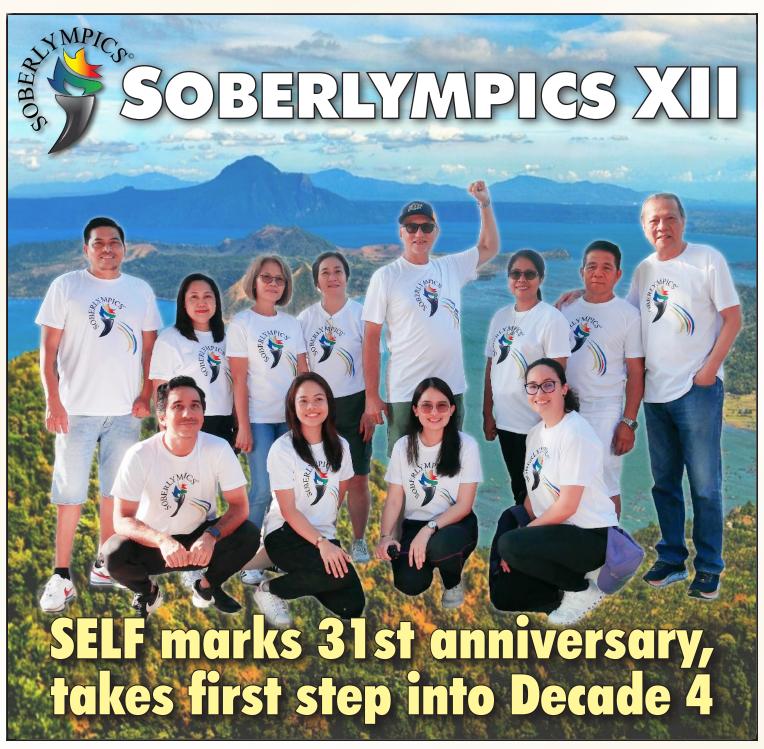
THE SELF JOURNAL

VOLUME XXXI • NO. 2 • OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SELF ENHANCEMENT FOR LIFE FOUNDATION, INC. • JULY – DECEMBER 2023



THE FUTURE IS NOW — Soberlympics XII, SELF's trademark intramural sports competition, formally opened on August 16 with the traditional colorful parade and festive ceremonies that culminated with the lighting of the Soberlympics Flame. This is the 12th staging of the intramural games that was inaugurated in 2005 to celebrate SELF's founding anniversary. Photo shows the members of the Organizing Committee who planned and supervised the three-week test of strength, skills, and sportsmanship.



Facing the world on wings of sobriety

ITH the theme **Time to Face the World on Wings of Sobriety**,

SELF held its 27th Commencement Exercise on July 22 at Sacred heart Auditorium (SHA) of the Taal View House Facility in Talisay, Batangas.

Eleven residents who completed SELF's Comprehensive Treatment, Rehabilitation, and Value Formation Program were awarded Plaques of Graduation.

In attendance were families of the graduates, residents, staff, and friends of SELF. The event was streamed live for two graduates who could not make it in person.

Fr. Russel Matuloy of St. Augustine Parish Church in Santor, Batangas celebrated a Thanksgiving Mass before the program proper.

In his homily, Fr. Russel reminded the graduates and their families that their triumphs are the fruits of the unconditional love of the Lord.

The program proper commenced with the graduation entourage marching into the SHA to the traditional entrance hymn "I Made It Through the Rain" by Barry Manilow. They were met with a standing ovation.

After everyone had settled down, the National Anthem was sung. After this came the recitation of the Serenity Prayer led by Candidate Elena Palella and the TC Philosophy by Candidate Ray Adalem.

Upper House Head Patrick Gallardo, himself a graduate of 2005, gave the Opening Remarks. He said he was happy for the graduates and proud that he had supported their recovery. "Masaya ako dahil lahat kayo inalagaan ko."

Next came the FAM Address by Letty Sarenas, the mother of graduate Robin.

An ardent champion of the SELF program, she acknowledged the roller-coaster ride all the families had embraced for the sake of their loved ones.

She encouraged the families of the younger residents to persevere despite the many challenges. "Take it from me," she said, "It's all worth it."

Then it was time to award the Graduation Plaques. Senior Program Director Lyn Simbulan read a summary of the recovery process of each graduate as they ascended the stage.

President Martin Infante and his wife Board Treasurer Joy handed out the Plaques of Graduation, assisted by Upper House Director Mai Fariñas.

The graduates then proceeded to the Wall of Honor for a family photo and to hang their framed photographs.

Graduates Sophia in Singapore and Brent in New Zealand, who joined the event via Zoom, watched as their counselors received their Graduation Plaques on their behalf.

After the awarding, Lyn presented the graduates to the audience who congratulated them with thunderous applause.

When the jubilation abated, Moses Recto delivered the Graduate Address. He recounted his years as an immature lad who rebelled against his father.

Coming on the heels of his removal from last year's graduation, the death of his father woke him up and he was moved to start being serious with his life.

He affirmed his commitment not only to his own sobriety but also to the recovery of his fellow graduates.

Next came the traditional video presentation prepared by the SELF Media Department on "The Life and Times of Batch 2023" that provided everyone with some comic relief.

Martin then delivered the President's Message. He reminded everyone that graduation is not the end of a process, nor the beginning of a new one, but a continuation of the recovery process.

He said, "You must continue to apply what has been inculcated in your heart from day one — Remaining honest and transparent; Kind and courteous; Forgiving of yourself and others; Understanding and empathic of others; Vigilant about hidden dangers;

Accepting of life challenges that may be thrown your way; and, most of all, Wise and discerning about what God wants for your life."

His stand was supported by 2007 Graduate Danilo Noche who delivered the Keynote Speech. Danilo emphasized the need to keep one foot grounded in the program while pursuing the future.

"Dapat marunong tayo kung sino sasamahan natin sa ating recovery.
Ang sikreto diyan, kahit nasa States ako, naka touch base lagi ako. Hindi ko inaalis yung isang paa ko sa Therapeutic Community."

For the Closing Remarks, FAM Chairperson Margie Stevens congratulated the graduates and their families who stood by them during their most beautiful and darkest moments. He assured them of SELF's continuing support.

The event closed with an inspiring dance offering by Lower House Residents to the song "Out of the Darkness" from the musical, "Everybody is Talking About Jamie."

The finale captured the mood of the ceremonies and left everyone hopeful that the 11 graduates would indeed spread their wings and face the world on wings of sobriety.



















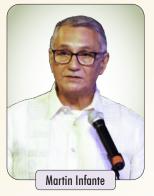
THE RITUALS — As each graduate is called on stage to receive the Plaque of Graduation, a brief summary of their process in SELF is read out by the moderator. Then they hang their photo on the Wall of Honor. In the top and bottom row are the main speakers.

Above, Graduate MJ receives his plaque from Martin as officers look on. At far left, Graduate Connie hangs her photo; the other two photos show the graduates who attended via Zoom, Sophia and Brent.











By Moses RectoGRADUATE 2023

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is a digest of the extemporaneous speech Moses gave at the Graduation Ceremonies.

HEN I began my treatment program, I was in denial. I was so full of myself. I insisted I did not do drugs and was merely a behavioral case. It took a whole year before I admitted that I was an addict.

When I started to trust the program, things got better. I learned how to embrace failure and became honest with myself.

As I leave this facility today, I don't

Graduate Speech

Not to go fast, but far

know what is to come. I plan to go back to school and know I will have to work hard to get there. Just like when I wanted to graduate and be on this stage, I will work just as hard to accomplish my dreams.

There were a lot of detours — up, down, left, right, and even U-turns. But even if I could go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing. Because all those difficulties that I faced made me who I am today.

I'm not perfect nor will I ever be. But I can try to be a good person and make the right choices. And when all else fails, I know I have God with me.

That was the one thing I lost when I was being eaten up by all the drama that I caused — spirituality. It's crazy that I'm talking about it now. I've never been one to talk about these things. But during Holy Week, when we watched Passion of the Christ, I asked myself, "Why not give it a shot?"

That night, I turned to Him. Then the next night, and the next, until it

became a thing. Soon, the spiritual aspect of my life was rekindled. It made me a fearful person.

Before, I didn't fear anything. Sure, I was afraid of my dad. Afraid of getting caught doing illegal things. But that's shallow. The fear that I have now is something that will help me survive.

My dad used to say, "Fear is the beginning of wisdom." I never really understood what he meant. But in the program, I learned you need another type of fear. The kind that helps you think twice and make the right choices. We never feared anything. We just did what we wanted.

I learned to fear after the numerous processes I experienced in the program. But what really changed me was when my father passed away. Before he passed away, I hated him. Then, he was gone.

As I was grieving, I remembered something I read: "The function of man is to live, not to exist." With my father's passing, I realized that I couldn't waste my time anymore. I gotta do something

with it.

I want to be someone that people can rely on, the guy people love, not because I'm the life of the party or the one with the drugs. I want to be the guy who's there to support you and I'm going to start with my batchmates.

I can only become someone like that if I have the support of everyone around me. And this brings to mind another saying. "If you want to go fast, go alone; If you want to go far, go together." Well, I don't want to go fast, I want to go far.

To my counselor Ate Lyn, thank you. And to all you guys out there, thank you for your support. I promise not to be a stranger and pop in once in a while

To my family, you never gave up on me since I was young. Thank you for loving me, supporting me, and taking care of me. Mom, I love you.

To everyone, it has truly been an honor to speak on behalf of my graduating batch.



Tree Planting and Farewell Dinner

Two days before Graduation, the candidates engage in community service activities within the facility as a final gesture of giving back for the manifold blessings they have received. The following day, each candidate (right photo) plants a Tree of Sobriety in the SELF Compound signifying their commitment to come back every now and then to ensure that their tree continues to grow along with their recovery. Then at night, the candidates become the honored guests at a Farewell Dinner hosted by the Upper House community. A meal is especially prepared and served to them by those who are next in line for graduation. After the meal, they are given words of encouragement by the residents and staff. A Japanese theme was chosen for this year's dinner and Upper House Supervisor Jonna (below left) who hosted the affair wore a kimono. Residents (below right) performed a dance number that incorporated the presentation of the menu of the Japanese food which was lovingly prepared by FAM member Sonoko Taguchi who runs a Japanese restaurant in Baguio City.











AUTHENTIC JAPANESE — This year, the SELF Family chose a Japanese theme for the Graduates' Farewell Dinner. FAM member Sonoko Taguchi, mother of Upper House resident Ken, volunteered to cook a special menu, which she undertook in the Upper House Kitchen with the assistance of her two sons and the kitchen staff. Above left, (L-R) Mike, Ken, and Sonoko with kitchen staff Ryan, Nene, and Jane. After a whole day of preparations, they came up with the following dishes: California Sushi Roll, Salmon & Uni Sashimi, Edamame & Beef Salad, Sukiyaki, Pork Tongkatsu, Chahan Fried Rice, and Macha Pudding. Above right, Upper House residents serve the plated food to the candidates.

2023 Yuletide Musical | December 16 & 17

WHEN YOU'RE DRAMATIC



By Claudine **UPPER HOUSE RESIDENT**

HE 2023 Yuletide Musical "When You're Dramatic" was another resounding success. Everyone who watched said it was the best musical ever produced by SELF.

SELF's resident director Inez Infante pushed the envelope this year and created a story involving the relapse of two residents.

The first character Amber tried to take her life in Aftercare but came through with a renewed spirit of love.

The second, a new resident named Logan, was pulled out from the program by his father who felt lonely and wanted to spend Christmas with his son.

Logan subsequently tried to get a job but was always rejected. This led him to relapse on drugs and alcohol, compelling his father to bring him back to the program. Logan learned that success doesn't come without hard work.

The story was narrated by four counselors who showed how SELF addressed these situations. Around 20 atmosphere actors supported the plot with intricate blocking and inspired dances in the 14 scenes of the two-act

This year, the cast and crew consisted of many new residents with natural talent in singing and dancing from the Lower House. Only a few of them were veterans from last years' musical.

The rest of the residents composed the "Structure 2" group who would run the house and prepare the meals of the cast during rehearsals. They are the unsung heroes of the production who expressed their full support for the cast after seeing a sample of the work they were doing.

They said, "Keep your focus and

attention on the musical and we will take care of the rest!"

Rehab is not a place where you would expect talent to flourish. At the start of rehearsals, everyone was just enjoying their time away from the rigors of the TC process. There was lack of discipline that necessitated stern talks by Inez and the staff.

There were lots of pull-ups and confrontations as well. And many required Encounter Groups to resolve peer conflicts. But, in the end, everyone committed to the rigorous practices and discovered potentials they never knew they had.

This was Inez's sixth musical and, other than writing and directing, she choreographed all the dances for the first time. We were all blown away at how she conceived all the moves. It was absolutely brilliant!

The lead singers and the cast were

trained by Music Director Love Dela Peña, a long-time collaborator of SELF who did a splendid job improving their voices.

On December 14, a Technical/ Dress Rehearsal was held. Graduates and neighbors joined the SELF Family in witnessing the test showing.

Notable guests include Sharif Hamid from Kasih Mulia Foundation, Indonesia and Cecille Terrible and her staff from of Balai Isabel, Talisay.

On December 16 & 17, the auditorium was filled with family members. In all, around 200 were wowed by the show.

The magic of the SELF Performing Arts Program is that it gives residents a chance to discover their inner talents and shine. We are all dramatic in our recovery, yet we have the ability to deliver a fantastic show that makes our families proud.







LEFT: Jeric and Antonio; ABOVE: Gaby and cast in "What I Know Now"; RIGHT: Claudine and Claire in "What's Wrong With Me".











Top Row (L-R): Mario, Matthew, Miguel, Carlyn, Nirro, Claire, Gaby, and Claudine. 2ND Row (L-R): Scene 2 "Money Money Money"; Scene 5 "Stop". 3RD Row (L-R): Scene 7 "Paciencia y Fe"; Scene 12 "I'm Not A Loser". BELOW: Scene 13 "Still Holding My Hand".



We continue to grow!

ELF's celebration of "31 years of rekindling hope and rebuilding lives" began with the launching of Soberlympics XII on August 16 and culminated with the Awards Night and Anniversary Program on September 9.

"Unity in Sports for Recovery" was the theme for the 12th edition of SELF's trademark sports competition that was launched in 2005 to mark its founding anniversary.

Residents and staff were divided into four teams — Blue Sober Vanguards, Green Serenity Heroes, Red Recovering Olympians and Yellow Enduring Musketeers.

Over a three-week period, they competed in eight events: badminton, basketball, chess, cheering, scrabble, skit presentation, table tennis and volleyball.

The day began with a colorful parade at 7:30 AM. The Organizing Committee and the team muses who rode on the back of the SELF pickup truck led the march of the athletes from the Upper House parking area down to the Lower House quadrangle.

There, Program Committee Head Jonna Gonzales presided over the Opening Ceremonies. She first called on Blue Team Manager Wea Reña for the Invocation. Then Red Team Manager Lester Yangco led the singing of the Philippine National Anthem and Yellow Team Manager Patrick Gallardo, the recitation of the TC Philosophy.

Next, Facility Director Aldo Infante presided over the recitation of the Oath of Sportsmanship. Tournament Director Jimmy Nalilin followed with a talk on the tournament rules.

President Martin Infante spoke last. SELF, he said, is blessed to be able to finally hold another full-scale Soberlympics after it was postponed for years by the pandemic. He ended with the much awaited proclamation: "Let the games begin!"

This was the signal for Sports
Committee Head Jason Cordova to start
the ceremonial Torch Relay. The team
captains were stationed in intervals
around the quadrangle and one passed
it to the next.

Then all four ran up to the Upper House terrace where they lit a fireball which came zipping down a line and ignited the Soberlympics Flame, a cauldron mounted on a pole at the side of the basketball court.

Everyone broke out in loud cheers.

Aldo then made the Ceremonial Ball Toss to start the first game, a basketball match between the Yellow and the Red teams.

The games ran over the next three weeks and culminated with the basketball finals and cheering competition on September 7.

That day also featured a special volleyball match between the staff and the residents. Dubbed Freddie's Cup, it was held in honor of Martin's older brother, a staunch collaborator of SELF, who passed away in 2020 during the pandemic. Freddie was a major force behind the meteoric rise of women's volleyball in the Philippines.

On September 9, the 31st

Anniversary Celebration began with a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated by Fr. Sancio Cabatay of St. Francis De Sales Seminary.

Fr. Sancio had immersed in the program in 2019 as part of his training for the priesthood. In his homily, he regaled everyone with humorous tales of his time in SELF.

A hearty merienda cena followed after which everyone, including some senior members of the Family Association, gathered in the Sacred Heart Auditorium for the presentation of skits, the last event that would determine the overall champion of Soberlympics XII.

All four teams made wonderful presentations and, while the judges were tallying the results, the Media Department showed an AVP of the highlights of the games.

The awarding of the trophies to the event winners followed. In the end the Yellow Enduring Musketeers who hewed closest to the prescribed time limit won the skit presentation trophy and the overall award.

After a 15-minute break, the anniversary program proper began with COO Sockie Averilla as host.

In his Opening Remarks, Board Vice President Peter Stevens congratulated Founder and President Martin and the SELF staff for their unrelenting efforts to maintain a program of integrity.

Martin followed with an Anniversary Message that expounded on the theme of the celebration — Marching Bravely into Decade Four. "When we turned 30 last year," he said, "I thought we had reached the summit of our journey."

Then he noted that in the first semester of 2023 SELF had marked another milestone as it added a new program to its training portfolio — the Whole Person Development Course that used the TC approach to promote better governance.

"We continue to grow!" Martin said. He ended with a fervent wish that God would grant him a longer life so that he could help more people grow and witness SELF turn 40.

Following this, Martin called Assistant Director Marichu Villegas on stage to receive her 10 Year Service Award.

Marichu had done her internship in SELF and joined the healing community straight after college.

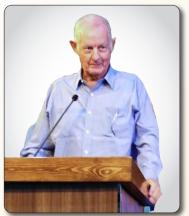
Early on she had been prone to tears. Tonight, she said she was shedding tears of gratitude for the personal and professional growth that she had gained in SELF.

An AVP recounting the SELF's rise from its humble beginnings to a world class TC and learning center came next.

Board Member Letty Sarenas gave the Closing Remarks. She expressed her happiness at witnessing the residents present their skits so gleefully.

"They were beaming with joy," she said. "And this capacity for joy is what SELF gives back to its residents."

She ended by congratulating SELF for 31 years of rekindling hope and rebuilding lives.







PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS — SELF's 31st Anniversary program was a short and sweet affair. Photos above (L-R) show Board Vice President Peter Stevens giving the Opening Remarks, Founder and President Martin Infante delivering his Anniversary Message, and Corporate Secretary Letty Sarenas making the Closing Remarks. At right, Assistant Director Marichu Villegas poses with program host COO Sockie Averilla after receiving her 10 Year Service Award.





SOBERLYMPICS XII UNITY IN SPORTS FOR RECOVERY





























Above, the Yellow Enduring Musketeers pose proudly with members of the Organizing Committee after winning the Soberlympics XII Overall Award. At left, Nurse Alan Mendez receives the Freddie's Cup award on behalf of the staff who won over the residents during the special volleyball game.

'My Brother's Keeper' staff takes TC BMC | July 3-14



COMPLETION CEREMONY — Program Manager Dominique Ladrido of My Brother's Keeper (MBK) treatment center in Cavite took the SELF TC Basic Management Course from July 3 to 14. Over the two-week training period, he immersed in the Lower House and participated in all the activities of the program. He also observed the Family Association Meeting on July 8. All told, Dom was quite impressed with the way SELF ran its programs. He looks forward to modernizing some of the "old-school" practices of the MBK program. During his send off on July 14, the residents and staff who worked closely with him bade him farewell. In the photo, Dominique holds up his Certificate of Completion as he poses with President Martin Infante and the staff and residents who participated in his training.

'Balai Banyuhay' officers take TC BMC | November 20 - December 2



THE TC BMC EXPERIENCE — Seven staff members of the Balai Banyuhay Treatment and Rehabilitation Center of Valenzuela City took the two-week TC Basic Management Course (TC BMC) from November 20 to December 2. It was their first exposure to the Therapeutic Community approach, which they plan to implement in their treatment center scheduled to be inaugurated on December 19.

During the course, the trainees experienced the induction protocols of the EMU and immersed in the Lower House where they joined the residents in all the activities of the program. On their second week, they were trained on how to staff the program.

The trainees were awarded Certificates of Completion during a Closing Ceremony held on December 1 in the IITC Training Room.

The following day, they got to observe the SELF Family Association Meeting.

In the photo are (FRONT ROW, L-R) Reymart Mendoza, Maricar Tolentino and Franci Baldomero; (BACK ROW, L-R) President Martin Infante, Rodan Abadiez, Rodizon Padilla, Glenn Tomagan, Wilbert Guevarra, and Training Director Lyn Simbulan.

3rd group of Panaon LGU staff takes WPD | November 6-10



TC TOOLS FOR BETTER GOVERNMENT — The all new Whole Person Development (WPD) program developed by SELF has become a big hit with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Panaon, Misamis Occidental. Since the first group of 25 took it in March 2023, Vice Mayor Ann Macias, who is a SELF Graduate of 2014, sent 28 more in May. She brought a third group of 30 who took the WPD from November 6 to 10. They included staff from the Department of Education, Philippine National Police, and the Rural Health Unit. Over the five-day course, the trainees learned about the TC Culture; gained an opportunity to discover their personal issues; acquired skills to address their interpersonal issues, gained insights on personal competency; and empowered to make action plans. Photo shows the

participants with their certificates of completion and the training staff. Seated are (L-R) Program Head Angeli Reyes, Clinical Head Jonnalene Gonzales, Senior Program Director Lyn Simbulan, President Martin Infante, Panaon Vice Mayor Ann Macias, COO Sockie Averilla, and Assistant Director Marichu Villegas. Standing in the second row are (L-R) Alvin Yting, Jade Compo, Joan Layna, Misty Daguman, Lorijean Peligrino, Ana Pabatang, Adrian Marapao, Rey Galario, Nestor Balaba, Russell Dumaboc, and Lyndon Lihat. In the back row are (L-R) Iven Losaria, Rowina Pagalaran, Vernie Tindahan, Conrada Yurong, Ray Salcedo, Regina Orbillo, Joel Ebarat, Ivy Revelo, Leah Xenos, Angely Bontilao, Cecille Luzano, Hearthy Apilan, Jovita Daig, Jobelyn Adorable, Jocelyn Virtudez, Joenard Cale, and Noli Cos.

BS Psychology students from BSU intern in SELF | September 4-22



STUDENT PRACTICUM — Four BS Psychology students from Batangas State University (BSU) completed 200 hours of Clinical Practicum in SELF in fulfillment of their course requirements. From September 4 to 22, the students immersed in the TC program and participated in the entire range of program activities. In the process, they were exposed to the full spectrum of clinical protocols such as Conflict Resolution Groups and Clinical Intervention Processes. They also observed the administration of basic screening tools and were asked to complete Case Studies and Assessment Reports. The interns were grateful for the warm hospitality of SELF and, most of all, the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of themselves. In the photo, Senior Program Director Lyn Simbulan supervises students (L-R) Kesia Limeta, Justine Eala, Agnes Abellera, and Monica Pineda as they learn to perform assessment and scoring techniques.





ASIAN COLLEAGUES VISIT SELF — Director Iqbal Masud of Dhaka Asania Mission (DAM) in Bangladesh visited SELF from December 8 to 10. Upon arrival, he was given a tour of the Taal View House facility and the International Institute of Therapeutic Communities (IITC) training center. Then President Martin Infante gave him an orientation to the SELF TC program and shared a few videos. In the afternoon he got exposed to clinical protocols and learned about the importance of establishing a strong TC culture. The following day Iqbal presented his organization to the residents and some videos of the DAM foundation in the IITC Training Room. Overall, he was quite impressed with the organization of the facility and was grateful for the hospitality. From December 13 to 18, Clinical Supervisor Sharif Hamid of Kasih Mulia Foundation in Indonesia also visited SELF and stayed to watch three showings of the SELF Yuletide musical When You're Dramatic. In between, he joined the residents in several groups to give talks about recovery. Photo shows the guests being welcomed by Martin. Iqbal is on the left; Sharif is on the right. They will be back in the Philippines to participate in the 2nd FTCA International Conference at the Novotel Hotel, Quezon City on February 20-22, 2024.

Marching bravely into decade four

HEN we celebrated SELF's 30th anniversary last year, it felt like we had reached the summit of our journey. Three challenging decades of dynamic and non-stop growth for an organization that was founded so humbly back in 1992. Three passionate decades of Rekindling Hope and Rebuilding Lives.

Yet the SELF Therapeutic Community will not rest on its accomplishments for its vision is yet to be attained:

"A just and equal society composed of families that nurture their members to become human beings with fully developed potentials — aware of their needs, accepting of their boundaries, duties and responsibilities, leading meaningful and God-centered lives, free of substance and non-substance dependencies, exercising their freedom of choice and interacting with one another based on universal values and principles."

We will continue to forge onward and do our part. For in these uncertain times, with our world rife with conflicts and existential challenges, we can only take comfort in doing what we do best. And that is to run our Therapeutic Community program with a compassionate heart.

It's only been a year since it turned 30, yet much has already happened. Early this year, SELF developed the

Whole Person Development (WPD) Course — a five-day journey of self-discovery toward achieving excellence in organizational dynamics and service delivery.

We have run three training sessions for some 80 personnel of the Panaon LGU (Local Government Unit) in the province of Misamis Occidental in Mindanao.

The WPD has proved to be a huge success as the participants reported experiencing a change of heart as manifested in their renewed passion to serve.

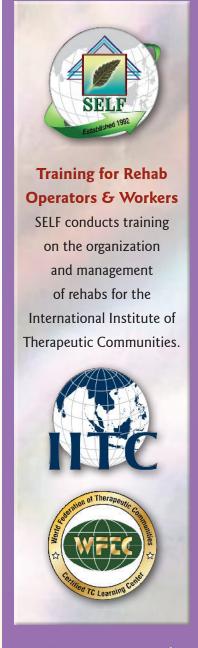
Who would have thought? TC tools for better government!

Well, as the TC Unwritten Philosophy goes, "Be careful what you ask for, you might get it."

SELF set out to become a TC Training hub in Asia by 2022. In line with our vision, we are now embracing a new mission to train public servants and help them improve their delivery of service.

SELF is proud but mostly grateful about this development. Grateful for the resilience of our staff who readily took on the additional challenge and grateful for the generosity of our residents who provided whole-hearted support.

And so it is with a renewed resolve to do our part that SELF is *Marching Bravely into Decade Four*.



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