



# Bringing hope to sexually abused children

## SAVOIR FAIRE



By **MAYENNE CARMONA**

Last week, I received a call from my sister Marisa who was in Iloilo for a mission: to check out Chameleon, a child abuse center in Passi City, Iloilo. She had a lump in her throat and was rendered speechless at the sight of 50 sexually abused children, five to 18 years old. She

passed the phone to Ivana Tasic who helps the French founder, Laurence Ligier, run the center. I learned more about Chameleon's mission by talking to Ivana who also gave me some literature to educate me on the many kinds of child abuse, but specifically sexual abuse.

Afterwards, my sister told me, "I had to compose myself when I saw a five-year-old who was raped by her father. The children looked helpless, but I saw a glimmer of hope in their eyes! They felt secure being at Chameleon, away from their predators!"

There are many kinds of child abuse. While physical abuse is shocking because of the marks it leaves, other kinds of abuse that are not obvious, such as emotional abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse, leave deep-lasting scars. But regardless of the type of child abuse, the result is serious emotional harm. Emotional scarring has long-lasting effects throughout a child's life, damaging a child's sense of

## HEALING CHILD SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE PHILIPPINES



### SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY, 1 MARCH 2013, 6:30pm  
Manila Polo Club, Makati City

### EXCLUSIVE CHARITY GOURMET DINNER

Master French Chef **JACKY ROBERT**

**BACCHUS EPICERIE**  
Lina-waga

Hosts:  
**KC Concepcion**  
and  
**Viscountess Corinne de Longuemar**  
  
Guest of Honor:  
**Mrs. Isabelle Garachon**  
wife of the  
French Ambassador

## CHAMELEON'S 15th ANNIVERSARY

Viewing of Master Artworks by world famous Filipino artists  
Auction Sale on March 7 by Salcedo Auctions

Php 5,000/person: cocktail and four-course French Dinner  
For tickets: TINA/CHR: +63 2 817 3081 or +63 920 912 9399  
15anniversary2013@gmail.com  
www.chameleon-association.org

self, ability to have healthy relationships and ability to function at home, at work and at school.

Chameleon deals mostly with child sexual abuse, which is the most complicated form of abuse because of its layers of guilt and shame.

While stories of sexual predators are constantly in the news, what disgusts me to the core of my being is the fact that the abusers are usually someone the child knows and should be able to trust — a father, a brother, an uncle, a stepfather, a neighbor. Young boys are also sexually abused, although they are left unreported due to shame and stigma. Sexually abused children are tormented by shame and guilt and oftentimes, they are made to feel responsible for the abuse or somehow made to think that they brought it upon themselves.

Case in point: Dress designer Ito Curata was asked to judge an art contest in Marilac Homes, a center in Alabang for abused young girls. An 11-year-old pregnant girl, who was raped by a stepfather, came forward with her artwork. After listening to the child's sad interpretation of her artwork, Curata delved into her case and found out that the child's mother sided with her rapist husband and claimed that her daughter was to blame for seducing her husband! This young girl is now traumatized not only by the rape but by the scorn her mother shows her by siding with her rapist!

The shame of sexual abuse makes it very difficult for children to come forward, so if a child confides in you, don't turn a blind eye and take her seriously. Bring her to a center that will take care of her and nurture her.

Chameleon was founded by Laurence Ligier, who came to the Philippines as a missionary with the Associate Missionary of the Assumption. She was assigned in Barrio Obrero, Aklan for six months in the squatters area and lived among the squatter residents. "I was able to discover that there were many things the people needed. The people asked me if I could help them uplift themselves. I experienced their struggles and saw their need. I promised them that I would be back, but first, I had to go back to France to seek support and financial aid."

When she came back, she travelled all over Panay to look for the center she wanted to put up and she met Mayor Jessy Palmares of Passi City who offered her 3,000 sqms. of land to put up the center.

She has been doing work in the center

for 15 years, living with the kids, learning Tagalog and Ilonggo. Unfazed by serious death threats she receives, she still runs the center with Ivana Tasic. Chameleon is dependent on financial funding from abroad and among the locals.

The objective of the organization is to change the emotionally wounded sexually abused children and make them adjust and respond to the challenges in life, to change their skin of the wounded past and view life positively. Most of the girls are empowered in their outlook after their rehab program at Chameleon.

Interested donors may contact the center at Ivana Tasic-ivana.sw@gmail.com.

To celebrate 15 years of untiring involvement in changing the lives of more than 600 abused children, Laurence Ligier announced that the foundation will be hosting an anniversary gala on March 1 at the Manila Polo Club. World-famous French-born American chef Jacky Robert will fly in from Boston to create a delightful Filipino-French fusion menu especially for the occasion. The evening will be co-hosted by Chameleon's godmother, KC Concepcion, and the Viscountess Corinne de Longuemar. To raise awareness and funds for Chameleon's valuable work, internationally renowned Filipino artists have donated several artworks for the cause. The pieces will be represented during the gala dinner and form part of a grand auction entitled "Important Philippine Art" to take place at Salcedo auctions the following week.

For tickets to the gala, call 817-3081; 9209129399.

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For more information, visit [www.chameleon-association.org](http://www.chameleon-association.org).

## KidzArt holds summer camp

LOVE YOUR HEART