

**Tree of Life Program  
Arapal Christian Camp  
Cebu, Republic of the Philippines**



The Tree of Life (TOL) program is located at the Arapal Christian Camp on the northern end of the island of Cebu in the Philippines. Arapal is about 10 miles from the nearest small city. The Arapal Christian Camp has become a viable commercial venture, processing organic meat, fruits, and vegetables, and is recognized by the government of the Philippines and neighboring countries as leaders in the field. There is a commercial hotel on the property and tours and classes are offered to Asian neighbors interested in seeing and learning how to grow

and process foods organically.

Many families on the northern end of Cebu live in near-poverty, jobs are few, and children are routinely taken out of school at an early age to help support the family. The Tree of Life program is intended to keep Philippine children in school through high school. For many years, it encompassed 100 children. However, last year the decision was made to sunset the program naturally as children either graduated, moved, or left the program for other reasons. At the end of 2020, approximately 80 children remain in the program. They range in age from about 8 to 17.

Seminars are held on Saturdays to tutor the children in their basic subjects. Bible classes are taught and the children are urged to attend worship services on Sunday and to bring their parents. There have been a substantial number of



converts over the years through this effort. Seminar teachers are young Christian men and women living either at Arapal or in the local area. There are currently 4 degreed tutors. Children in the program live as far as 10 miles from Arapal. Several currently live with Dodong and Gemma Carbales at Arapal. Dodong is the minister at the Arapal Church of Christ, and Gemma is the TOL administrator. Gemma monitors the grades of all of the TOL children to ensure they are maintaining their grades. It is satisfying that a large number of TOL children are in the top of their classes. Parties are held several times a year to celebrate holidays and the birthdays of the children. Additionally, on the last Saturday of each month, rice and vegetables are given to each child to assist the family's needs.

Three years ago, it became apparent that facilities at Arapal were not appropriate. There was no church building, simply a large tarp-covered area for a church that has over 200 members. The roads into Arapal from both sides of the island were in such a poor state of repair that a speed of 10 mph was often unsustainable and the roads washed out during heavy rains. An effort was successfully undertaken to build a multi-use building at Arapal. February, 2019



was the grand opening and dedication of the building, which serves as a church building, community center, and facility for the TOL program. Pews were sent by the church in Edmonton, Canada. Most of the cost was absorbed by the Legacy church. The Arapal church had a church-building fund for 3 years which paid for 10% of the cost. Recently, an outdoor kitchen facility and deck was added after a generous contribution by his wife, Bonny, in memory of Doug Strickland. It will be

completed by March, 2021. The Philippine government has now rebuilt the road from Arapal to both sides of the island, a huge improvement to travel.

The pandemic has been handled well by the Philippine government but has resulted in great losses of jobs, closure of schools, and restrictions in travel, among other things. Children are attending schools online, and TOL seminars must now be conducted in small groups, which has altered and lengthened the work schedules. More effort has been made to feed families of the children since many of their parents have lost their jobs. The church still meets, but observes the necessities imposed by the government.

Body and Soul Ministries managed the TOL program for some years, but made an economic decision two years ago to stop sending support. It is now managed by a member of the Legacy missions committee. Support has been raised from a number of Legacy members and from Legacy Missions.

The result of Legacy involvement at this site and in this program has been significant. There are nearly a million residents within 15-20 miles of Arapal and they all recognize the presence of the Church of Christ. The church is growing and is a major influence in the local area. The facilities at Arapal are utilized by various groups in the area and Arapal's willingness to assist in local activities is known and appreciated. The church at Arapal is self-sustaining and there are dozens of visitors weekly.

