

Alaminos

The Entrepreneurs School of Asia punctuated its thrust of Social Entrepreneurship in the last quarter of 2006 with a flurry of events. In line with this thrust, students of EXL6 spearheaded projects that built awareness and created opportunities for concrete action, namely: Social Awareness Week, The Student Entrepreneur Bazaar held at Tiendesitas, and the memorable immersion with Micro-entrepreneur families in Alaminos, Pangasinan.

From October 27th until the 30th, 2006, students of EXL6 and other volunteer participants from the school set out to the beautiful town of Alaminos. Packed with only a few days' worth of clothes, a modest amount of pocket money, and the willingness to take in a new experience, the 40 or so participants could hardly wait to get to the town. The bus ride to Alaminos was all but relaxing as the participants were kept awake by a silence that only a sense of excitement laced with dread can bring. Upon the group's arrival, these feelings of apprehension were laid to rest, as were their heads—tired from the night's travel.

The following morning brought with it the mouth-watering smell of an Alaminos-style breakfast and the chatter of the foster families eagerly awaiting the arrival of their Manila-grown foster sons and daughters. The program commenced right after breakfast, starting with a few words from the project organizers as well as school president Joel Santos and class moderator Caroline Burns. Afterwards, they did not waste time and quickly assigned students to their respective foster families,

who then set off on different roads to their humble homes with their newfound children. Participants were barely given time to breathe—they were quickly sent off by their foster parents to experience what it was like to live like them. In fact, some students went straight to the town market to help sell various wares and meat products their foster families made. It was very surprising to see the students wearing blood-stained aprons and selling longganisa, de-boning bangus, and peddling



their foster families' produce. More impressive was the fact that some students were under the scorching sun with their foster fathers working on the fields, binding *palay* together and putting them through machines. Upon his arrival at the farm, one student was fortunate enough to experience helping a goat give birth to a kid. Some families, however, seemed to be content with just sitting under a tree, sharing a cold drink and stories with their foster children. At the end of the day, the participants got to experience the simple pleasures that come with the difficulty of living the life of our countrymen in Alaminos.

The trip wasn't all work and sweat, however—participants got the chance to spend half a day at the white sand beaches of the Hundred Islands National Park. Here

they got to experience the beauty of the environment that the citizens of Alaminos had successfully lived in harmony with. And as the sun went down, the students got to join in on a street party held a stone's throw away from their dorms. They eagerly shared stories and looked back at the difficulties they experienced with a new sense of respect and appreciation for the people who choose to live their daily lives in simple ways.

On the way home, the students brought with them a new perspective on life and a sense of humility in the



understanding that they were tiny cogs in the greater scheme of things; that in fact, their actions affected not only themselves but the society and environment in which they lived. They took with them a newfound respect for the people who work with their hands and relied on the earth and the sea for their bounty. With this experience they developed an understanding that we need to not merely co-exist with the environment but to live in balance and harmony with it. Finally, they learned to appreciate the things they took for granted in the course of their city lives. But ultimately, they were planted with the precious seed of desire to live not only for themselves but for others as well.