

DepED, DENR 7 tandem to strengthen environmental education

The strong collaboration of the Department of Education (DepED) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of Region VII pegged the stakeholders' support as they embarked on the 1st Environmental EDU-Congress in the Visayas on September 28, 2011 at the DepED ECOTECH Center, Sudlon, Lahug, Cebu City.

This 1st Environmental EDU-Congress showcased the overwhelming participation of both public and private elementary and secondary schools. Colleges and Universities alike have also given their laudable contributions in its drive of establishing sustainable & eco-friendly schools in line with the theme, “Sustainable & Eco-Friendly Schools for Life”.

The EDU-Congress is in response to Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9512 entitled: “AN ACT TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”.

Embodied in Section 3 of this Act is the “*Scope of Environmental Education*” which would be jointly handled by the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), in coordination with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and all other relevant agencies.

The integration of Environmental Education in the school curricula at all levels becomes the core of this Act. All schools/learning centers/educational institutions, whether public or private, offering daycare, preschool, non-formal, technical-vocational, professional level, indigenous learning and out-of-school youth courses or programs are made to comply with the provisions of this existing law.

Brief presentations on the initiatives and actions by the government agencies involved, such as DepED, DENR, CHED, TESDA, and DOST highlighted the whole day affair. All these agencies have embraced the implementation of RA 9512.

The SMART Communications, Inc., on the other hand, vowed to be a valuable partner to sustain this undertaking. Its laudable support pushed the stakeholders' drive to incessantly work hard for the attainment of the government's goal.

Regional Director Recaredo G. Borgonia informed the rest of the government agencies about the DepED Region VII earnest involvement in Environmental Education. “With our 1-Billion Tree Project, we, in the Department can assure of our 101% involvement in planting and growing trees”, Director Borgonia stated.

As of this date, all the schools in Region VII have started planting and growing trees. “With the number of personnel and children we have in the department, you can see the power of DepEd to do this endeavor”, Director Borgonia emphatically declared. “Of course, we don't limit ourselves to just plant and grow trees, but we broaden it to our engagement in animal husbandry and natural farming technology. Having this 1st Environmental EDU-Congress and internalizing its worth, I am confident that we can enhance the environmental balance of the places we live in”, he added.

DepEd ECOTECH is now a laboratory of natural farming technology. ECOTECH serves as the show window for both public and private schools in the 19 Schools Divisions. It has developed a nursery, bio-diversified farming, animal husbandry and others.

One of the initiatives of DepEd Region VII that schools should look forward to is the conduct of competitions in all schools to determine the highest number of percentage of trees planted against that of the number of pupil/student population. DepED believes in the importance of Environmental Education as a primary function of the schools.

DENR Director Fernando P. Quililan stressed some important points, that highlighted the significance of Environmental Education. Dir. Quililan cited that Central Visayas is fast becoming an ultra-violent environmental region. "The vigilance of other environmental bureaus is not enough if not supported by other agencies", he said. He recognized the systems installed by DepEd pertaining to environmental endeavor as effective and a sound one.

Awarding of checks and plaques of recognition to the Regional Winners became the limelight of the event. Winners from each category were as follows: ***Simeon Ayuda Elementary School***, Cebu Province Division (Elementary Level), ***University of San Jose Recoletos (USJR)-High School Department***, Basak Campus, Cebu City Division (Secondary Level), and ***St. Paul University***, Dumaguete City Division (Tertiary Level). CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!

Workshop by levels (Elementary, Secondary, and Tertiary) and the presentation of outputs concluded the 1st Environmental EDU-Congress in the Visayas. Division Coordinators of the National Greening Program, Agriculture teacher representatives, School Principals, Winners and other participants were duly acknowledged. **LBA**