

Laurence Ligier: The substance of a woman

By Jaocel Temblador and Angela Christy Castañares

Volunteerism is a noble endeavor that is founded on public service. It is surprising how some people can help others without expecting anything in return, more so if the person in question is of no relation or a foreigner in the land where he or she does the charity work. Like the word itself, charity, it is a work of love for someone you know little of. This, however, is never a hindrance as long as you have the drive and the gumption for your chosen life's work.

One good example of these exemplary individuals is Laurence Ligier, a French national who has been on and off the country for 15 years. She is the foundress to the Chameleon Association Incorporated, a non-government organization based in Passi City that cares for abuse girls who are in need of a secure place. Laurence works with Zanzibar Circus France to help the girls come through their ordeals, using circus training as therapy for the girls. She is also gathering funds for the association for its continuous service to the Ilonggo people.

Her selfless help and care for our people has made her an Ilongga by heart, as she has claimed herself with a warm smile. She has fallen in love with the people and the culture that she has been helping out over the years.



Laurence Ligier

The News Today (TNT): What made you decide to organize Chameleon here?

LL: I was on a missionary trip under the Associate Missionary of the Assumption when I was assigned in Aklan to help the people in the piña industry, in the weaving of fiber and after that I was assigned in Barrio Obrero for six months in the squatter area. I lived and immersed myself with the kind of living the people has in the place. And then I was able to discover that there are many things that these people needed. They asked me if I could help them, because they are helpless that time. I experienced their struggles and I saw the need. I told them that I'm going back to France to seek for more aid and support and promised to be back.

TNT: How were you able to discover Passi City?

LL: For almost six months I was looking for a place where I am going to organize the center. I traveled throughout the island of Panay and fortunately I met Mayor Jesry Palmares of Passi City. When I told him my need, he immediately offered the 3000 sq. meter land in Pass where I can put up the organization. I am glad of the agreement because it will not expire as long as the organization exists.

TNT: Why is it named Chameleon?

LL: Chameleon is a kind of reptile that changes its color depending on the environment, so like chameleon, we want to change the lives of the girls who are victims of violence and who are abused. Chameleon is a place that will provide them with humanitarian aid that they will need.



Lieger and Chameleon

They will need.

TNT: What was your first impression of the Filipino people?

LL: Well, Filipinos are very accommodating and hospitable and they can manage to smile despite their struggles. By now I can distinguish which smile is genuine or fake.

TNT: Have you fell in love with the Philippines?

LL: I guess yes, I felt in love because I saw the need to help. The Philippines is a country of extremes, like most people are faithful but their actions won't coincide with their faithfulness. The lack of discipline of the Filipinos is a big problem, and the sense of patriotism is now in critical times because of the increase of overseas foreign workers. Parents would sacrifice being away with their children just to earn dollars in foreign lands. I felt in love with the country because I want to safeguard the innocent children who are oftentimes the victims.

TNT: What keeps you on the go?

LL: The smile of the girls. Their calm and happy faces because they felt that they are secured in Chameleon. Well, I could have run away because after all, this is not my country but I chose to be here and continued this quest. There was a time that someone entered my room and attempted to take vengeance on me, but he failed. I took up lessons in taekwondo, a way of protecting myself too. That experience drove me more to strengthen my character just for the children.



The Chameleon girls



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