

Sacramento Maharlika Lions Club Medical Mission to the Philippines 2020

by Lion Derek Ledda

The Maharlika Lions' mission that took over two years to organize came close to not happening. Just before the 16 Maharlika mission members were supposed to leave for the Philippines, Taal Volcano erupted, shutting down the Manila International Airport just 41 miles away, raising concerns that the airport might close again if the eruptions did not stop. Luckily, they did. By January 31, the relieved and dedicated team members had arrived and were excited to finally be able to provide critical medical, prescription, dental, diabetes and sight services at the two stops near Davao City on the island of Mindanao and at the two stops near Cebu City on the island of Cebu. People arrived at the first stop in Magsaysay long before the mission team was scheduled to start. They were poor and suffering and anxious to have the relief that the Lions were bringing to them in their small town which just a few weeks before had been devastated by a 6.8 magnitude earthquake that toppled trees, damaged the roadways and destroyed many of their homes. Many had walked for miles to receive the critical services that they could not otherwise get.

As Lions, we live to improve even one person's life in a way that is so profoundly meaningful, we experience the true joy of Lion service. It is what we call our "aha moment". At Magsaysay and Marilog, Maharlika's two stops near Davao, the team did medical screenings for 1400 people, dental extractions for 212 people, blood sugar testing for 230 people and thanks to the Folsom Project, distributed around 2000 pairs of glasses for men, women and children. We also fed chicken and rice porridge to over 1800 people, who would otherwise have gone hungry. At Borbon and Sogod, the two very remote stops near Cebu City, the team did medical screenings for 624 people, dental extractions for 116 people, blood sugar testing for 135 people and distributed around 272 pairs of glasses. In 15 days, the mission made possible over 4,240 unforgettable "aha moments" of service to people who were desperate for help.

The mission actually started on a somber note when team members visited a home for 25 sexually abused elementary school aged girls being cared for by nuns in the city of Pampanga on the island of Luzon. By the time they left, the sadness had been turned to joy by the laughter of the girls who loved the \$100 in special "Jollibee" meals and Sees chocolates to which they were treated and by the smiles of the nuns for whom Maharlika's help was a godsend. Maharlika delivered hope in the form of a month's supply of food which cost \$500 and another \$1200 to cover 4 months' rent for the 4 adjoining houses in which they were temporarily staying after losing the buildings they had been using as a school and as lodging. The mission ended with an equally emotional visit to the Davao School for the Blind to which club members donated \$700 after the school's very gifted blind student orchestra moved them to tears with their impressive

performance. Maharlika has already committed to continuing if not expanding its support for both life-changing if not life-saving projects.

The team's fondest memories include the fun and bonds of service Maharlika enjoyed with their local partners, the Mt. Apo Lions Club in Davao and the Diamond Lions Club in Cebu, who provided critical planning, coordination, logistical support and volunteer assistance. Although Lion Drs. Bing and Lynn President Myrna and Lion Mark deserve kudos for leading the mission, it was a total club effort to raise the over \$23,000 spent for the mission which included \$20,000 from four fundraisers and over \$3000 from individual member donations. "Where there's a need, there's a Lion" and sometimes a Lions Club.