



Your Friend Here

The pay it forward story of Dire Husi Initiative, Inc.

Dire, a visayan word for “here”, and Husi, a Manobo indigenous word for “friend”, fitting words that anchor a non-profit organization in empowering the marginalized youth sector in Cagayan De Oro City.

“I have been depressed. Wala akong makitang direction,” said Mr. Rhyan Casiño, founder of the Dire Husi Initiative, Inc., and a former alcohol and substance dependent, as he started the story.



In 2003, he was able to turn his life around when a simple act of kindness found his way. He was adopted by the Tighawanon Tribe and helped him through his recovery.

The Dire Husi Initiative, Inc. started in 2009, as a rural workers organization registered under the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), when Rhyan realized he needs to share the blessing of having a creative skill to move his self and those people that he will reach out.

Formed with only 20 members, they started reaching out to troubled youth, as well as street children and indigenous teens, through art exhibits, street performances, workshops, and production of souvenirs like shirts, key chains, landmark miniatures, pens, and other forms of handicrafts.



Seeing the potential of the organization’s souvenir project, in 2013, the DOLE granted them a livelihood assistance under the DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP), through purchase of vital tools and equipment worth ₱419,350.00.

The livelihood support helped improved the product quality rating by 50%, which allowed them to produce an average of 3,250 souvenir items and 350 customized trophies per month, from 1,500 souvenirs and 150 customized trophies before the assistance.

As a beneficiary of the program, the Dire Husi honed their crafting skills and became crafts trainers under Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Misamis Occidental.

The increase in their productivity allowed them to participate in different trade fairs and exhibits, which open a lot of opportunities for the organization.

Dire Husi partnered with the local government of Misamis Occidental through pasalubong centers, and offered their products on malls and companies.

They frequently trained Subanon Indigenous Women’s Group in beads making in Jimenez, Plaridel,



Clarín, Misamis Occidental, as well as in the cities of Ozamis and Oroquieta from 2013 to 2018.

They also partnered with Tingog sa Kasanag (TISAKA), an organization helping prostituted women in giving arts and crafts therapy among its members.

Dire Husi is not just an organization, but a family that is ready to welcome lost children. It was proven through Rusty Quintana, a street kid who found a home in the organization, and was once featured in “Maalaala Mo Kaya”.

He was adopted by the Dire Husi, and was able to graduate from Ateneo De Cagayan University.

Another one is Florante Talampas, who was sold when he was a baby. He found not just a home but a family through the organization.

He is now a missionary, and spreading the words and promise of God to others, as how it reached him through Dire Husi.

Jun Cacho, a former substance abuser, found his purpose when he stumbled upon the organization. He was able to turn his way of life and be an inspiration to others.

“I am very thankful to Dire Husi. When I met them, many helped me to change. Indeed, nothing is impossible,” Jun said.

David Yañes, one of the members, emphasized the beauty of helping one another.

He said, “It is important to help one another. DOLE helped Dire Husi, Dire Husi helped me, a Higaonon. Now, I want to help others as well.”

Because of these inspiring stories, media outlets and award giving bodies took notice of the organization.

They were featured in ABS CBN TV Patrol, TV 5, GMA 7, Manila Bulletin, and Rappler. They were also recognized through the ABS CBN MAG TV Awards in 2013, the Lambago Art Awards in 2016 and 2018, and have been the Northern Mindanao Representative for Visual Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) in 2011 to 2013 and from 2013 to 2016.

They were also highlighted in one of the documentaries entitled “Dire Husi”, directed by Mr. Nef Luczon, in the 2014 Piling Obrang Vidyo (POV), a film contest in the University of the Philippines, which won Best Documentary for POV X.



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Content: **Maria Geneva R. Bassig, DOLE-X**

Photos: **Mr. Rhyan Casiño, DOLE-X**

Design: **Maria Geneva R. Bassig**

Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns

9/F G.E. Antonino Bldg., J. Bocobo St.,

Cor. T.M. Kalaw Ave., Ermita, Manila

8527-5856, *Telefax: 8527-5858*

mail@bwsc.dole.gov.ph

www.bwsc.dole.gov.ph

http://www.facebook.com/bwsc.dole

The organization is still aspiring to reach more marginalized youth in Mindanao through their arts and crafts.

With the help of government instrumentalities like the DOLE, they will be able to pay it forward to the sector that is mostly neglected, and be able to empower them to become the best people of tomorrow.

“We realized that there are many ways to help, through arts or music, or just by simply being there,” said Rhyan Casiño.