**Jabbawockeez extends help to ‘Yolanda’ victims**

<http://www.manilachannel.com/world-news/jabbawockeez-extends-help-yolanda-victims/>

Las Vegas -- America's best dance crew, the Jabbawockeez, as with other foreign celebrities, has extended its helping hand in the relief efforts for the survivors of super typhoon “Yolanda".

“It's just Jabbawockeez style to just be part of something that helps people around the world. We are recognized around the world so I feel like it's a responsibility to contribute when there's time to contribute. We are all family-oriented individuals, so to hear stuff like that go down for the Philippines," said group member, Kevin "KB" Brewer.

The Jabbawockeez even came up with a special dance move called “wockasone,” dedicated to those affected by deadliest typhoon, ‘Yolanda’.

"For us, in times like this, we just want to give as much as we can especially to the Filipino people that are suffering at the moment. We just want to do whatever we can to 'wock as one' and contribute whatever we can do. This is why we are here. We are here to show love. We are here to entertain and make people happy," member Chris "Cristyle" Gatdula said.

On the other hand, the winners of the first season of “America’s Best Dance Crew” headlined a festival relief effort titled “LV4PH,” in Las Vegas on Dec. 14. Admission was free, with monetary donations accepted at the festival gate by the National Alliance of Filipino American Association (NaFFAA) Nevada for “Yolanda” victims.

Of the benefit show, Noel Casimiro of NAFFAA confirmed that they generated a lot of profits.

**‘Resilient’ and ‘Resourceful’ Filipinos**

Brewer, who is married to a Filipina, praised Filipinos for being “resilient” and “resourceful” amid crisis.

"From what I know, Filipino people are resilient. They are resourceful. They make do what they got. They make the world recognized them and see who they are. They just don't stay to the background. They force their way to the front and they get recognized and very, very talented people from boxing to dancing to singing to everything. It's all a package,” he stressed.

Likewise, Gatdula said that they are doing their best to help on whatever way they can.

"Our message is stay strong! Everybody in the world really wants to help and give back as much as they can. Even though we are not there we are still trying to help. And we are still figuring ways to help as much as much we can," he said.

Besides, performing for a cause is not new for the group members, who are predominantly Asian and Fil-Am said that when the tsunami and earthquake struck Japan in 2010, they danced for them too.

**UN stays firm in lending help to PH**

<http://www.manilachannel.com/general-news/un-stays-firm-lending-help-ph/>

MANILA, Philippines-- United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said they stood firm in its commitment to help the Philippines as it lays out a long-term plan to rebuild typhoon-battered areas.

Ban visited the country to show solidarity with the Filipinos and was deeply moved and inspired by his visit Saturday to Tacloban City, one of the hardest-hit by the typhoon.

“I was very impressed on the strong resilience of the people. The villages are coming slowly to normalcy. People are more motivated. Many people, citizens wearing safety helmet were clearly helping, whatever they could do they would do,” he stressed.

Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosari Del Rosario said Ban’s visit to the country demonstrated the UN’s firm commitment to help Yolanda victims.

“Throughout this tragedy, the United Nations has been steadfast in its support for the Filipino people in the devastated areas, as demonstrated by the very quick response of the UN and humanitarian country teams in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon and the UN flash appeal,” Del Rosario stated.

Likewise, Sen. Panfilo Lacson said Ban’s visit in Tacloban was a testament to the UN commitment to help the country and emphasizes the concern of the United Nations and other international bodies for all the people in all devastated areas.

However, the Philippine government said it would need $8.17 billion over four years for a massive rebuilding effort as Yolanda inflicted $12.9 billion in damage and left 4.4 million people homeless.

“Therefore, the UN and country teams and all agencies will work very closely to help this long-term recovery and reconstruction plan be realized as soon as possible,” Ban said.

The UN is raising $791 million for a yearlong recovery plan while the he Philippine government has separately launched an $8.17 billion reconstruction drive over four years.

British Ambassador Asif Ahmad said that the UN chief’s visit was important to retain international and domestic focus on recovery from the typhoon before attention moves on.

**More aid needed**

Ban met with key ambassadors stationed in Manila at the end of his three-day visit and urged donor countries to provide more aid in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda, which hit the central Philippines in Nov. 8.

Ban noted that the UN had so far achieved only 30 percent of the $791 million aid to boost relief and rehabilitation efforts in areas devastated by super typhoon Yolanda.

“We must not allow this to be another forgotten crisis,” Ban announced at a joint press conference.

He expressed hope that may his visit typhoon-battered Philippines would inspire the international community to keep focused on this crisis.

However, the UN leader acknowledged some bottlenecks in relief efforts in the immediate aftermath of the typhoon owing to logistical challenges in reaching remote areas impacted by the typhoon.

Ban joined the Philippine government in thanking the armed forces of 25 nations that helped overcome logistical hurdles in delivering humanitarian assistance to typhoon-hit areas.

“There has been excellent cooperation between the United Nations and its partners and the Philippines authorities at every level. Aid deliveries have been scaled up significantly,” he said.

Two days before Christmas, however, more than 100,000 Yolanda survivors are still staying in evacuation centers and most of them may spend their holiday there.

“A majority of them (evacuees) may still be inside evacuation centers by Christmas. The construction of shelters is not yet completed,” National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) spokesman Maj. Rey Balido said.

“But the government is continuously providing them relief. The government is continuously extending assistance to them,” Balido added.

NDRRMC’s data showed that 101,527 people or 20,924 families are still housed in 381 evacuation centers, while 3,993,753 people or 869,971 families are receiving assistance outside evacuation centers.

**Yolanda victims: "Job for the Jobless"**

<http://www.manilachannel.com/general-news/yolanda-victims-job-jobless/>

ORMOC City, Philippines-- The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) together with the International Labor Organization will hold job fairs in Eastern Visayas in order to provide jobs to at least 100,000 workers who are among the 5.9 million displaced by Typhoon Yolanda.

The job fair was first conducted in Ormoc City where more than 1,700 people attended and 171 were hired on the spot. Another 970 were qualified but their applications need to be processed further, according to ILO team leader Frances Fierst.

“About 3 million affected workers were employed in the service sector when the typhoon struck on November. Over one third of them or roughly 1.9 million workers were in agriculture and around 16 per cent in the industry sector,” Fierst explained.

Over 20,000 workers who lost their livelihoods are taking part in this program, rebuilding the communities while working in decent and safe conditions.

“Initiatives such as the job fair and efforts of local businesses to rebuild local employment and to restore livelihoods complement the emergency employment programs that the ILO, together with the government, is helping to implement,” Director of the ILO Country Office for the Philippines Lawrence Jeff Johnson said.

“Ensuring decent work for one person can support an entire family and boost the local economy. This means we would have changed the lives of 100,000 people by the end of this year,” Johnson added.

Johnson stated that ILO’s approach goes beyond an immediate short-term emergency employment.

He said that the program will be a transition to medium-term labor-based community work, skills training and enterprise development.

Moreover, ILO stressed that the disaster has brought death and destruction to the Philippines, but the reconstruction phase is an opportunity to build back better and ensure that people are not left vulnerable or exploited.

“The job fair is a great way for the government to reach out and assist this specific group of affected workers,” an ILO official said.

Meanwhile, Labor Secretary Rosalinda Baldoz said the DOLE will hold job fairs in Tacloban in the first week of January 2014.

Baldoz said that in addition to local employment opportunities, POEA also provide information about the challenges of working abroad, including tips on avoiding illegal recruiters and traffickers.

**Leyte farmers avail of Sikat Saka Program**

http://da8.da.gov.ph/index.php/media-resources/da-news/675-leyte-farmers-avail-of-sikat-saka-program

The implementation of the Sikat Saka program is now rolled out or expanded to the Province of Leyte.

This is a credit assistance initiative unleashed by the Department of Agriculture (DA) in partnership with the Landbank of the Philippines (LBP), National Food Authority (NFA), Agricultural Training Institute (ATI), National Agribusiness Corporation (NABCOR), National Irrigation Administration (NIA) and Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC).

Sikat Saka aims to help boost the productivity of underprivileged rice farmers in accordance with the government’s Food Staples Sufficiency Program (FSSP).

Aside from Leyte, the program is now being piloted in 16 provinces throughout the country.

All collaborating agencies extend their respective technical support to farmer-beneficiaries to include extension and training through ATI; processing and market linkaging through NABCOR and NFA; and organizational support to potential Irrigators Associations (IA) through NIA.

With this program, farmers enjoy a lower interest rate of 15 percent per annum for the first two loan cycles. It can go as low as nine percent per annum on the eighth loan cycle if the farmer consistently pays on time the full amount of the amortization.

According to Leyte Provincial Agriculturist Rogelio O. Portula, the program is also pushing more farmers to plant hybrid-rice varieties and attain self-sufficiency in our food staple by the end of this year.

Farmers who would like to plant hybrid varieties can avail of production loan of up to P50,000, or P41,000 per hectare if they wish to plant inbred under the expanded P400-million Sikat Saka credit program.

Moreover, through this, the DA also introduces the use of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) in releasing program loans to farmers whose applications are approved under the Sikat Saka Program. As such, the farmers could consequently use their ATM cards to withdraw their approved loans.

Accordingly, prior to Eastern Visayas, Sikat Saka was successfully piloted last year in major rice-producing provinces of Nueva Ecija, Isabela, Iloilo and North Cotabato

**5,000 fisherfolk benefit Fishery Insurance from PCIC-BFAR**

http://da08.da.gov.ph/index.php/media-resources/da-news/674-5-000-fisherfolk-benefit-fishery-insurance-from-pcic-bfar

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation-8 (PCIC-8) in coordination with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources-8 (BFAR-8) has targeted 5,000 fisherfolk in Eastern Visayas as prospective benefaciaries of the PCIC-BFAR joint project called Fisheries Insurance Program.

PCIC-8 Regional Manager Dominico Digamon said that those who will qualify for coverage under this program are licensed operators of fishponds, fish cages, fish pens and fisheries farms produced in selected fish species such as milkfish, shrimps, groupers, snappers, tilapia, mud crab and seaweeds. They must also agree to place themselves under the technical supervision of an accredited Fishery Technologist.

BFAR also intends to cover non-fishery assets such as service vehicle trucks and equipment and buildings, under the Non-Crop Agricultural Assets Insurance Program of PCIC and has set aside P150 million for premium subsidy nationwide.

PCIC provides insurance protection to fisherfolk against losses due to un-harvested crop or stock in fisheries farms caused by natural calamities, extreme weather conditions and other accidents.

The insurance covers the cost of production inputs, the value of the fish farmer’s own labor and those of the members of his household. The value of labor of hired workers per Fisheries Farm Plan and Budget insurance coverage shall commence from the date of issuance of the policy.

"Under the agreement, the PCIC will cover risks on natural disasters and loss of crop due to unexpected events or accidents", Digamon explained.

The premium rate will depend on the result of the pre-coverage evaluation of the type, and other factors such as agro-climatic conditions and terrain, project management, production and loss records.

The extent of loss will be determined based on the severity of damage with the use of existing applicable loss prediction models. The state-owned crop insurance firm is expected to settle claims within a period of 60 days.