

**Saint Mary's School of Sagada**  
**PRINCIPAL'S BULLETIN, 2009-2010 SERIES # 8**  
**July 24, 2009**

Dear Students, Parents, Guardians, Alumni, and Friends:

I have just returned from Manila after two weeks of meetings, purchasing, and eating. Believe it or not, I was ready to go back home after one week of traffic, heat and humidity, crowds, and city garbage, all the time longing for the clean and green of Sagada, the smiling faces of its people, and the quiet serenity of its environment. I left Manila at 3:00 a.m. for Sagada, hoping to be back by early afternoon. Instead, I arrived at 7:00 p.m., after negotiating floods and traffic in the Central Plains, and being cut off by two landslides in the Alab area. I refused to stay one more night away from my comfortable bed, so I negotiated the Sabangan-Tadian-Besao route, and arrived at home three hours later, tired but happy.

I am happy to announce that SMS has been ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in the Mountain Province Division for the NAT (National Achievement Exam) administered to all 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students throughout the country last March 10, 2009. The NAT was also administered for all Grade 3 and Grade 6 students, as a means by which the Department of Education can gauge the performance of schools, and the level of mastery achieved by students in these levels. Unlike the National Career Assessment Exam (NCAE) administered to all 4<sup>th</sup> Year students last August 2008, the NAT focuses on the students' mastery of content in the five academic areas (English, Social Studies, Filipino, Math, and Science). On the other hand, the NCAE focuses on gauging students' aptitude (similar to the Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT, in the United States) in reading comprehension, verbal ability, scientific ability, mathematical ability, entrepreneurial skills etc., with the objective of suiting the graduating high school students to future careers and post-high school and college programs. Our school average in the NCAE last school year 2008-2009 was 84, compared to the Mountain Province composite average of 75. Since this is the first time during my tenure as SMS principal that private schools were included in the NAT, I have no basis of comparison regarding our scholastic achievement in the NAT in prior years. Congratulations to the students who are now in 3<sup>rd</sup> Year for the honor you have bestowed upon our school. Also many thanks and deep appreciation to all the faculty who have spent countless hours, *gratis et amore*, reviewing our students for the exam, during and after school hours, particularly during Saturdays.

**ABS-CBN Updates:** A great part of my time in Manila was spent meeting with the officials and staff of the ABS-CBN Foundation regarding the proposals, logistics, agreements, and implications of the adoption of the municipality of Sagada as a recipient of the BayaniJuan program. I would like to use this opportunity to present and clarify the procedures and processes involved in this project, and inevitably correct some misconceptions. In all its BayaniJuan projects (I expounded on the philosophy and objectives of the program in the Principal's Bulletin of June 26), the ABS-CBN Foundation looks for and enters into an agreement with funding partners to finance individual major and minor projects. For example, the foundation solicited National Bookstore to donate dictionaries to all the Sagada elementary schools. In turn, National Bookstore, as a donor, receives a tax credit through the Adopt a School program) and free media coverage from ABS-CBN. This is the same process by which ABS-CBN, in partnership with DepEd, were able to secure from a computer distributor a donation of 25 new computers for Ambasing Elementary School. Likewise, individual and corporate donors had been tapped for the production and donation of the E-media DVDs given to each of the 9 full elementary schools in the Sagada district. SMS is a partner of the foundation in teacher training, as was initiated last year.

What the foundation seeks to achieve in Sagada is eco-tourism based on three premises or guidelines: 1) that any funding for infrastructure and training would result **for the benefit of the community**, as opposed to one or two individuals profiting from the project; 2) that Sagada, as it achieves its eco-tourism goals, continues to **preserve the environment** which is the main factor why the town attracts tourists; and 3) that the people of Sagada continues to **preserve their cultural dignity** and avoid the pitfalls of commercialism. (For example, we have to guard against the use of old people dressed in full ceremonial attire posing for P5.00 with tourists or the use of child guides.)

Initial consultations with selected barangay officials had been held before I left for Manila, in order to identify tourist attractions and potential sources for livelihood for members of the barangays. The officials were also tasked to hold consultation meetings (town hall meetings) to get the opinions and input from their constituencies, particularly to anticipate problems and set expectations. When I returned from Manila, a second meeting was held with a larger group of barangay officials to solidify and clarify expectations. The constituency consultations will be done this week, and a third meeting is scheduled on Monday, July 27. A proposal would then be written up and sent to ABS-CBN for fine tuning.

Initial projects that were suggested are rest area facilities for each Sagada tourist site like Sumaging and Lumiang caves, Bomod-ok, and Bokong Falls, including comfort rooms and coffee shop type facilities. Pathways, railings, markers, and landscaping would be included. A central visitor's center in the poblacion has been envisioned. Moreover, native huts in selected dap-ays in Sagada would be constructed.

The cost of infrastructure materials would be donated by ABS-CBN and its partners. The participating barangays' counterpart would be providing volunteer unskilled labor in tasks like mixing cement, hauling rocks, or gathering kogon for the native huts. Naturally, part of the budget would be to feed volunteer workers and hire specialized skilled labor. SMS would monitor the receipt and disbursement of funds, just as it has done so for the Ambasing computer lab project. Once constructed, the barangays would assume responsibility over the management and maintenance of these centers, and receive the income derived from these facilities.

**Other updates:** I brought back with me 47 dictionaries donated by National Bookstore to be given to each elementary classroom in the Sagada district (20 of a total of 67 have already been distributed prior to my departure from Manila). Nine 29-inch TV sets would also be distributed to each of the full elementary schools in Sagada, so that the educational DVDs donated by ABS-CBN can be properly viewed by the school children. 23 boxes of books and school supplies were donated to the SMS library by a friend of my sister's. I also brought back with me replenishment copies of textbooks, laboratory supplies, and new bed sheets and pillow cases for the dormitory.

### **Current Events and Announcements**

Last night, the PTA-sponsored School Dance was held in the school theater, with almost 150 parents and guardians joining 200 students. Mothers, fathers, lolos and lolas, plus siblings took turns dancing the cha-cha, the waltz, the slow drag, and the swing with their SMS children and wards. The danced finished at about 9:30 p.m.

Today has been designated as the YCAP day for students and parents. Tasks included the clearing of the orchard, and hauling aggregates in anticipation of the gym cistern construction. Simultaneous with the YCAP program are parent-teacher-student conferences for those who were unable to attend the conferences a week ago. Teachers are on hand for consultation throughout the day. They are stationed in their own teaching areas.

July 25, is considered a school day. Hence, Monday, July 27 will be a **special school holiday**, allow for a two-day break after the YCAP. The library and computer room will be open from 8-12, and 1-5 p.m., for students to finish their major projects. The internet will be shut off, so computers can be dedicated solely for encoding major papers. Research can be done through available references in the library.

Please note that 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Exams will be held on Thursday and Friday, August 6 and 7.

**Advisories: We have had a number of reported cases of dizziness, high fever, and coughs among students. Though it is the flu season, parents should not take any chances. Please bring your child to the hospital for a check-up. We have been advised that there have been several positive cases of AH1N1flu virus in Bontoc.**

**The school has also been advised on gang activity in Sagada. Please be vigilant, and do not allow your kids to go out of your houses unnecessarily. If they have to go out, please have them accompanied by adults. We also have had two cases of physical assault and harassment against SMS students in the past two weeks. A third case is currently under investigation by the Sagada police.**

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Principal