



# STORIES OF HOPE



JUVENILE JUSTICE AND WELFARE COUNCIL (JJWC)



## Dawn of Hope:

“**Manuelito**” thought his life was over at 12 years old. At such a tender age, he had already found himself in conflict with the law. Military personnel caught him in possession of illegal firearms along with other members of a militant organization.

The eldest in a brood of four, Manuelito and his siblings were born in Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte. His family moved to Sagbayan, Bohol, where his father found work at a bottling company. The town is notoriously known for intensive insurgency activities by militant groups.

A friend invited Manuelito to a “lecture” one day, and this first meeting would be followed by another, then another. The meetings revolved around hating the government for graft and corruption and its incompetence in delivering basic social services to the poor. Soon, he was lured to fully pledge his support to the group’s endeavors.

“We didn’t know that one of our colleagues had tipped the military forces about our operation that night,” he said. That night he was arrested along with two other member. Because he was a minor, he was taken to the DSWD Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) in Cebu.

Manuelito was seen as an introverted young man, far different from the other boys in the center. He was a quick-learner, though, and he never engaged in any form of hostility towards his fellow residents.

“I learned a lot of things at the center. I underwent skills training, aside from the many seminars on values education. I learned everything I needed to learn to re-enter the community,”

With constant counseling and guidance, he went through the center’s various programs administered

by an interdisciplinary team composed of a social worker, a psychologist, and in some instances, a psychiatrist. After three years of stay in the RRCY, his last houseparent offered to act as his foster parent. His re-entry into the real world made Manuelito apprehensive that people might not accept him. But Manuelito eventually overcame these difficulties and successfully re-entered society. Soon he was being regarded as a regular teenager, free of the shackles of his past.

“It’s hard not to trust Manuelito. He is such a nice person; very hardworking. I can trust him totally even when he’s all alone at home. Besides, my children are now grown-ups. We treat him like a family member now,” said Nida.

Eight years after he was caught, Manuelito is now a changed boy.

“I regret everything that happened in my past. But, looking back, I wouldn’t have reached this far if it weren’t for my past. I learned so many things about the experience. It paved the way for me to build the life that I have now.”

## From a Gang Leader to a Youth Volunteer

“Rafael” arrived at the BK-REStoRe Youth Home in 2009. He was a leader of a gang and rarely went home to his mother. He used prohibited drugs and committed acts that brought him to a youth-detention center.

At the beginning of his stay, he was a bit short-tempered and sensitive to comments at the start. Soon he became participative. Eventually, he became a brother to his fellow youth in BK-REStoRe and many of them started liking him. He became more responsive and would willingly sympathize with the distress of others.

One volunteer from an international company supported Rafael and sent him back to school.

He attended special reading and writing classes. He finished courses on Cooking and Haircutting at the Manila Manpower Development Center. After graduating, he joined a team of student-haircutters in medical missions and extended his services as a barber to the small boys in ERDA-TuKLasan Center in San Juan. He also worked for e-lee (ERDA-livelihood entrepreneurship education), a fish-ball-cart business. His hard work paid off when he got recommendations to work for a restaurant serving noodles and dumplings in Manila.

Rafael now 18 years old, lives again with his family and works at a 7-11 Convenience Store in Blumentritt, Manila, together with other ERDA youth.

## Transformation aided by love

“**Javier**” is a child forced by peers into joining gangs. He arrived at BK-REStoRe Youth Home in 2009 after committing acts against the law.

When he came to the youth home, he had observable insecurities. Nevertheless, he often smiled and showed determination to try to open himself to fresh possibilities, especially whenever he felt people believed in him and trusted him.

He participated in various advocacy sessions, such as those on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Soon he was chosen to be one of ERDA Foundation’s representatives to a Children’s Forum in 2009. Javier also discovered his talent in drawing and won competitions.

Javier also studied how to repair cell phones, while working for a factory that made pants. He also tried his luck as a burger-stall crew and will soon start working for Jac Liner.

He continues to be inspired by his friends and family. They are his reason in striving to improve himself and establish a better future.

“Before, I often had misunderstandings with my mother, so I sought comfort from friends. Now, we are more open to each other and I am closer to my siblings.”

## Engineering the Future

“**Sam’s**” childhood was filled with happy memories with his family in Cebu City.

But they had to leave Cebu. Sam, along with his parents and six siblings, migrated to Mabalacat, Pampanga. In 2001, five years after they moved to Pampanga, his nightmare began when he was accused of raping a neighbor, a teenage girl. With this situation, everything in his life crumbled. He was 14 years old.

He was subjected to endless questioning by people in authority during their mediation process. According to Sam, he felt humiliated and ashamed for what he and his family had to go through.

The mediation did not work. His parents declined to settle the amount set by the parents of the girl so the case was brought to court.

Since Sam was still a minor during the alleged commission of crime, he was brought to the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY).

At first, he had difficulty adjusting. But through the therapeutic, recreational, practical and spiritual activities at the center, Sam was able to strengthen his character. He started to establish good relationships with the center’s staff and residents. “What I am now, it’s all because of their help,” Sam revealed.

“At first, I wallowed in self-pity and thought that life has been cruel to me. I refused to join other residents in the center’s activities. But through the encouragement of the staff and my co-residents, I gradually learned to enjoy life at the center.”

An active member of the RRCY band, Sam's display of good behavior had earned him the "Most Improved Resident" of the center award.

Sam also shared that his family and the hope that one day he will be reunited with them kept him strong. "This inspired me and turned me into what I am now", he added.

Sam's preparation for the future did not stop at the center. His determination to become a better person drove him to pursue his schooling. He reached his third year of high school with honors for three consecutive years while he was at the center.

With patience and perseverance, Sam's plea to be reunited with his family was finally granted by a regional trial court in Angeles City on March 9, 2008. Because Sam was only 14 years old at the time of the alleged commission of the offense, the court dismissed the case and returned him to the care and custody of his parents.

Sam now dreams of becoming an engineer.

"After all the experiences that I've gone through, I realized that my life has not been wasted at the center. Life can be tough at times but I've learned how to make the most out of it. With the varied experiences I gained at the center, I can now face life's challenges. Now I can truly say, there's life after RRCY."



## Journey towards change

“**Estong**” was sixteen (16) years old when he was turned over to Baguio City Jail to serve his sentence after committing robbery with homicide. Despite his young age, Estong had to live with other offenders much older and experienced than he was. However, months after his entry at the City Jail, RTC Branch 4 of Baguio City decided to suspend his sentence and referred Estong to undergo rehabilitation under the Regional Rehabilitation Center for the Youth (RRCY) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

On 20 January 2011, Estong was transferred to RRCY-Region I, but was again requested for transfer to RRCY-CAR after a short while due to his difficulty in adjusting to the climate and culture. He was formally admitted to RRCY-CAR on 9 February 2011. But the beginning of Estong’s journey towards change was never easy.

On his first two years, Estong has repeatedly violated the rules and regulations of the RRCY. He had been reported of smoking, chewing tobacco/ moma, drinking alcohol and leaving the center without permission. His violations went on until the court decided to subject him to substance use disorder treatment after Estong admitted that he could not control his desire to engage into drinking every time someone offers him such.

From June to December 2013, Estong underwent the Substance-Use Disorder Out-patient Treatment from Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center (BGHMC) to control his alcoholic behavior. While attending half day treatment sessions, he was allowed by the court to stay with his brother from Tuesdays to Fridays and go back to the RRCY for the rest of the week. After six (6) months of treatment, Estong was able to show very satisfactory accomplishment. Although he did well, he had to finish six (6)

to eighteen (18) months of aftercare program.

“Noong nasa center ako, namimiss ko yung pamilya ko. Kahit yung mga kaibigan ko, pero kahit isa sa mga naturingan kong kaibigan, walang bumisita. Kaya doon ako natuto.” Estong shared.

With the development Estong has shown, he was recommended for transitional living and was allowed to be with his family while undergoing the aftercare program of the Substance Use Disorder Treatment. He was temporarily discharged to his family on 27 December 2013. “Masaya po ako na kasama ko na ulit yung pamilya ko. Magaan sa loob.” Estong shared.

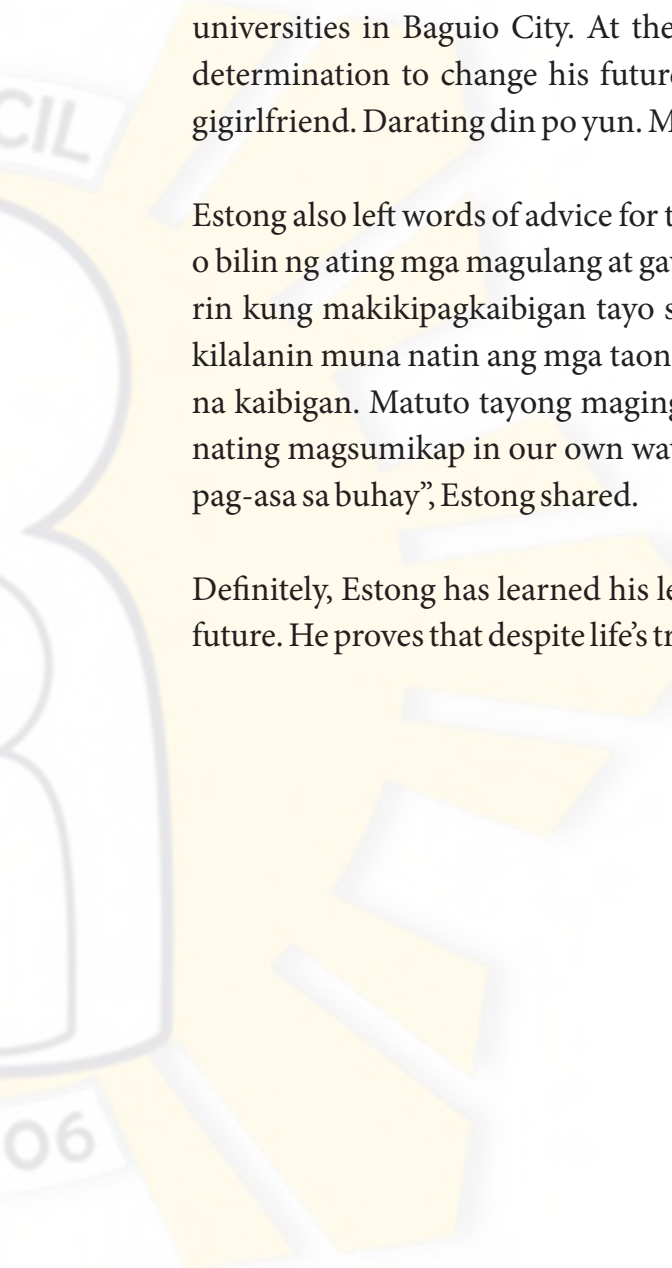
During his stay in the RRCY-CAR, Estong was able to finish a short course on automotive, thus he was also recommended and referred to have his on the job training for automotive mechanic at Jack’s Industrial Corporation in La Trinidad, Benguet from February to May 2014.

Estong continued to prove that he is a changed man. At the end of May 2014, the Substance-Use Disorder Out-patient Treatment Unit (SUDOTRU) conducted another assessment and Estong was assessed to have fully completed and satisfied his aftercare program. With this, on 31 May 2014, RRCY-CAR recommended the dismissal of his case. The court granted this on 25 June 2014.

Estong also vowed to keep his records clean not only during the two years of observation before his case record becomes completely closed, but for all the days of his life.

“Gusto ko pong maging pulis. I-aapply ko po yung mga natutunan ko sa center gaya ng pagiging pasensyoso at yung anger management. Parati ko rin pong matatandaan yung character at values na tinuro nila sa amin sa center tuwing may character building at religious activities kami” Estong added.

At the moment, Estong is taking his first year of Bachelor of Science in Criminology in one of the



universities in Baguio City. At the age of 20 and after his experiences in the center, he has shown determination to change his future. “Tatapusin ko po yung pag-pupulis. Hindi po muna ako mag-girlfriend. Darating din po yun. Mag-aaral po muna ako”, Estong added.

Estong also left words of advice for the youth. “Ang masasabi ko lang po sa kanila, sumunod tayo sa utos o bilin ng ating mga magulang at gawin natin ang responsibilidad natin bilang mga anak. Mas maganda rin kung makikipagkaibigan tayo sa mga taong lubusan na nating kilala. Maging friendly tayo, pero kilalanin muna natin ang mga taong kinakaibigan natin para hindi tayo ipahamak ng mga hindi tunay na kaibigan. Matuto tayong maging independent at wag parating umaasa sa ibang tao kasi kailangan nating magsumikap in our own ways. At higit sa lahat, maging pasensyoso tayo at wag mawawalan ng pag-asa sa buhay”, Estong shared.

Definitely, Estong has learned his lessons and is now on his way towards change and eventually better future. He proves that despite life’s trials and mistakes, everyone can still change and make a difference.

## Regaining dignity, living a new life

“Lino” was referred to the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (MSWDO) of Binangonan Rizal by the Binangonan Police for an alleged rape case in relation to R.A. 7610. On January 25, 2012, the MSWDO Binangonan, under the supervision of Mrs. Jennifer T. Dilag, referred Lino to the Batas Bantay Eskwela (BBE-DASAL KA Inc.) Youth Detention Home and Youth Rehabilitation Center for diversion and residential care.

At the BBE Youth Diversion Unit, Lino was introduced to an environment that is like home. It was a place where he is treated with love and care and a place where a child’s dignity is respected and upheld. Lino underwent different counselling and therapies to address his past misbehaviors. Part of his rehabilitation program was to complete the Spiritual Enrichment Program (SEP), a set of activities that were focused on teaching special Godly principles to children.

For his schooling, Lino attended the Alternative Learning System (ALS) at the Bagong Nayon Community Learning Center at the Barangay Hall. He successfully passed the ALS examinations conducted on November 2012 and on January 19, 2013, he received his Certificate of Completion on ALS accreditation and equivalency course during their Commencement Exercise at Sta. Cruz Elementary School, Barangay Sta. Cruz, Antipolo City. He also received a Certification on his completion of the ALS Course making him qualified to enroll and continue his tertiary education.

To further equip him with skills for his independent living, Lino attended a Vocational Course on Driving with Troubleshooting at the DAR Technical and Vocational School from June 2013 to August 2013. After completing the actual driving test and exams, Lino passed the course and received his Certificate of Proficiency on August 18, 2013. Lino was also granted by the Land Transportation Office



(LTO) a Student Permit in June 19, 2013.

In 2014, Lino was officially discharged from Residential Care at the BBE Youth Rehabilitation Center, and now lives independently. Presently, Lino is further enhancing his technical skills and knowledge by taking up Solid Arc Welding Course at the TESDA accredited MAGIST Academy in Antipolo City. Under this course, Lino is trained on the international standards in welding. This gives him the opportunity to have a lucrative business, a welding shop or the chance to go abroad where his skills and expertise is in demand. Currently he conducts home service repairs on welding jobs and steel fabrications.

## A Beacon of Hope

On October 24, 2005 a shy 17 year old boy dwarfed by two escorting Jail Guards entered the gates of the Regional Rehabilitation Center for Youth (RRCY) in Concordia, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras.

Fast forward to nine years later, that same 17 year old youth in 2005 now disembarks from an international cargo vessel. He is excited to be reunited with his parents to discuss marriage plans with his fiancée in their house he has financed the construction.

“Carlo”, was once a child in conflict with the law (CICL). He was admitted at the DSWD Field Office VI RRCY in Guimaras for rehabilitation on October 24, 2005. Charged of a Crime against Chastity-Act of Lasciviousness in relation to Republic Act 7610 as amended, Carlo was referred by the Honorable Court RTC Branch 65 through the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office San Miguel, Jordan, Guimaras to undergo rehabilitation in the center.

His rehabilitation program for one year and two months in RRCY has been significantly beneficial. During his stay in the RRCY, he was assisted with his court appearances. Carlo was also provided with therapeutic activities which enhanced his physical, emotional, spiritual, social/behavioral, educational and economic productivity. These enabled him to restore his social functioning. The nurturing care of the house parents in the center enabled him to regain his self-worth and slowly realized that a future still awaits him after reintegration.

Because of his good behavior, Carlo gained the trust of the center staff and he was given the opportunity to continue his formal education. Eventually, he completed his secondary education at Nueva Valencia National High School, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras.

Strong coordination and networking with the Court, the Public Attorney's Office (PAO), Prosecutor of RTC Branch 65, San Miguel, Jordan, Guimaras, and the RRYC personnel was also established. On December 28, 2006, the Court issued an Order for the dismissal of the case of Carlo. The RRCY further recommended the release of the minor's custody to his biological parents and together with the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office, Jordan, Guimaras to comply with the After Care Services encompassing the psycho-social, behavioral, educational, emotional and spiritual aspects during his community reintegration. Regular coordination and case conferences were facilitated together with the LGU Social Worker to ensure successful After Care Services.

Carlo's parents joined efforts in assisting their son's education through their animal raising project and the father's income. Carlo afforded his parents the respect they deserve always heeding the advice he was given. He took charge of tending their livestock when he is not at school while persistently pursuing Marine Engineering at Western Visayas College of Science and Technology, Iloilo City. His diligence paid off and successfully graduated in March 2010.

The same diligence and dedication enabled him to eventually find employment and currently work as an International Sea Farer. For the last four years he supported the needs of his parents.

During one of his return trip to his hometown, he chanced upon an old college acquaintance. On March 23, 2014 finally, Carlo found his life partner and got married to a registered nurse. His old college acquaintance and now life partner is a U.S. Citizen and working in Los Angeles, California.

His wife has already filed a petition for Ferdinand and their plan is to be together to build their own happy family.

But, as a faithful son, Carlo plans to sail one more time for his parents before joining his wife in the

United States to raise a family of his own.

In hindsight, Carlo attributes the seeds of his new life to have been planted in the center and was nourished by his parents who never lost hope on the innate goodness of men radiating in the eyes of their son.

Once more, Carlo will be returning to the confines of the center but this time as an inspiration for the other boys to emulate.





## From Street Kid to a Model Pupil

Like most children in conflict with the law (CICL), Arvic grew up in a dysfunctional family. His parents were household helpers who were forced into marriage because of an unwanted pregnancy. They were always engaged in bitter arguments and oftentimes the father resorted to violence. Arvic and his four other siblings too were beaten, verbally and psychologically abused.

His mother left them for another man when Arvic was only nine years old. After she left, Arvic's father became worse. He spent most of his time drinking and always beat his children especially Arvic as he blamed them for their misery.

Arvic ran away from home to escape the abuse by his father. He stayed on the streets and begged in order to survive. He learned to sniff 'rugby' or industrial glue to assuage his hunger. He was picked up several times by local police and detained in a youth center in Valenzuela City but always went back to the streets as soon as he was released.

One time, Arvic and his friends decided to break into a house. Arvic was arrested and detained again. This time, he was referred by the local social worker to the Preda Bukangliwayway Center.

Arvic was admitted to the Bukangliwayway Center last 17 July 2012. At first he had difficulty adjusting to his new environment in the countryside but the staff and the other boys made him feel welcome, secure and cared for. He also visited his grandmother, father and siblings and Preda social workers invited them too to the Preda home for family counseling, therapy and reconciliation.

Not long afterwards, Arvic showed enthusiasm and participated in the different activities at Preda. Although he finished only first grade (as he dropped out of school many times when he was with his family) the staff noticed that he was very eager to learn. The following school year, Arvic was enrolled in second grade and finished in the top ten of his class. He took and passed the government acceleration test so he is at present already in fifth grade. Preda social workers are now preparing him for his reintegration with his grandmother where he can continue his studies still with support from the Preda Foundation.





***The Stories of Hope is a compilation of success stories documented by JJWC  
Member agencies and NGO partners.***

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DSWD Field Office III  
DSWD-RRCY VII  
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