

CADPI leads coastal cleanup





NASUGBU, BATANGAS – About 100 volunteers from Central Azucarera Don Pedro, Inc. (CADPI) and Roxas Holdings, Inc. (RHI) gathered 17 sacks of trash as part of the coastal cleanup early morning last Friday at the beachfront here.

The activity was held in support of the celebration of the World Water Day Philippines 2019 with the theme: “Hawak Kamay, Tubig Kaagapay”.

Led by RHI’s Environmental Management Systems Manager (EMS) Shiela Rose Martin and supported by RHI’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Head Angeline Bondad, CADPI Human Resources (HR) Head Carlota V. Inumerable, and RHI’s Safety Manager Jettison Tee, members of Kiwanis Club of Don Pedro, volunteers from CADPI and Barangay Lumbangan, the coastal cleanup showed CADPI’s commitment to the environment.

In an interview with the Stakeholder Relations and Corporate Communications (SRCC), Ms Martin shared that the level of participation this year had risen significantly. *“Dati po, noong nagsisimula pa lang kami na gawin ang coastal cleanup in 2011, tinitingnan lang kami ng mga tao. Ngayon, alam na ng mga tao na plastic ang kailangan na pulutin. [When we were just starting to do coastal cleanups in 2011, people were just looking at us. Now, people know that they need to pick up plastic along the coastline.]”*

She added that coordination with the barangay and the municipality was key in implementing the environmental program that resulted to improved environmental awareness among volunteers.

CSR’s Ms Bondad lauded the level of environmental awareness among volunteers at CADPI. “There is that consciousness now. It is important how we approach activities of this kind, like Adopt-A-Estero, Coastal Cleanup and others. We engage people. It is a multi-sectoral partnership that involves the barangay, the municipality and regulatory, such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).”

Ms Bondad also noted that the coastal cleanup activity is crucial in enforcing public awareness. “Eventually, those who are not participating will understand [the importance of helping ensure a clean environment], especially with the news we hear of marine life – of even big ones, dying [due to trash]. The activity in itself is an educational venue for the people to understand the need to maintain cleanliness,” she said.

A week ago, D’Bone Collector Museum Founder and President Darrell Blatchey reported that 40 kilograms of plastic bags were recovered inside a dead Cuvier’s beaked whale that washed up in a coast east of Davao City. The plastic included “16 rice sacks and multiple shopping bags”.

The *BBC* noted that the United Kingdom government last year published a report, which noted that: “the level of plastic in the ocean could triple in a decade unless steps are taken to curb litter”.

Ms Martin noted that the environmental laws of the country stress the need for a sanitary landfill. “If the local government cannot provide, then an organization or a company should provide for one so the DENR will not include it when it files a case,” she said.

Gathering under a tree after the early morning cleanup, Ms Martin, Ms Bondad and Ms Inumerable appreciated the clean Nasugbu waters, which could have been more pristine if not for a rusty barge that ran aground by the beachfront since 2015.

They noted that the law must have teeth to ensure that environmental compliance is achieved.

Given this scenario, Ms Bondad shared that implementation depends entirely on how each municipality or local government unit engages people. “It is about being creative. There can be something where one can get extra medicines in exchange for collecting bottles or loyalty cards in exchange for canned goods or rice or anything that is more relevant to people and encourage them to see *na may pera sa basura* [that they can earn money by recycling waste],” noted Ms Bondad.

Ms Martin shared that at CADPI, she asks her team to collect and clean used coffee and other drinking sachets. “We shred it for use in the bricks we will later make,” she said, adding that she also plans to help students who cannot afford the cost of printing materials by encouraging them to bring empty plastic bottles to their house in exchange for free printing of their requirements in school.

Other coastal cleanup activities were also done at La Carlota City and San Carlos City in Negros Occidental last Friday and Saturday.

The environmental advocates, like Ms Martin, Ms Bondad, Ms Inumerable and Mr Tee, and the countless others at CADPI and in other plants under the Group, show that commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility is alive at RHI.