



## Community Pantry: Reviving Bayanihan Spirit

•Lucky Allan C. Valle

A spark of bayanihan spirit was ignited after a community pantry was installed in Barangay Tapuac, Dagupan City, through the initiative of a milk tea shop owner.

The idea of putting up a community pantry in Dagupan was inspired by the "Maginhawa Community Pantry" which was first set up in a small bamboo cart in a street in Quezon City. Ana Patricia Non, the proponent of the Maginhawa Community Pantry displayed groceries, vegetables, rice, noodles, canned goods, and bottled water amounting a total of 800 pesos. Her intention is to help her neighborhood and reach out the families in need. After being featured on journals, social media and television, various organizations, both public and private were inspired to put up their local community pantries.

The Cowabunga community pantry in Tapuac had gained popularity as it helps the locals by providing their basic necessities like pack of rice, canned goods, noodles and milk.

"Although we were influenced by the Maginhawa Community Pantry, it is our Christian virtue that moved us to action", said the initiator of the Tapuac Community Pantry who chose to be anonymous.

Cowabunga believes that one act of kindness at a time can change the world. From a small table displayed with assorted groceries in front of the shop, it prospered and received multi-ple dona-

tions from anonymous donors. The Tapuac community pantry already reached hundreds of families and touched thousands of lives as it continues to help those in need. It also showcased the generosity of people, despite their economic status. Public figures, private organizations and companies, families, or even a simple market vendor

extended assistance to sustain the pantry. The organizers were very grateful for the support of everyone.

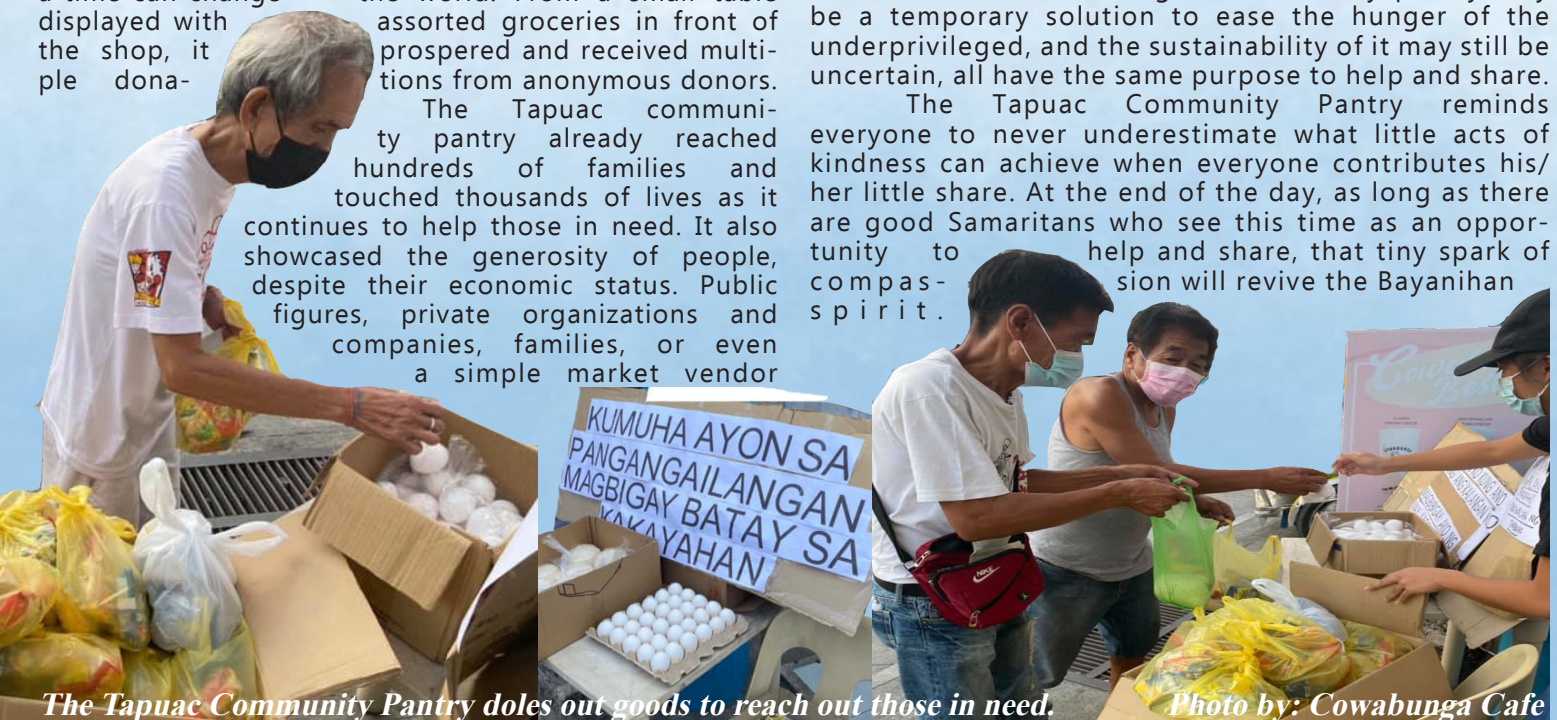
"It's entirely a community activity where we receive donations from random people", said the Cowabunga staff.

With the growing advocacy, the organizers of the community pantry had experienced difficulties in crowd control and in the distribution of food packs, however they still continued to uphold their mission of sharing and caring.

Inspiring stories were also shared in the pantry, such as a bystander who approached the person-in-charge if he can get some of the groceries. Some members of the staff watched the community pantry from the second floor of their building. They wondered why 'manong' only took a can of sardines and a piece of biscuit. One of them rushed down to offer him more yet unfortunately, 'manong' had already boarded a jeepney on his way home. According to the person-in-charge, 'manong' is a water delivery boy who lives with his son who is unemployed because of the pandemic. He intentionally took only one can of sardines and a biscuit just to obtain one meal with his son. This circumstance may remind everyone what Non said in one of her interviews, "Let us not think that those in need are greedy and abusive."

Because of the pandemic, many turned out to be unemployed and experienced scarcity of their basic commodities. Though a community pantry may be a temporary solution to ease the hunger of the underprivileged, and the sustainability of it may still be uncertain, all have the same purpose to help and share.

The Tapuac Community Pantry reminds everyone to never underestimate what little acts of kindness can achieve when everyone contributes his/her little share. At the end of the day, as long as there are good Samaritans who see this time as an opportunity to help and share, that tiny spark of compassion will revive the Bayanihan spirit.



The Tapuac Community Pantry doles out goods to reach out those in need.

Photo by: Cowabunga Cafe

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