also adept in watercolor. He wants to study architecture or engineering after high school but first, he has to exemplify good leadership having been elected as President of the Student Council for schoolyear 2026-27.



GABY is a Grade 12 student at the Leyte National High School in Tacloban. She was only in Grade 5 when she started at FPVI and relishes the experiences and opportunities she has had growing up and spending her Sundays with fellow students, something that has fostered strong ties between and among them. In the past 2 years, she and the 3 college freshmen in 2025-26 had the role of responsible older siblings to the younger ones in the Learning & Development Program, the Ate & Kuya (big sister & big brother). She has also displayed a maturity that has evolved from her time at FPVI. Gaby is curious by nature, and she is as creative as she is diligent with her schoolwork and assigned tasks. She produces extraordinary artworks on canvas and also projects herself well in Open Mic Sessions and in role playing.

JHONREY has been with FPVI since 2017 when he started Grade 7. Excelling in academics, he had no issues with schoolwork but in his early teens, he struggled with the trauma of parental abandonment. FPVI Center was his temporary home for a time when his maternal relatives could not care for him any longer. He moved to the Pope Francis Center for Disadvantaged Youth & Elderly in Palo, Leyte where he was able to continue Grade 10 and get the support he needed from social workers. At the same time, he was immersed in spiritual nurturing, resulting in his personal transformation. In 2026, he is a 3rd Year Nursing student in Tacloban, experiencing independent living and has grown to be a more responsible young adult. His free time is divided between Pope Francis Center and FPVI, especially on special occasions and he continues to enjoy the bond and friendships he forged from his time in Tunga at FPVI.



THE COLLEGE FRESHMEN Our college students and FPVI alumni continue to form part of the FPVI family. Whenever their respective schedules allow, they would come visit to check in with their current studies and even help younger FPVI students with their ongoing tasks, as well as to enjoy each other's company and share their experiences living away from Tunga.

At the beginning of 2026, Marky is a freshman at the Visayas State Agriculture University (VSU) in Baybay, Leyte, studying for a degree in Agriculture; Hannah Jane is a 1st year nursing student at Biliran Province State University (BPSU) and Lyka is a Biology major at Leyte Normal University (LNU) in Tacloban, also a freshman. They all had college adjustment challenges during their first semester but during the Christmas get-together at FPVI in December 2025, the three displayed an aura of confidence that revealed they are finally able to master study routines, manage independent living and now beginning to enjoy college life!

OUR YOUNG GRADUATES At the beginning of 2026, this is what everyone is up to: Patrick is now on his third year as Instructor in Biological Sciences at Cavite State University in Indang, Cavite and at the same time pursuing his master's degree at University of the Philippines in Los Banos, Laguna. Miracle, a licensed Civil Engineer, works in the Municipal Engineer's Office in Barugo, Leyte Local Government Unit (LGU). Mary Rose, having just passed the Board of Accountancy, started work as a junior accountant at a Makati firm in Metro Manila. Mary Grace has qualified as an architect.

We are as proud of them for their achievements as their parents and guardians and we continue to support them remotely for counseling or advice and other practical support they may need. Although now living and working away from Tunga, they remain part of the FPVI family.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Collaborating and connecting with communities

FPVI has been working with barangay (village) elementary schools and barangay units in the municipality by initiating programs to supplement what the schools offer, specifically in reading and literacy.

Beginning in 2025, FPVI partnered with Tunga LGU with heritage-related projects including a photo exhibition that opened in November 2025 at the Municipal Hall on the making of the town, *An Pagbungto* and a heritage book for the 77th founding anniversary of the town in 2027.

Literacy Enhancement

Astorga Elementary School needed a boost with its literacy program having had consistently poor ratings in children's evaluation and performance in reading and writing.



In early 2017, the FPVI Team worked with teachers to devise a method to improve literacy levels by conducting additional lessons in reading, and in English. Subsequently, storybooks and information books for different reading ability levels have been made available to children and their teachers as learning resources. The Program aims to boost children's reading and literacy levels by conducting additional lessons in reading. Storybooks and information books for different reading

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Launching the first bee-friendly school

FPVI joined forces with Beengo Farm and the Leyte Electric Cooperative (LEYECO 3) in introducing

beekeeping advocacy in schools with the launching of Banawang Elementary School in October 2018 as the first bee-friendly school in Leyte. The initiative aims to inculcate awareness and motivate children to love and respect



nature, instill a sense of individual responsibility for the preservation of the environment and for maintaining a healthy ecosystem, and to learn and appreciate the importance of bees and the benefits of the process of pollination. On the community front, the project encourages cooperation and productive collaboration in the smallest barangay in the smallest town in Leyte.

Reading & Rhythm Program Summer 2024

Supplementing literacy programs and efforts in Banawang Elementary School, FPVI offered its first reading intervention program

designed to help students in Grades 5 & 6 as they prepare for and transition to high school. A training program was conducted by a Reading Expert from University of the Philippines Diliman QC who works with children in underprivileged urban communities to train Reading Mentors out of our FPVI students. Having successfully completed the training, the newly minted Reading Mentors jumpstarted the 2-week



Reading & Rhythm Program, an innovative approach to getting children to be avid readers and interested in books, resulting not just in improved reading ability by their mentees but also a better prepared cohort moving up to Grade 7.

Reading & Rhythm Program Summer 2025

The Reading & Rhythm Program was brought to the community of Barangay Balire in the summer of 2025 with 24 participating children with the active collaboration of the Barangay Captain and Tunga LGU staff. As with the 1st R&R in 2024, challenges were abundant, but the children became more and more receptive to their now experienced Reading Mentors every day they returned to the barangay hall. While the program improved the reading ability and comprehension of children transitioning to high school, they also enhanced the Reading Mentors' teaching skills, as well as their sense of responsibility to the younger children they mentor.



An Pagbungto

A Photo Exhibition at the Tunga Municipal Hall In time for Tunga's 76th founding anniversary in November 2025, an exhibition of old photographs mostly from the Domingo A. Ponferrada Collection and also from the community, photographs that survived the onslaught of super typhoon Yolanda, opened in the Tunga Municipal Hall. The narrative focused on the efforts of the people who shepherded Tunga from barrio to a municipality, independent from Barugo. It is the first exhibition of its kind in the town and also the first time that many townspeople saw photographs of their parents, grandparents and relatives in the backdrop of the 1949 inauguration of the new municipality.



FPVI loaned photos from the family collection and provided the curatorial concept for the exhibition, sourced some of the community photos and managed the printing, fabrication and installation of the exhibition with support from Tunga LGU.

Tunga Heritage Book Project 2025-26

In conjunction with the photo exhibition which served as a teaser, the heritage book is planned for publication in time for the 77th founding anniversary of Tunga in November 2026. FPVI is supporting the LGU project from book concept to content design in collaboration with Tunga LGU Executive Office and Legislative Office, LGU staff, and teachers from the Tunga Central District School, barangay elementary schools and the Gregorio C. Catenza National High School.

FPVI STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES and UPDATES

Sub-Rosa: FPVI's emerging Mary Rose

January 2026



One of the innate traits we observed in Mary Rose when she joined FPVI in 2018 as a senior high school student was her intensity and singular focus on her academic studies. When a school project was assigned, it had to be done, and done well, to the detriment of other tasks or concerns. With an in-built deftness, she wrote, polished and completed all her assigned work with maximum effort. In short, a perfectionist to the core. That was Mary Rose to her FPVI batchmates, to her junior colleagues, to us at FPVI and, as it turned out, to her family, as well. We worked with her to modify a desirable but dangerous behavior pattern that when carried out to the extreme could cause imbalance in her general well-being.

Born to parents who depended on agriculture work for livelihood, Mary Rose is the eldest of five siblings. She brought on to herself a sense of responsibility towards her siblings and to her family early on. With the way she carried on with school work, her father, proud as he was with her achievements, was concerned for her health. His accident in the farm field, rendering him partially disabled and compromising the source of family income, heightened her concern and sense of responsibility.

Mary Rose learned to relax a little when she participated in FPVI activities not directly related to academic demands such as Open Mic, Theater Arts (role play) and art-making. She also continued to write her evocative *sidays*, verses in Waray, the local language, showcasing her skill and talent in writing in the vernacular. In all these, she was immersed in the friendships she forged with her FPVI cohort.

Mary Rose's intensity saw her through her senior high school, graduating with highest honors and garnering the most medals. She continued on to college and graduated with a degree in Accountancy, with Latin honors. The pandemic years saw her reverting to her no-stone-unturned study habit that extended when she started preparing for the board exams in accountancy. She came out of it triumphant, passing the board in October 2025, and becoming a Licensed Accountant.

Emerging from her months of focused self-review, Mary Rose happily rejoined the FPVI family in early December 2025 for a day of camaraderie and shared meals, and to say goodbye as she prepared to leave soon for Manila for job interviews. She left with everyone's good wishes paired with a gentle reminder, in jest perhaps but also in all seriousness: that it is perfectly okay to be imperfect!

She started 2026 far away from home with a new job as a Junior Auditor in a reputable accounting firm in the nation's financial capital!

CELEBRATING TUNGA

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December 2025



FPVI celebrated Christmas 2025 with a special focus on the home front. The idea was meant to complement the photo exhibition commemorating the 76th founding of the Municipality of Tunga in the lobby of the municipal hall. Moved and inspired, the FPVI students wrote about their personal reflections on Tunga and painted local places and sceneries having a special connection to them.

The art pieces were mounted on display towers made from amakan, a traditional Filipino woven mat made from split bamboo and popularly used as wall panels in rural huts. The opening of the exhibition was graced by parents/guardians, teachers, volunteers and friends of FPVI who, unsure what to expect, viewed the artworks with surprised delight and pride.

Following the viewing of the exhibit, the students read their written personal reflections on Tunga to raucous laughter, though a snivel or two could be heard in between the readings. Over merienda cena, the students and guests

reflected on what they presented, seen and heard, probably an uncommon way of celebrating Christmas but everyone had a wholesome time!

A SESSION ON CREATIVE WRITING

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October 2025

FPVI is delighted to share with you this ebook covering the special session on creative writing conducted by a visiting author, Oscar Peñaranda, with the FPVI students during the summer break. In Mr. Peñaranda's words: "The students wrote and drew and read. They seized upon the task with such vigor and wonder and attention that I was swept away by their collective finished products. Their imaginations were limitless, rooted in their daily lived experiences, yet sublime in their aspirations and revelations of humanity."

A gem of a collection showcasing another facet of the students' ability to express themselves imaginatively, creatively.



2nd READING AND RHYTHM PROGRAM

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May 2025



HANNAH, MARKY, AND LYKA

June 2025



April 2019: Marky, Lyka, Hannah



April 2025: Hannah, Marky, Lyka

In April 2019, Fundacion Ponferrada Van Stone Inc. (FPVI) admitted to its Learning Program 3 elementary school graduates moving up to Grade 7. Painfully shy and absolutely silent at the onset, they were recommended by their teachers for their academic abilities and the dire economic situation of their families. In April 2025, Marky, Hannah and Lyka completed their high school education with aplomb, all with high commendation. This August, Marky starts an agricultural engineering course at the Visayas State University in Baybay, 114 kms from Tunga, where FPVI is based, and Lyka will study Biological Sciences at Leyte Normal University in Tacloban, the capital city of Leyte. Hannah is studying Nursing at Biliran School of Nursing and Health Sciences in Naval, also a considerable distance from home. But they are ready!

Proud as we are of their achievements, we believe that theirs and the Foundation's greatest accomplishments are the character and values transformation that we saw evolve in each of them in the 6 years they were with us --- the discipline of attending and participating actively in the FPVI Sunday sessions; the gradual learning of personal responsibilities; the discipline of handling weekly transportation and lunch allowances; the caring relationships they established with each other and with the other FPVI students and volunteers; the slow realization that what they have to say counted; and the recognition of their own capabilities.

Puberty is when major physical changes occur and its attendant issues happen. Marky, Hannah and Lyka navigated those challenging years while with FPVI, especially during the pandemic, but the many experiences they have had helped them to mature earlier and be wiser, as Marky puts it. He says further, *"I will always remember the painful moments of realizing my big mistakes and the awareness that followed. Those moments allowed me to fully understand what growing up means and what I needed to do. Now I'm ready for college!"*

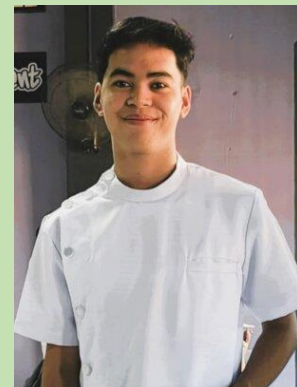
For her part, Hannah says, *“Being part of the FPVI family has been life-changing. Our writing skills improved when we read books, kept a journal and participated in activities such as Open Mic and Theater Arts to develop our self-confidence. We also had bonus learnings that broadened our minds and made us proud of the work we produced. For example, holding a paint brush was my dream as a little girl. I think I produced more than 20 paintings in my time at FPVI and I enjoyed making them!”*

Lyka states that *“FPVI taught us things outside of our school work to help us express ourselves better. Those activities gave me relief as they took some of the grief of losing my parents, one after the other. Our learning also extended to short-excursions outside Tunga. In the summer of 2024 and 2025, we learned the responsibility of being Reading Mentors to younger children in our community. In all these, we learned that kindness, respect and consideration for others are important in all that we do. I will carry that learning with me as I go to college and do more growing up!”*

MY STORY

By Jhonrey Yumol | *Lifetime member of the FPVI Family*
April 2025

Note: Jhonrey came to FPVI in 2017 when his Grade 6 teacher entrusted him to the Fundacion for him to be able to continue on to Grade 7 and receive high school education. She saw much potential in the skinny little boy with bright eyes who was burdened with the dire situation of his family. Jhonrey lived with relatives when he was in Grade 7; with a neighbor in Grade 8; and stayed at the FPVI Center in Grade 9. Since FPVI did not have the capability to provide him with professional counseling, which at that stage he badly needed, he moved in time for the start of his Grade 10 to the Pope Francis Center for Children & the Elderly in Palo, some 40 kms. from Tunga. The Center has to be credited for his transformation from a troubled teenager with abandonment issues to a steady, more mature young adult and a nursing student that he is now. Let him tell his story in his own words.



I was living happily in Dasmariñas, Cavite in Luzon with my mother and father. As the only son, I felt secure and loved. My mother was a housewife while my father worked as a truck driver. Despite our simple life, they provided everything I needed. But when I turned 10, everything changed. My parents started fighting constantly because of my mother’s affair. The arguments never seemed to end, and the pain was unbearable, especially for my father. He was so devastated that he attempted suicide three times, but each time, I was there to stop him.

Before our family completely fell apart, we visited Leyte to see my grandfather on my mother's side. My parents decided to build a house there and planned to start a business. For a moment, I thought things were getting better, but before the house was even finished, my mother left. She abandoned both me and my father in Leyte. That was when my life became miserable. My father, unable to cope, left me at my aunt's house and returned to Dasmariñas to look for my mother and find a job, but he never came back for me. My grandfather became my only source of emotional support. Unfortunately, my aunt and uncle were unkind to me. Their treatment was so unbearable that I eventually left their house and stayed with a neighbor instead.

By the time I reached sixth grade, I feared I wouldn't make it to high school. My grandfather was too old to earn enough money for my education. But just when I was losing hope, my adviser, Ma'am Madonna, introduced me to the Fundacion Ponferrada Van Stone Inc. (FPVI). FPVI and the people in it became my lifeline. They supported my schooling, provided my first-ever uniform, and even arranged tutors and mentors to help me keep up in class. When I had no place to live, FPVI took me in. It was there where I learned so much, not just in academics but also in the arts and music. They encouraged me to play the guitar, express myself creatively in various ways, develop the love for reading, and most importantly, to keep the faith and a genuine belief in God. At FPVI, I found not just support but also companionship. I met fellow students who, like me, needed help to continue with their education.

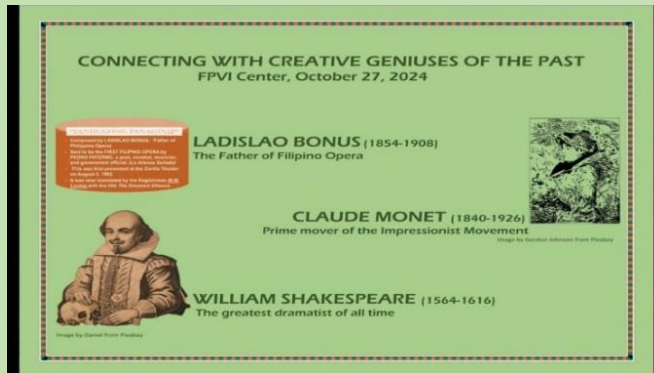
During the pandemic, FPVI found me a permanent home at the Pope Francis Complex Center for the Poor. This congregation of brothers and sisters welcomed me with open arms. Living there was another turning point in my life. I learned how to help care for the elderly and people with special needs, and I even learned farming since the Center has its own farm. They provided everything I needed, including food, clothes, shelter, and most importantly, education. My spiritual life also deepened because prayers and masses were constant part of our daily routine. Through the guidance of the Center, I grew not only in knowledge but also in faith.

When I graduated from senior high school, Father Kim, the Director of the Center, was the one who went up on stage with me. It was a moment of pride and gratitude. Now, I am in my second year of college, working toward my dream of becoming a registered nurse. At my pinning ceremony in November 2024, Ma'am Belen from FPVI, was present, representing family support for me especially that Father Kim was out-of-town. I hope to use my skills to help my family and serve those who are in need, just as so many people have helped me along the way.

CONNECTING WITH CREATIVE GENIUSES OF THE PAST

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpBa78gjanI>

December 2024



Video presentation engages the students' interest more dynamically and, despite the intense preparation involved, the excitement and pleasure derived from all aspects of the preparatory work make all the efforts well worth it.

As a means of broadening the students' viewpoint from their digitally-oriented world, FPVI suggested that they tap ideas and choose topics for this video project from the distant past. The topics selected reveal a broader scope of interest and demonstrate their improved research skills; and the modes of presentation chosen highlight more confident expressions of creativity.

FPVI READING AND RHYTHM PROGRAM

<https://designrr.page/?id=374860&token=4065852930&type=FP&h=3644>

July 2024



In July 2024 during the summer school break, FPVI conducted on a pilot run a 2-week intensive reading intervention program for grades 5 and 6 students at one of the barangay (village) schools in Tunga, Leyte. A renowned literacy program expert provided training to the nine FPVI students and one volunteer who served as Reading Mentors to the 24 participants. The Program yielded very positive and encouraging results, including requests from school and town officials to offer it in

other barangay schools.

This ebook provides both context and images from the activities covered during the two weeks. FPVI may replicate the Program in another barangay school next summer.

WHERE MIRACLES DON'T FALL SHORT

May 2024



Nothing miraculous where a young lady, christened Miracle Joy by her parents, is now in her life, a newly-minted civil engineer at 22 from the most recent results released by the Philippine Board of Civil Engineering on April 26, 2024. She followed the path of hard work and determination, with a self-imposed rigid study regimen that she herself called 'brutal', pausing only to moderate it from time to time when the tough progressed to rough.

Admitted to the FPVI Program in 2018, Miracle was recommended by her teachers on account of her academic achievements and her determination to finish secondary education amid the struggles of her family. The 4th of 7 siblings whose parents relied on unpredictable seasonal agricultural work, Miracle's chances of completing high school was compromised by the competing financial demands of her other siblings. But it wasn't so much her academic record as her determination to finish high school that made her a good candidate to be part of the FPVI family. That she would continue on to college with a government scholarship and continued support from FPVI was a bonus that she never took for granted.

Miracle's time at FPVI did not only afford her the opportunity to complete her senior high school and college education but, to her own admission, afforded her personal development where she honed her creative skills, learned to be part of a team, and served as a mentor to younger members. It is heartening to observe a painfully shy girl blossom into a self-assured young lady, mixing paint colors, holding a paintbrush confidently and filling a canvas with such bold strokes in a composition all her own. It was exhilarating to see her drill the younger ones at FPVI with math formulas and guide them to find solutions to math problems with such earnestness and passion. This she did on a regular basis when her time allowed.

Miracle insists that it wasn't only her disciplined path that got her to where she is now. She puts faith in prayers and believes that God has put her exactly where she needs to be. That there isn't a need for anxiety for what she thinks are her failures and missed opportunities. She refreshes her mindset continually to focus on opportunities yet to come, not the ones she thinks she missed. For us, her FPVI family, there is no greater pride in knowing that we have helped to nurture a confident young lady who is poised to make a difference in her community and the lives she will touch.

PATRICK'S STORY:

A case for empowering vulnerable children through education

December 2023



The aftermath of super typhoon Haiyan in November 2013 was massively devastating in terms of lives lost and homes and livelihoods wiped out. The pain wrought by it 4 years later could still be seen in the eyes of a 15-year-old boy onstage who was about to receive 5 medals for his academic achievements in Grade 10

Patrick came from a family fragmented by a marriage breakdown. The mother had to go to Manila to look for work to survive. There was no way any of the 5 children could continue their schooling under the circumstances. In the parentless household, the older ones looked after the younger siblings. Patrick, the 2nd oldest, lamented that those medals may just be in a corner in their modest hut and stay put there, just as its recipient would. Indeed, a terrible loss to abruptly halt the education of a gifted boy. In 2017, Patrick became the first of several children to join FPVI's Learning & Development Program.

An academic achiever, Patrick's perseverance, cheerful disposition, and willingness to help others as he was being helped himself made him an outstanding member of the FPVI family. He graduated from senior high with another 5 medals. Subsequently, he was admitted to the University of the Philippine (Tacloban) on a scholarship. The transition from small town to big city had its challenges but he handled them as best as he could. Then the pandemic happened and everything shut down and shifted to online learning. He persisted through the 2 years of virtual college, and FPVI was behind him all the way. In July 2023, Patrick graduated with a bachelor's degree in Biology, cum laude.

Patrick's goal after graduation was to find work, any work. An application to a teaching post at the Cavite State University, followed by a panel interview online, yielded an offer to join the Faculty of College of Arts & Sciences starting in a week's time. Patrick accepted the offer with the proviso that he be allowed to attend the 7th International Conference for Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (ICFAS 7) in Iloilo City in October where he was to do a poster presentation of his thesis on mangroves. The University agreed and off he went to Cavite, accessed from Leyte via an hour-long plane ride to Manila and another 3-hour road journey. First job, first plane ride, first time to cross islands to live away from home. Many firsts that he managed with aplomb. In mid-October, he went to Iloilo and his scientific poster presentation was recognized and his thesis picked up for publication by a UK publisher.

At FPVI, we are immensely proud of Patrick! His journey is just commencing and FPVI is happy to have been part of those who helped him get to where he is now.

FPVI: CHRISTMAS 2023

<https://youtu.be/KzyT1VdiWdk>

January 2024



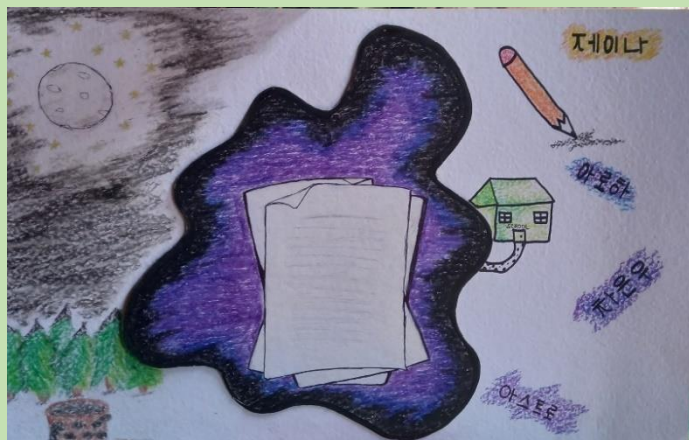
Filled with curiosity and inspired by a growing self-confidence, the FPVI students, through research, ‘traveled’ to foreign lands of their choice to find out how Christmas is celebrated in those parts of the world.

DISCOVERING THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING

<https://designrr.page?id=304493&token=1500235834&type=FP&h=3090>

September 2023

In FPVI’s continuing efforts to develop and hone the students’ writing skills, we introduced them to letter-writing during their last school break. The project was initially received with anxiety and panic due more to the fact that, as the FPVI Lead Volunteer explained, “their generation is not into sharing experiences in a written narrative.” With more amplification and encouragement, however, the anxiety and panic turned into excitement.



The letters in this collection exhibit the students' much improved ability to express their thoughts in written English and reveal an unexpected degree of openness in sharing their personal feelings and emotions. A major feat indeed.

GROWING-UP, GOING GREAT!

August 2023



2019

2023

In March 2019, three fresh graduates from Barangay Astorga Elementary School in Tunga joined the FPVI Learning and Development Program. They came highly recommended by their teachers on the basis of their academic performance, their motivation, and the economic situation of their respective families. The three participated in the FPVI Summer Program as a way to get to know the students already in the Program and familiarize themselves with various FPVI activities. By the opening of the new school year, as new high school students, they were faced with the daunting challenges of a new school, new teachers, new classmates, and making new friends. They approached these challenges quietly but seriously, working hard, and the Sundays at FPVI provided a chance to review and reinforce lessons not totally understood in classes through tutorials and more focused exercises.

The challenges they encountered at the start of high school, however, paled in comparison to what awaited them in the succeeding two years during the pandemic. The physical constraints and emotional/mental hardships the pandemic brought on were incalculable. FPVI came up with innovative ways to continue connecting with them to mitigate the harsh effects of the isolation, and assist them with lessons remotely through distance tutorials.

The three returned to in-person classes for Grade 10 in September 2022. And in July 2023, Lyka, Marky and Hannah completed junior high school with honors and subsequently qualified for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) strand they have chosen to pursue in senior high school.

A GATHERING OF SORTS

<https://youtu.be/5Ruk3WdxRPA>

May 2023



We have, in the past, experimented with video as a new way of updating everyone with our activities. This reporting season, we are delighted to share with our FPVI supporters and friends a new video of our students showcasing their growing creativity and confidence. The guideline for the project was to choose a character they admired, find out as much as they could about these characters, and develop their own material to be used in a performance. They rose to the challenge.

Over the years, we have observed the expanding use of their imagination and the incremental improvement in self-confidence. The growing curiosity of a world wider than their own locality is something FPVI takes credit for, but our greatest pride is in seeing the children in our care derive genuine joy in the process of discovery, creating, and learning.

CAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF THE FPVI RETREAT

<https://designrr.page?id=253326&token=1606029284&type=FP&h=2534>

December 2022



For students in its care, FPVI provides the platform for discovery and adventure. Each Sunday session brings new learnings in unexpected ways. For example, while the schools settled with the modular distance learning system during the pandemic, FPVI introduced learning through self-discovery. Projects like the e-book, the video trilogy---Christmas in August, Local News Recap, and Usrag, virtually---fully reflected their own experiences and memories that they were not aware

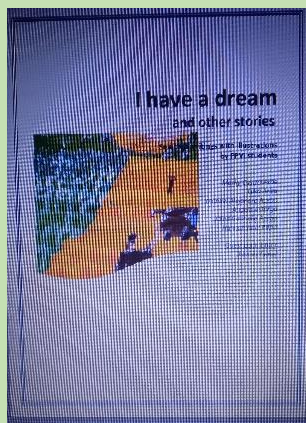
they could tap and mine for their written work and arts and crafts work.

The FPVI Christmas celebration in 2022 came in the form of Year-End Retreat aimed at helping the students focus on setting goals beyond senior high school, encompassing the spiritual and practical dimension, and made possible by sessions with a Catholic missionary priest, a school teacher, a district school supervisor, a Theology School rector, and Tunga's town mayor. The side activities were just as important and the thoughtful questions at the end of each session and at mealtime revealed a growing maturity in each of them. The retreat reaffirmed FPVI's role in the students' lives and as a safe place for fostering and nurturing their potential. It was a first for all but also their first sleepover, first visit to the city, first time to dine in a proper restaurant, and first time to see historic sites. The group left the FPVI Center with a genuine sense of joy, appreciation and optimism from the 4-day retreat experience.

STORIES WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY FPVI STUDENTS

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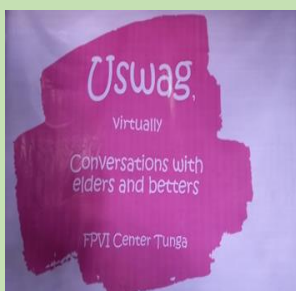
August 2022



FPVI USWAG, VIRTUALLY

<https://youtu.be/7nhrkkEoTGA>

April 2022



The rapid advances in communication technology and the complete shift to virtual meetings and sessions during this pandemic disadvantaged many in rural areas where internet connectivity is poor, if at all available. FPVI, nonetheless, stayed in regular touch with all the children in its care using devices available, primarily the early version of Android phones, and providing each phone with regular credits. FPVI maximized the utility of these devices for online tutorials and virtual sessions that were oftentimes interrupted by rain or thunderstorms, causing the internet connection to drop or die.

Zoom we don't do at FPVI as the children do not have the right devices to support the app, but we do group chats using Messenger, the easiest and most popular way to have online gatherings in rural areas. We have also devised **Uswag** (meaning, "Come in" in Waray, our local language), FPVI's own rudimentary version of gathering the children 'virtually'.

FPVI's **Uswag** sessions go beyond academic learning and enable the children to discover important facets of their own families and communities. At the same time, they afford the viewers a peek into rural life. The feelings and sentiments emerging from the characters and circumstances are starkly real and will resonate with rural lives everywhere.

LOCAL NEWS RECAP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rbPfkQ-grn4>

December 2021

As of December 2021, the Philippines is one of two countries in the world whose children have not had any face-to-face classes since the pandemic lockdown began in March 2020. The prolonged lockdown has not only severely impacted the children's ability to learn but it has also tested their mental health and resilience. FPVI continues to provide support to the children within the confines of health and safety protocols through mentoring in their distance study learning and printed modules, and through opportunities for in-person sessions and personal interactions in aid of their mental well-being. The children's Christmas wish this year, the Omicron variant notwithstanding, is for the planned resumption of in-person classes to happen in 2022 now that they are double vaccinated, and for resumption of the weekly support sessions at FPVI.



FPVI CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3716x1W5-AA>

September 2021

In Leyte, Eastern Visayas, Philippines where FPVI is located, there was a period when Covid-19 regulations were slightly relaxed. This window of easing-up of rules allowed FPVI to plan for an alternative activity for the FPVI students during their school break in July and August. The project would not contravene existing health and safety protocols but still make up for the much anticipated summer activities planned in pre-pandemic times, including mentoring of 60-70 village pupils in reading and creative work by the FPVI students.

This short video was put together after the conclusion of the 2020-2021 school year in June with technology and expertise available in a rural setting. Perhaps, it is short of the magic of real Christmas but nonetheless is full of all-out effort and enthusiasm. This is part of FPVI's efforts to keep the children in its care motivated and optimistic. It also recognizes and celebrates their resilience in the



face of many challenges in the past school year. As it turns out, our swift planning paid off as August brought us to another surge in cases of the Delta variant, and with it a return to more stringent health and safety mandates. We completed the video just in time! The art pieces in this video were done by the FPVI students.

BEING RESILIENT IN PANDEMIC TIMES

May 2021

The FPVI Fellows continue to struggle with the print-based modular learning system, the new norm for students in the Philippine public school system. The absence of in-person lesson delivery and the inability to access help from the school leave many students anxious and stressed. To reduce and alleviate the distress, FPVI provides the Fellows remote tutorial support through group chat. This plus journal-keeping and independent creative arts projects serve as their lifeline in pandemic times, as well as a more practical type of learning--collaborative and learning to be more resilient in the face of many challenges.



Additionally, once a month, the Fellows come to the FPVI Center to collect care packages and school supplies, and to receive in-person tutorials on subjects they need help the most, within the bounds of health and safety protocols in effect in the municipality. To add to the monthly learning support provision, the Fellows are participating in a series of game-based Virtual Visit Sessions to a science facility on topics relating to rice. Rice is central to the lives of everyone in this part of the world so there is interest and curiosity to the novelty of a virtual visit to RiceWorld. The April 4th topic was *Climate-resilient rice*. Most of the students are from farming families so they were interested, excited and surprised that there's more to be learned about rice. A second virtual session is set for June.

RIDING OUT THE PANDEMIC

June 2021



Amid the many challenges before us in COVID-19 times, it is heartening to know that resilience, in all its forms, has prevailed among the children in our care, with FPVI working collaboratively with their parents and guardians.

We at FPVI are very gratified to be able to serve as the children's support at this time, and we shall continue to be their safety net in times to come.

UNCERTAINTY, THE ONLY CERTAINTY IN COVID-19 TIMES

September 2020

The start of the school year has been moved again to October 5 because the COVID-19 cases continue to rise. Under this circumstance, FPVI continues its own version of Distance Learning for the children in its care with the monthly assignments consisting of book reviews, grammar exercises, math and science lessons, with side projects in journal-keeping and art. This exercise is proving to be helpful not just for the children's productivity and continued engagement similar learning format of Education is planning 2020-2021, particularly like our FPVI students.



Downloading class materials in the rice fields



but also as a dry-run for a that the Philippine Department to adopt for the school year for those living in remote areas

The three college students who were under the FPVI program in their senior high school have their classes online. In the absence of internet access where they live, they go out to the open fields where they get a signal using their precious and limited mobile data sometimes on borrowed phones. When quarantine regulations are eased and they are allowed to enter the town proper, they do their online lessons, quizzes and assessments at FPVI Center where the internet connection is more reliable. On the side, they also support the younger Fellows with lessons in Math and Science.

COPING WITH THE PANDEMIC THROUGH ART

July 2020



Collage using different types of found materials

REMAINING UPBEAT IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

June 2020

The reopening of schools is still uncertain, leaving the children's schooling in a state of flux. Mindful of the importance of maintaining a strong relationship with the children and checking the negative impact of unengaged and unproductive minds, FPVI continues to conduct its own version of Remote Learning. Regularly replenished with phone credits by FPVI, the families' dated flip phones remain immensely helpful in keeping communication lines open with the children. All have been diligent in keeping their journals updated and their drawing books filled, completing Reading, Writing and Literacy assignments. Despite the profound disruption and unrelenting threat caused by the pandemic, it is heartening to note that the children have remained good-humored and upbeat, as captured in their writings and drawings. The next round of assignments will include lessons in Science and Math with worksheets developed by former FPVI Fellows who have just completed their first year in college.



Conquering my fear of heights

This pandemic time has a positive side if we look more closely. For me, it has made me discover many things about me that I never knew I could do. I have made a rose out of pieces of straw, a beautiful flower pot using bamboo, and I could climb a tall coconut tree despite my fear of heights to get coconut for a dish that my sister was going to prepare. Most surprising of all is discovering that I am now strong enough to lift a sack of rice! --- entry in Angelo's journal, June 21, 2020

FPVI REMOTE LEARNING (AND CARE) IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

April 2020

What used to be regular pre-pandemic Sunday sessions at FPVI energized the children for the coming school week. Since March 2020, unable to meet as a



group, FPVI sends remote learning materials to parents and guardians on a monthly basis, along with a care pack. Lessons and assignments are monitored via text messages and phone calls, in the absence of appropriate devices and reliable internet service.

OPEN MIC, OPEN MINDS

February 2020



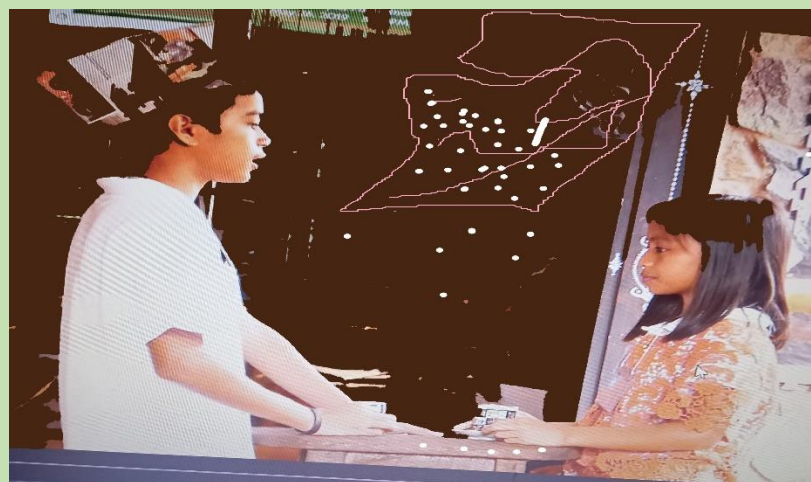
In 2019, Open Mic was introduced into the FPVI Program with the view to developing the students' confidence in their individual capabilities to speak in front of their peers. After three rounds of these individual sessions, usually followed by Q&A, students were ready for a more challenging version of Open Mic. In January 2020, the Team Open Mic was introduced where each team is tasked to choose a famous personality (local or international) whose life and work they have to present in any format of their choice - an open invitation to further their creative potential. The point is to spur them to learn to do research, understand the materials they gather, and work as a team. It was clear that the teams understood the objectives of the exercise: working creatively on material/topic and mode of presentation of their choice and working cooperatively together.

FOSTERING APPRECIATION OF OTHER CULTURES AND THE ENVIRONMENT THROUGH A MINI-ASEAN MINISTERIAL MEETING

May, 2019



During the Summer of 2019, FPVI introduced Theater Arts as a means of helping the children develop self-confidence and encourage them to find and use their voices, literally and metaphorically. The highlight of the End-of-Summer Program celebration was a role play of the “*Mini-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Environment*” where all 8 FPVI Fellows, each representing an ASEAN member-country, got to speak on his/her country’s stance on the environment



And during the coffee break, officials from two ASEAN countries discuss the role of common citizens to stop the further deterioration of the environment.

IN THE STUDENTS' OWN WORDS

EXIT PIECES WRITTEN BY STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED FROM SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN 2025

LYKA ARIZA, June 2025

Six years ago, I joined the Fundacion Ponferrada Van Stone Inc. (FPVI) upon the recommendation of our elementary school Principal. FPVI came like a light that I found through the darkness. Coming from a big family, it was such a great help and opportunity, and I treated my admission as a blessing not just for me but also for my family. My initial expectation was that FPVI would support my educational needs and focus solely on academic matters. However, throughout the six years, what I gained far exceeded my expectations.

FPVI helped and taught us many things outside of our academic pursuits. For one, they introduced us to art-making which made me really happy since I was most interested in painting and drawing. In addition, we engaged ourselves in varied activities such as journal-keeping, theatre arts, individual and team open mic, which helped us express ourselves better and with more ease and confidence. Journal-keeping helped to enhance our writing skills, making us also mindful of the correct use of grammar.

The learning also extended to social graces including basic dining etiquette. We were also shown the proper way of setting the table. I was amazed at how there were different types of eating utensils and how they were arranged on the table; the placement of glasses and the provision of table napkins.

And it was thrilling for us to experience more new things: they introduced us to food we've never eaten and to places we've never been to. We traveled to the Samar side of the famous San Juanico bridge; the historic MacArthur Park; and to eating places in the city where we could enjoy delicious food and experience dining in proper restaurants. We also visited the exhibits at Espazio History+Art, where we got to see a wide collection of items with historic significance to Leyte. After the summer reading program where we, FPVI students, served as reading mentors to Grades 5 and 6 students in Banawang in 2024 and in Balire in 2025, we were treated to nearby resorts where we could relax, have fun in the pool and rejuvenate physically and mentally before preparing for the opening of the new school year.

FPVI also actively supported us financially when we took the college entrance exams at various universities. We even got to attend the summer tutorials at the University of the Philippines Tacloban where I met and forged new friendships with students from other places. We were also taken to a memorable visit to the Visayas State University in Baybay, where we could tour the campus, and since we stayed overnight in a facility overlooking the sea inside the campus, we could also enjoy an early morning swim.

The pandemic put considerable and bewildering challenges on us but the learning continued. Not seeing classmates and not being with friends in person for a long time was very difficult; I actually thought of quitting but I am glad I didn't. During the time when going to the FPVI Center was not possible, FPVI resorted to group chats; however, more often than not, conversations would get abruptly cut off due to poor connection. When movement outside was resumed and going to the FPVI Center became possible, tutorials in Science, Math and English, as well as help with the school's distance modular assignments, were provided. We continued to do side activities such as video production and writing essays which were compiled into an ebook.

Throughout the six years of being a part of the FPVI family, I got exposed to so many learning experiences and possibilities for which I am eternally grateful. And I am also thankful for the profound friendship I have forged with the other FPVI students; remain deeply indebted to our tutors---the Ates and Kuya---for their patience and dedication in helping us especially with lessons not taught to us in school during the pandemic period but for which we were required to respond to questions remotely. A special mention with appreciation also to Ma'am Shiena, the lead volunteer who was like a mother to us. She was a great source of reassurance and comfort to us, and offered unwavering support, advice, and encouragement especially during tough times.

Through the FPVI and the incredible people behind it, I discovered my potentials and inner gifts that I did not know I had and which they encouraged and helped me to develop. Learning to step outside of my comfort zone was a bit daunting at first but ultimately empowering and maturing. At this juncture, college beckons and I feel confident that I am adequately prepared for the new set of challenges ahead.

HANNAH JANE RAPIZ, June 2025

When I graduated from grade 6, my parents became more worried about how they would fund my high school since my father's salary as a security guard was only enough for our daily expenses. It was particularly hard for them since I had a baby brother then who still needed diapers and other necessities, which translated into additional expenses for them. One day, my teacher recommended me to the Fundacion Ponferrada Van stone Inc. (FPVI) as a scholar and, luckily, I was accepted. But there was a muted reluctance on my part in actually joining because we were required to go to the FPVI Center every Sunday to take

part in various activities including tutorials. I thought it was going to be a hard adjustment for me but realizing what the financial support could mean to my parents impelled me to make a go of it.

Being part of the FPVI family has been life-changing for me. FPVI helped us develop our writing skills, guiding us to keep a journal and encouraging us to read books. There were Open Mic and Theater Arts which helped me grow and develop self-confidence. But our exposures were not limited to academic issues but also many new experiences useful in life in general. These bonus learnings enabled us to broaden our personal perspective, and experience joy and pride in whatever we do. For example, holding a paint brush was only a dream but FPVI made it a reality for me. Art-making is part of our activities which I enjoy very much. FPVI also taught us the proper way to set the table and shared with us helpful dining etiquette. They also instilled in us important basic values such as being kind, respectful and considerate of others.

Through the FPVI, I got to meet new people who have become important part of my life---the other FPVI Fellows. They have become my friends and family with whom I feel comfortable to open up and share my thoughts and feelings as they do and feel the same with me. There have been many memorable experiences we shared together: sleepovers with lots of fun activities and laughter; Easter Sunday egg hunt; Christmas celebrations where we got a lot of gifts. The FPVI experiences gave me memories that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

I will always be grateful to FPVI not only for helping me and my family financially during my high school years but also for letting me experience new things that helped me grow, flourish and ready for college. FPVI has a special place in my heart.

MARKY CASTROVERDE, June 2025

It has been six years since I first joined the FPVI yet it feels like it just happened yesterday. Back then, I had a very vague idea where it would lead me. Coming from a remote barangay, my radius was very limited; I had rarely been to the Tunga town proper and now I have to go every Sunday for the weekly FPVI session. The opportunity of being part of the FPVI was a very big deal for me. I was very happy but somewhat bewildered.

I resolved to keep an open mind, participating in every activity we were introduced to. Summer was when we were first introduced to the activities of the Fundacion. For a shy and withdrawn boy, I kept observing and adjusting to the new environment, rare activities, fun sessions like theater arts and open mic---speaking in front of everyone which I dreaded the most. Open mic developed my confidence in speaking in front of a crowd; talking about my family made my tears flow but it was good to share my story as it boosted my self-confidence and made my awkwardness slowly disappear. I remained cautious but quietly liked it. I was a totally shy and withdrawn kid when I first arrived, but those sessions helped me come out of my shell. At FPVI I also got to eat delicious and different varieties of food

carefully prepared with our health and well-being in mind. Art-making made me happy even though I was not satisfied with my work at first.

There were tricky times for me personally. In summer, FPVI held sessions on Wednesdays (art-making, theater arts) and Sundays (tutorials), and sometimes the temptation to skip the sessions and spend the time with my friends became irresistible. But I would remind myself that those sessions are very important and are helpful to me to stay on to attain my goals for the future. I remember one particular day when I tried to skip one session because I had a hangover. I informed Ma'am Shiena that I had a headache but I felt she did not believe me. Later, I was called by Ma'am Nonna for a one-on-one talk. She reminded me about FPVI's earnest desire to help me. But I have to also want in earnest to be helped and to keep to that part of my responsibility. While listening to Ma'am Nonna, my tears became uncontrollable and thought that indeed I needed the help and must not waste the opportunity. I thought about my parents and all they have done for me amidst very difficult circumstances and my wish that one day I would be able to help make their lives easier.

Big thanks to such moments of enlightenment and self-awareness, opening a door for me to fully view what growth means for me and what I need to do. With that, my desire to become a successful person one day became even more clear. I must make the most of the opportunity given to me to be better in the future, my future. Then I thought about my parents again and how they deserve a better life that they have at present. FPVI helped me to become more mature and wiser. And to realize that attitude matters equally as academic excellence.

I graduated from Grade 12 last April and have now been accepted to the Visayas State University for college. I am so grateful to FPVI for all the opportunities, support, and nurturing they have given me. My life would have remained miserable without their support. FPVI is more than just a Fundacion for me; they are my family too. I would forever cherish the growth they have afforded me.

MOVING UP FROM GRADE 11 TO GRADE 12

RHENZ BRUN, July 2025

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the FPVI for helping me and my family with my education during the school year 2024-2025. I am grateful for the opportunity to be an FPVI fellow. Becoming one has changed me a lot. My first year in FPVI enhanced many aspects of myself. I was considered an introvert, avoiding talking with my classmates unless absolutely needed or unless I knew the person well. FPVI changed my perspective in life. The many activities such as open mic, and role playing, which I liked the most, have changed my perspective in life. Slowly, I could feel my self-confidence improving. Suddenly, I found myself making friends, talking with my classmates, participating in class recitations. Being part of the FPVI family has been an amazing transformational experience for me. Though sometimes things could become a bit strict, but ultimately it is always for my own

benefit. I also learned how important self-discipline is in life. I am still learning how to discipline myself better and I am doing it to the best of my ability.

There are rules we FPVI fellows have to be aware of and follow. Mostly basic rules which sometimes I overlook, or take for granted, resulting in a reprimand. But the reprimand helps me to be more mindful and to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

ROBERT ACUIN, July 2025

My experience with FPVI during the school year 2024-2025 was transformative. My school expenses were covered and this allowed me to focus on my studies without the constant worry of financial burdens. But beyond the financial help, FPVI also provided invaluable support by way of mentorship, a supportive environment conducive to learning and growth, and fostered a strong sense of community among us, fellows. We were encouraged to participate in various activities like role-playing, art-making, and many more that broadened our creativity and knowledge. The resources and opportunities provided by FPVI were instrumental in my academic success in Grade 11. FPVI also took us to places outside of Tunga to learn the history of our island and country. This sense of belonging and shared purpose has been incredibly motivating, giving me an opportunity to form lasting friendship particularly with the older FPVI fellows who supported and guided us throughout the year.

The regular Sunday session at the FPVI Center allowed us to focus on our school assignments. This had a significant and positive impact on my grades as I was able to finish all of my school assignments on time, and sometimes even ahead of deadlines. FPVI also supported us in navigating through the school year, providing guidance and motivation to improve and achieve our goals for the year. I learned how to manage my time and to prioritize the things I needed to do and not to procrastinate. I learned to handle unexpected circumstances and to adapt to any situation.

My first year with FPVI was a pivotal period in my life. The combination of financial support, academic resources, and a strong sense of community allowed me to thrive academically and personally. FPVI's commitment to us extends beyond financial aid; it cultivates a supportive environment that empowers us to reach our full potential.

HANNA JOYCE NICAL, July 2025

My first year as a member of Fundacion Ponferrada Van Stone Inc. (FPVI) was a journey of growth, challenges, and self-discovery. There were moments when my faith in myself wavered, but I learned that these struggles are part of growing up and of becoming a better version of myself.

Before joining FPVI, it was natural for me to greet the people I encountered with a simple “Good Morning” and express my appreciation by saying “Thank You” to those who did something for me. But FPVI taught me the deeper significance of these words and gestures. I came to understand more about why we perform them and the impact they have on both me and the people I accord them to.

Also, I used to care so much for the people around me more than myself. FPVI taught me that self-care is not selfish but essential for me to thrive in this life. That taking care of other people is as important as taking care of myself. Not only should I look after my physical health, but also my mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Meeting and spending time with the other FPVI fellows expanded my horizons; it helped me understand people and myself better and embrace the differences of each one of us. It helped me build supportive friendships and a healthy comfort zone. The value of having a meaningful conversation initiated by one simple question, for instance, has spurred on a deeper meaning for me. “*How was your week?*” brings a lot of comfort and security. It makes me feel valued and significant.

Through FPVI, we’ve had the privilege of meeting individuals, local and foreign, who are successful in their fields. The interactions have left a lasting impression on me. I’ve learned valuable lessons from their stories and experiences that I will always cherish. Despite their achievements, they remain humble and genuine. They inspired me to be one.

FPVI has instilled in us the enormous importance of reading and journal-keeping, and participating in group activities such as theater arts, open mic, and FPVI’s Summer reading and rhythm program for barangay elementary pupils. These activities also redound immensely to our own personal development.

Change has been a constant part of my growth this school year, and FPVI played a significant role in shaping my perspective and my growth as a person holistically. They taught me that change can be a powerful force for personal growth, enabling me to become a better version of myself. I’m grateful for the opportunities and experiences FPVI has afforded me.

ALEXANDRA LIGUTAN, July 2025

Family is not defined by blood alone, but by hearts that are truly united. This is what I realized when I became part of the Fundación Ponferrada Van Stone Inc. (FPVI). It is a home where time is not a measure, but where guidance is given with love and understanding.

As a new member, the experience wasn’t always easy, but it wasn’t impossible either. If I were to measure all that I’ve learned, the changes in me would be obvious. Looking back at the person I used to be, I can say I’ve come a long way. In just one year, I’ve gained more

than academic knowledge—I've learned about morality and life, which are far more important. Morality reflects who a person truly is. It can't be seen at a glance, but it shows in how a person chooses never to step on others just to get ahead. Life doesn't require just academic intelligence—it demands wisdom grounded in principles and values. That realization has stayed with me since the day I officially became a member. In this family, I've learned that even in today's complicated generation, a person with strong principles still stands out the most.

At this young age, I've grown to be a more mature and braver individual. I've learned many things, and gaining self-confidence was the first major change in me. Even the people around me noticed the positive effect it had on me. I no longer feel regret over missed opportunities. Improving my self-confidence has truly been a big deal. I started trusting my own abilities, decisions, and worth. I let go of self-doubt and stopped relying on others for validation to feel good about myself. Secondly, throughout the year, I developed the ability to control my thoughts, emotions, and reactions, especially in tough situations—embracing the principle of mind over matter. Looking back, I used to be someone who let emotions get the best of me. I had what people called anger issues; I would react immediately to situations without thinking twice. But through the guidance and advice I received from the FPVI family, I learned that not every challenge requires a reaction. Sometimes, what matters most is how you choose to think, respond, and carry yourself through adversity. It's a training of the mind—to lead instead of being led by emotion. I also began to truly understand the value of acceptance—not just as a word, but as something I actively chose to live by. Acceptance means realizing that not everything in life will go the way you want, and that's okay. It means learning to let go of the things we can't control. As a student who was always on top, failure used to be something I refused to accept. But over the past year, whenever I failed, I chose to accept myself without judgment or doubt. Instead of resisting, I moved forward with peace. That shift in mindset became the foundation of my healing and growth. Self-love? I learned that too when I became part of this family. It was something I never gave myself before—something I thought didn't matter because I was so focused on achieving success. Self-pressure became my foundation to get everything I thought I needed. Needed? Because I had to. Many people believed I would earn academic titles. My family may not have directly said what they expected from me, but I could feel their silent expectations. So, I pressured myself to meet them. But ever since becoming part of FPVI, I realized how wrong I was to treat myself that way. You don't have to pressure yourself just to gain academic titles. Instead, feel the moment—enjoy the process. I learned to love myself genuinely and without force. Loving yourself means treating yourself with kindness, respect, and compassion. It means acknowledging your worth and not being too hard on yourself. I stopped worrying about what others might say, because I know no one else truly understands me better than I do. When I see classmates receiving multiple awards, I still place a hand on my chest. But no longer do I feel jealousy or envy just because I didn't receive the same. Because I've embedded in myself this truth: those awards weren't meant for me, and that's okay. I know something else—something just as meaningful is still destined for me. I don't have to run just to keep up with others. I just

need to make sure I don't stray from the right path—because every step I take leads me closer to something greater that's already prepared for me.

During my year as an FPVI fellow, financial support was part of the highlights of my journey which was indeed a great help. As a student who struggled financially, the support I received lifted a huge burden off my shoulders. It had a meaningful impact, allowing me to continue my education without relying solely on my parents.

All of these lessons and experiences have shaped me since I stepped into this new chapter and became part of the FPVI family. I couldn't be more grateful for the growth and learning I've gained. Being part of FPVI has been a truly enriching journey, and I'm thankful for every opportunity and lesson that helped mold me into who I am today. From the people I've met to the challenges I've faced, every moment has contributed to my development and understanding. I am proud to be part of this family and look forward to continuing to grow and learn alongside such passionate and dedicated individuals.

RUDELYN AVILA, July 2025

In my seventeen years of existence, there have been so many experiences and realizations that could qualify as life-changing. Every new experience brought a new lesson to me. I could say, the most transformative of all are my experiences in FPVI.

My first school year in FPVI has been life-changing and has been great help in my studies. I could clearly remember when I was in grade 9, before becoming a member of FPVI, I didn't have much allowance then so I had to choose whether to spend my money for snack or lunch. However, this school year, I didn't have to worry about that anymore. I was finally able to focus on studying without the worries that I might have no money for school the following day. Thanks to FPVI for making this school year more enjoyable to learn.

Additionally, I have learned more about everything around me and most importantly, about myself. I have practiced boosting my confidence especially in class, confidence to share my opinion and knowledge and not to brag. I couldn't say that I have completely changed and became a disciplined student and individual. Rather, FPVI helped me take small steps towards learning and helped me open up a room in myself for improvement. I have not just become motivated to keep performing well academically and keep working hard to achieve my goals, I have also learned to discipline myself, practice time- management, always show respect and courtesy, and other values that I know I'll be carrying for the rest of my life.

FPVI also affords us the opportunity to join fun activities when the school load allows a breather, activities that we can enjoy while learning as well. Good habits such as reading books, which I can now finally appreciate and look forward to picking up and enjoying every book that I come across. Slowly, I have also improved my vocabulary and comprehension because of the daily spelling and grammar activities in FPVI.

Throughout the year in FPVI, I have met so many inspiring people who motivated me to keep going no matter how hard the situation is; people with different perspectives and experiences who openly share their experiences with us. I have also been with the other FPVI fellows who are always there to give me advice and guidance and who selflessly help me academically and personally. Most importantly, I have developed friendship that I would cherish in my whole lifetime.

Note: *All the children came to FPVI in different times with different degrees of shyness, almost resistant to all manners of persuasion to express their thoughts and feelings, and share what they know or ask what they don't know. But the regular sessions, shared activities and experiences, and constant cajoling allowed for their confidence to build-up gradually. In 2022, just before the start of the new school year and the resumption of face-to-face classes, a project they all worked together with enthusiasm ---an FPVI ebook --- is a testament how far they have gone since first stepping inside the FPVI Center. Not just in expressing their aspirations and frustrations, but thoughts and feelings expressed in English and in drawings and paintings!*

“I first came to the FPVI Center in 2019 expecting that the support the Foundation would be providing us would be limited to the school expenses involved in going to high school. The arrangement may have been explained to me during the interview but I did not fully understand it then. So, I was in for a very pleasant surprise. My personal experience with FPVI has been great in terms of growth in many levels. I was not confident in speaking in front of many people and did not feel comfortable talking with others who are not close to me. But FPVI helped me overcome my fears.

They also taught us the importance of good manners and basic home-based values. Also reading and writing and speaking in English for which I am very thankful now. FPVI also exposed us to art-making and I am now enjoying painting. We eat together, me and the other FPVI Fellows; have fun conversations much like a family; and learn from each other. FPVI continues to guide us not just in our academic studies but also and especially towards becoming better persons.” ---**Hannah**

“Being part of the FPVI is the greatest thing that happened in my life. I was in 6th grade when I came for the interview in 2019. I was nervous and did not know what to expect. I remember they explained the rules to me and I was surprised that I was asked to determine the grades I needed to achieve.

Supporting our needs in school is a big help for me. But FPVI does more. They teach us things that some teachers do not teach us in school. They help us to gain more knowledge and expose us to new experiences that I could not believe are possible for me to experience. I discovered many new things in myself that I thought I could not do and FPVI helped me identify, develop and enjoy them. The most enjoyable activity for me is art-

making, painting in particular. But I also like jewelry-making and now I get so much joy from writing. I continue to make grammatical mistakes but FPVI helps me and never judges me. If I had not become part of FPVI, I would not know the many things that I know now.” -

--**Lyka**

“I remember when I first arrived at the FPVI Center for the interview in 2019. I was nervous, happy, scared, and excited at the same time. And I kept praying that the interview would go well. It seemed it did because I ended up being selected to be part of the Program. I knew then that a new life had started for me.

I have always been shy and was not comfortable talking with the others in the group, or with any one for that matter. But slowly, FPVI started ‘deleting’ my shyness through the activities we were given like theater arts, role-playing and open mic. It was terrifying for me in the beginning but slowly I noticed I was beginning to enjoy them and could feel my self-confidence being lifted. Eating breakfast and lunch with the other Fellows, I began to learn more new things---like setting up the table and for the first time using a spoon and fork to eat. It was also thrilling for me to have a table napkin during meal times. Experiencing these new activities has been quite special that I know only FPVI could have made it happen for me.

I did not like art but I did not know any better. Having been exposed to many kinds of materials for sketching and painting and having FPVI encouraging us to try, I have now become an art lover.

We have grown not only physically but also and more importantly in our learning journey with FPVI’s guidance. Expressing ourselves better in English, both in writing and speaking, is now possible for me. My artwork also has improved which makes me happy.” ----**Marky**

“I was in third grade, 8 years old, when I first joined the Sunday sessions at FPVI in 2018. I was a shy girl, awkward and embarrassed because I felt I was not good at anything. Writing or drawing and painting, for example. But FPVI helped and encouraged me; now I have developed a liking and derive pleasure from these activities. Through the tutorial sessions, I also discovered that I like Science.

At FPVI, I have learned that fun activities could be educational, as well. At first, role playing, team open mic (where I experienced my first debate) would seem difficult but almost always we end up having a lot of fun too. FPVI also exposes us to nutritious dishes and sometimes cultural aspects of what we are eating. This is very interesting for me.

Now, I am not shy anymore. And I can draw and paint and construct good sentences. And my grammar is improving.” ---**Gaby**

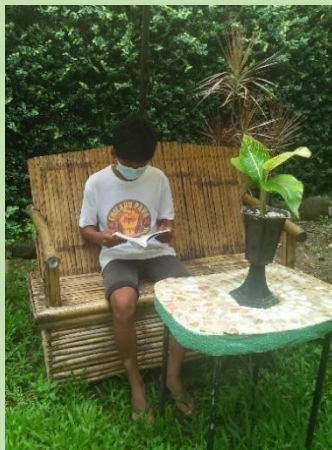
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“Becoming a Fellow of FPVI in 2018 is one of the best things that happened in my life. I used to be a shy and not-so-friendly boy but FPVI changed that. FPVI drew out good stuff from within me that I did not know existed. I could not even speak in front of a crowd and I was incapable of starting a conversation with a stranger. Through various exercises, games, projects, and even one-on-one session, FPVI boosted my self-confidence to new heights and I very much like the new me. I get to hone skills and talents I didn't know I had and learn new ones and to do them well. The time I spend with the FPVI family is full of joy, excitement, and learning experiences.

The once weak and shy boy is now a confirmed talent and a strong person making his way to a brighter future. The journey will be hard but I know that FPVI will always be there to guide and help me. The impact FPVI has made on my life is hard to measure and I will always be grateful to be a part of the FPVI family.” ---**Angelo**



MASKED, THE LEARNING CONTINUED





One of the murals done by the FPVI students in the FPVI bee garden

Engaging young minds towards holistic development

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