

“Nobody Should be Left behind...”

Story by Charis M. Frianeza

I am Charis Frianeza, a 2017-2018 Alternative Learning System passer in one of Arnold Janssen’s ALS Learning center. I come from the island of Polilio in the Quezon Province. This eastern province of the Philippines is directly fronting the Pacific, the reason why poverty is like a twin to anyone born in this typhoon-ravaged province.

I was a single parent of two boys before I enrolled in ALS. I got pregnant in my teens, the reason that I did not finish my studies in High School. For lack of credentials, I could not find a decent job. Hence, in order to make both ends meet, I need to earn a living. I worked as a house-help.

I had worked in several families and in various capacities. Normally, house-helps need to be a jack of all trades: house cleaning, doing the laundry, cooking, and ironing clothes etc. But, despite everything, I got maltreated several times: cursed or forced to work beyond working hours, or even brutally. I felt so degraded. I left in self-pity debased. I went home to my kids so uncertain about what lies ahead.

I started looking for other jobs the next morning around the community where we lived. But no company hires anyone without certification of competencies. I started accepting laundry just to bring food on the table. Oftentimes, working late in the night in order to save a bit. The life of a single mom is not easy.

Deep into the night, I often sobbed in frustration... almost surrendering: “Life should not be just like this.” I made a firm resolve to study technical courses. “Giving up is a luxury I cannot afford.” I wanted to be heavy equipment driver but I could not afford the fees. I settled in Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW). I need to save a bit of what I earned as a laundry woman for the fees. “My kids should not suffer the way I suffer; I need to dream bigger than myself. I need to dream for them.”

In 8 months of unwavering resolve, I finished the course and pass the assessment for a National Certification 2 (NC 2). There was nothing sweeter than that certificate. I literally crawled and clawed my way up. What was even more satisfying is the feeling of self-confidence. “I felt I can be someone. I am someone.” In one conference sponsored by the school, I met my future husband, Roland.





I finally got employed as a welder in the same company that Roland worked. I one lunchbreak, I confided to him that I want to be a welding trainer. But I need to get a Trainer's Methodology I (TM 1) course. But only High School graduates are allowed to take the course. We decided to enroll in ALS together then. After finishing the program, we took the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency test in 2017. And we both passed. But, before the ALS graduation, we decided to get married.

With High School Certificate and an NC 2, employment was not as elusive as it used to be. One day my former employer offered me to be a Student Assistant in their school. I was so excited to get the job. It was like a dream come true. From a house-help, to a laundry woman then a welder now the twist is getting brighter. I can even push my dream a little further. I took up BS in Secondary Education at the same time with the TM 1 course. I made especial arrangement with the school, that is to work as student assistant only after my classes. After office hours, I enrolled in the evening in TM1 from 6 pm to 11 pm. "No work is so difficult and tedious for a person who has a dream." After 3 months, I finished the TM1 Certificate Course. Then I received from my former ALS Teacher that Arnold Janssen is looking for a Welding Trainer. I took the offer right away. I have been with Arnold Janssen since then until this day. Teaching welding as part of the Foundation's skills training program to learners, inspiring them, motivating them to dream again is a personal commitment and mission.



Aside from being a welding instructor, I am also tasked as a welding inspector by the Philippine Welding Society and provide special training to Filipino welders throughout the country.

In the silence of the night, I could not imagine that all my hard work really paid. Arnold Janssen has truly opened windows of opportunities for me. Its vision: “Walang Maiwang Mangmang, Lahat ay Kapaki-Pakinabang” (Nobody must be left behind; all are valuable/significant [have a place in building a Christian community]) also becomes my personal mission for the ALS Learners