

Columbia student goes home to build homes

Friday, 06 January 2012 06:00

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Alex Eduque leads 2,000 volunteers to build 200 homes in Manila in May 2012



Columbia University student Alexandra "Alex" Eduque (far right) with members of the Habitat for Humanity Philippines Youth Council.

By **CARISSA VILLACORRA**

For 21-year-old Alexandra "Alex" Eduque, most of her time is spent preparing for her future as a junior political science student at New York's Columbia University. Yet even as the Philippine-born Eduque focuses intensely on her studies, she remains concerned about more than just her own future. That's why, at an age when it would be reasonable to be entirely self-concerned, Alex, daughter of Jose Armando "Mandy" Eduque and Susana "Chucho" Madrigal, has given most of her spare time to Habitat for Humanity, the international non-profit organization that aims to provide housing to impoverished families all over the world.

"We can't just keep saying we want a better world," said Eduque, who founded and serves as chairperson for Habitat for Humanity Philippines Youth Council. "We can't just keep saying, 'Hey, aho, when I grow up, I don't want to see poor people in the Philippines.' I say, if I want to create a better world, then help change it."

Alex, who is changing the world, one brick at a time, was first introduced to Habitat for Humanity as an immersion experience when she was in high school. She fell in love with the week's work of service that she chose to spend the following summer months continuing to build not only homes but relationships with the community home partners. "I chose to help Habitat for Humanity among other causes, because I believe that housing really is a necessity. You can have food, you can have water, they are necessities, but to be able to go home to a steady and sturdy structure is really important, especially with the latest Typhoon Sendong.

Seeking other youth like Alex who has kind hearts, brilliant minds and undying passion to help the poor, Habitat will gather schools, youth programs and cor-

porate partners to for their Youth Build 2012 Launch on Jan. 14, at Greenbelt 5 Fashion Walk in Makati City, to unveil their latest campaign to combat homelessness in the Philippines. With the theme, "Today's Builders, Tomorrow's Leaders," The fundraising event will acknowledge corporations and individuals who have made their home already sponsored some of the 200 homes for the May 2012 Youth Build, while encouraging other patrons to support the other homes that are to be built by 2000 youth volunteers in Manila this coming May 12.

At the said event, Habitat will also announce their Alex Eduque Legacy Project which will develop 200 youth leaders like Alex to help elevate socially-conscious volunteerism to a whole new level.

ABS-CBN television stars Kiren Davila and Matteo Guidicelli will host the event, with entertainment by the Hiyang Pilipinas Children's Choir and the CCP Bobcats dance. This highly anticipated Youth Build Launch event follows Habitat Youth Council's successful Swatch Partnership Launch last month where they unveiled a special Habitat Watch by Swatch whose sales will go towards doors or windows of a Habitat home.

Habitat Youth Build 2012, which kicks off on May 12, aims to attract 2,000 Filipino youth volunteers from all over the world to help build homes in the Philippines. The first to involve the youth spans through the Asia-Pacific region, where students and young professionals in countries like China, India, Indonesia and Thailand are also mobilized to give their time, sweat and networks to advance Habitat's mission and vision. The build in the Philippines will take place in Barangay Tanza, Navotas where they hope to build 200 homes in an area that was heavily affected by Typhoon Pedring, where over 1,000

affected families have yet to be relocated.

Eduque, who has been assisting Habitat since the age of 16, understands the time and commitment required to be a part of such a project.

The Ivy-League student was in



Alexandra "Alex" Eduque (owner) with the youth in the Philippines.

Davila and Arnold Clasio, former beauty queen Margie Moran-Florencia, and PBA basketball star Chris Tiu.

When asked how she was able to recruit so many of her friends to help her help, she said, "It's actually so easy to get people to help out," said Alex, whose younger sister Michaela also joined the

in the Youth Council Leadership are Isabel Martel Francisco, daughter of Randy Francisco and Irene Martel Francisco; Kay and Kevin Yang, children of Kenneth and Cindy Yang; Eugenia Zobel de Ayala, daughter of Jaime and Lizzie Zobel de Ayala; Simon Tansoco, son of Mons Romulo Tansoco and Sander Tansoco; and Pedro T. Roxas, son of Gina and Pedro Roxas. These young kids, from age 18 to 21 now make up the Habitat Youth Council who think of fund-raising partnerships and events, and mobilize groups to join builds to help Habitat for Humanity.

For a teenager who has donated 18 homes for her 18th birthday (therefore building a village, called AlexVill which she still visits regularly), and a young lady who spent Valentine's Days not on dates but on builds with her friends, Alex has definitely built a legacy. It has been a lot of sweat and hard work, but the energy of her youth and passion still shows. She assures that the satisfaction of spreading good will to others is rewarding.

"There are a lot of times you just want to leave it all on the side already because you have other things going on with school and work. But if there's a will, there's a way. Even if it means giving up sleep and leisure time. Because as they say, in the end, it's not about what you give, it's about what you're willing to give up. Nothing worthwhile comes easy, and in the end that's what makes it more fulfilling."

Habitat for Humanity Philippines' 1K for 1Day Youth Build 2011 gathered together over 1,600 young members of society. This year, Filipino youth around the world are encouraged to join the Asia Pacific Youth Build in May 2012. To sign up, go to www.habitat.org.ph, call +632846-2177 or follow on Facebook at www.facebook.com/habitatphilippines and Twitter at www.twitter.com.habitatphils

fact, such a beacon of generosity and passion that she was able to mobilize many of her friends to join the cause. Among the friends that Alex was able to enlist were ABS-CBN soap star Matteo Guidicelli, and singer and theater actress Cris Villonco. They now join the Habitat Ambassadors such as Queen of All Media Kris Aquino, boxing legend Manny Pacquiao, TV celebrity Derek Ramsay, TV host Kim Atienza, broadcast journalists Karen

campaign. They've gone on builds and seen my passion for advocacy. A lot of people really want to help out, they just don't know how or they're looking for ways to do so. So when you approach them, it's so refreshing to see them not really go out of their way but to give what they can, their time to build, to plan, to mobilize. For them, it's not the money, it's their time. I think that the spirit of volunteerism has come out from that also."

Joining Alex volunteer and serve

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