



# THE UCMPFI NEWSLETTER

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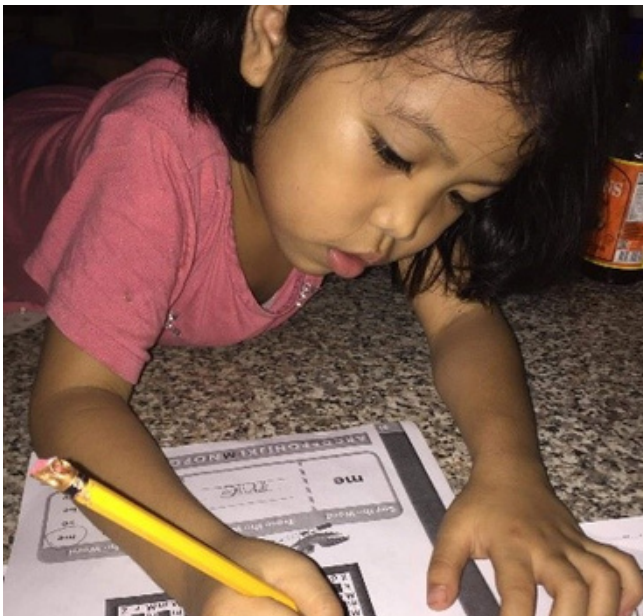
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## The work goes on

On April 19, volunteers Honeyly Bernardo and Vangie Nepomuceno helped collate the set of modules for May and June for the CENEP sites.



CENEP student Sage Alli Adalia P. Soriano conscientiously filled out her modules and wrote a sweet letter to the Foundation: *“Sa pag-aaral sa CENEP, natuto po akong bumasa, sumulat, at bumilang. Salamat po sa CENEP at sa lahat ng mga sponsor. (Through my studies at CENEP, I learned how to read, write, and count. Thank you, CENEP, and thank you to all the sponsors.)*



TRACE scholars Joje Ariego and Judy Ann Alvez spent their spare time at the Foundation office to design and set up our bulletin board.



GEESE scholars continued to attend their bi-monthly Bible studies online. They are excited to do this face-to-face soon. Angelika Sampang expresses how they feel about it: *“Our GEESE Bible study is one of my comfort zones. Here I can say and share my thoughts on how my day is going. The facilitators and other scholars are kind, approachable, and they'll never judge you. I also learned that God is always by your side and will always forgive you.”*



# Know Your Scholar: Tricia Isabel Hernaez

Trich, a TRACE scholar, is in her 3rd year of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Sciences at Rizal Technological University. She has had an extremely challenging life, as her story shows, but she perseveres, and for that we truly commend her.



*Is life really unfair? This question has been on my mind since I began to think for myself. My story started when my parents decided to choose their own happiness over us. I have one brother and one sister. My sister has her own family now and my brother is living alone. We live apart from one another.*

*When I was young my parents fought almost every day, running around with a knife to kill each other. During those times, my brother and I would just cry in our room, not knowing what would happen to us, and we just prayed for God to protect us. When I reached the last year of my elementary schooling, my parents finally decided to separate. My mother bitterly destroyed the house that she and my*

*Papa built together out of love, so we had to move to a different barangay (district) in Bayuin, Socorro, Oriental Mindoro. Even if she was depressed, my mother worked very hard to support us. She sold fried chicken in the town to which she walked every day from our barangay to save money. Unfortunately, to further meet our family's needs, she also started bringing home men.*

*Finally, my mother decided to go to Makati to work as a helper. She left my brother and me by ourselves in Mindoro. We experienced hardship that I cannot even describe. Many days, we ate spoiled rice just to fill our empty stomachs; there were days when we didn't even get to eat.*

*When classes were about to start, our neighbor asked permission from my mother to bring me to Muntinlupa to take care of her two daughters. I was just 11 years old at that time. I left my brother alone in Mindoro, without even thinking how he would survive. I started studying in a school in Muntinlupa. At first everything was going smoothly, but one day, the neighbor told my mother that I could no longer stay with them. So, my mother took me to Nueva Ecija where her uncle and auntie lived. Because school had already started and my transcript of records came too late, I stopped for a year. I got so depressed and blamed my mother. I started to work in my uncle's house as a helper. My cousin talked to me and asked if I could take care of her two children, a four-year-old boy and a month-old baby. I said yes because she said she would pay me one thousand pesos every month. I moved to Valenzuela in Bulacan and started working as a "yaya" (nanny) of my two nephews. My cousin and her husband were busy working so they left me with their children all day. I cooked their food, took care of the children, cleaned the house, and did many other things. Life was so hard back then as an 11-year-old child, so innocent with no one beside me. I didn't have any contact with my mother or brother. No one taught me how to become a good person, how to handle problems, and how to become a girl. I just learned those things because I needed to. I had to be strong for myself.*

After a year, I enrolled in Valenzuela National High School. I was the happiest child back then because I was finally going back to school. While studying, I still took care of my nephews and did the house chores but I was doing all right. Then something happened that prompted my mother to get me and bring me to Makati to live with her bosses. I transferred to San Isidro National High School. My mom's employers and their two daughters treated me like family. Everything was

going fine, but unknown to all of us, my mother had been communicating with foreigners to see if someone would give us a better life.

On February 16, 2014, my mom left. Out of sympathy, my mother's employers offered to let me stay with them and continue my studies on the condition that I would do what my mother was doing. I agreed because I had nowhere to go. Every night I cried and asked God why these things were happening to me. But I always remembered the pastor saying, "God will not give you challenges that He knows you can't handle. God gives you those challenges because He knows you're strong." So, for four years, that is what I did. Before I left for school, I cooked breakfast and cleaned the house. Every weekend I washed clothes.

When I was in grade 9, one of my teachers, Ma'am Pablo, learned of my situation. She asked me to write my life story. I had no idea that she would give it to the Department of Education to see if I would qualify for a scholarship program offered by a foundation. After a few days, I was informed that I got the scholarship—GEESE of the UCM Philippine Foundation. In my last year of junior high school, however, things became difficult. Because of school requirements, I often got home late and failed to do my tasks in the house. At a certain point, my employers asked me to leave. I was at a loss on where I would go but, thank God, one of my friends asked her parents if I could stay with them, and they agreed. Again, God provided for me.

I moved to my friend's house in San Andres Bukid, Manila, where I stayed until I finished high school. My friend's family helped me a lot. For the first time in my life, I felt free. I got to enjoy the remaining months of my high school. On my graduation, even if no one in my family was present to celebrate with me, I felt proud of myself. But it presented me with another problem because I could no longer stay in my friend's house.

I finally decided to live on my own. During those times, Tita Lolit, Miss Nadine, and Miss Emmy of the Foundation were always there for me. I did not lose hope because I knew I had them. In my senior year, I moved to Guadalupe Nuevo where my school was located. It was so tough and overwhelming because now I was paying rent and providing for myself. But, proudly, I finished my senior year with honors. The sleepless nights, the challenges, and the struggles paid off.

I enrolled at Rizal Technological University to pursue education. I am currently in my third year, I still have struggles but I know I am not alone. I have the Foundation, my friends, the people who believe in me, and my co-scholars. Looking back to the struggles I encountered, who would have thought that I would survive. The secret is that God is with me, until now, even though sometimes I forget to thank Him. There will always be struggles, but God is always with us. You will never see Him but you will feel Him. He will use other people to help you. He will never leave you.

I still can't believe I have only one year left to finish my degree. Yes, life is unfair but everything has a purpose. The struggles we face will mold us into the person that we are meant to be. If I could go back to my painful past, I would like to hug that little girl and tell her that everything is going to be okay. I will tell her that every challenge will be worth it. I know my life story is not like other people's. I know there are some children who are experiencing even more than what I experienced. But I'm still proud of myself, and I intend to share the lessons of these experiences with my future students.

Do visit our website [www.ucmphilfoundation.org](http://www.ucmphilfoundation.org) to know more about the Foundation's activities and to participate in continuing to provide a better life to these children and young people. For your inquiries, please call (63 2) 8812-6062 or 8812-5609 or email us at [info@ucmphilfoundation.org](mailto:info@ucmphilfoundation.org).