

In the 1960s, Adventist college and university students on the island of Mindanao, South Philippines, were strong in their faith and willing to suffer penalties for non-attendance at academic activities during the Sabbath. School authorities, observing their commitment and determination, granted them Sabbath privileges or assigned to them make-up work. There was no need then for the church leadership to intervene on the students' behalf.

However, a few years later the situation changed. As larger numbers of Adventists

work, church visitations, fellowship meetings, and retreats. These programs were enthusiastically embraced by our students on several campuses. It was during this time that the General Conference established the Committee on Adventist Ministry to College and University Students (AMiCUS), with representatives in all the world divisions. The South Philippine Union immediately appointed a coordinator to represent this ministry and provide support to Adventist students attending non-Adventist colleges and universities. Coordinators for this ministry in the missions and conference, cities, towns, and districts were also chosen. New chapters were organized, and existing ones were revitalized. At present, 62 local AMiCUS-MAS chapters minister to close to 10,000 members in Mindanao.

Eventually, campus evangelism became a central activity of the MAS program. Students were taught to give Bible studies and share practical methods of health care. As a result, at Central Mindanao University, Musuan, Bukidnon, four professors with their families and some staff members were baptized. At present, about 100 students, faculty, and staff attend regular church services at that university. In the Southern Mindanao Mission territory, six simultaneous Voice of Youth crusades were conducted last summer by MAS members and professional groups. These served as practicum for those who attended youth evangelism seminars. One hundred thirty-seven were baptized as a result of these crusades.

At Mindanao State University, Central Santos City Campus, the MAS gained recognition as the most outstanding student association for exemplary behavior of members and extraordinary contributions to the school community. Engr. Hayde Bustamante, a former MAS officer and now a professor and active sponsor of MAS at that university, reported that last July during a social party more than 50 students were injured by a bomb explosion. However, not one Adventist was injured because nobody attended when they had learned that the program would include dancing and other activities they considered contrary to their convictions. "We praise the Lord for the commitment of our youth to the Adventist social standards," she concluded.

In the Davao, Northeastern Mindanao, and Western Mindanao mission territories,

Brilliant Stars in the South Philippines

by
Jonathan C.
Catolico

enrolled in colleges and universities, a few of them began attending classes or taking exams on the Sabbath. As a result, some university administrators withdrew the Sabbath privileges granted to all Adventists on their campuses. This move concerned many faithful Adventist students and led them to organize student associations through which they approached university authorities, requesting exemptions that would allow them to remain true to their religious convictions.

Thus, the Movement of Adventist Students (MAS) was born in Mindanao and became a strong unifying force. However, when martial law was imposed in the country, student organizations were disbanded. After a few years of martial rule, university authorities again allowed student organizations, and the MAS resumed its activities on several public campuses.

During the mid-eighties, MAS objectives were expanded to include campus ministries and outreach activities, social

Voice of Youth Crusades were also conducted last summer. The Bible seminar presented in Misamis University, Western Mindanao, resulted in a dozen baptisms. Additional crusades are planned for future school breaks. Part of the planned activities are temperance parades and rallies, and a health expo.

Other activities sponsored by the AMiCUS groups in the South Philippines include holding consecration and baccalaureate services and a tribute to parents by graduating students, mission-wide conventions and retreats, Bible conferences, health and temperance rallies, religious film shows, and weeks of prayer. The union and mission papers provide space for news and articles about these student activities.

MAS members who complete their studies and become professionals are invited to join the Association of Adventist Professionals (AAP) after graduation. This association was established to provide professional fellowship and support, foster outreach among their peers, and assist student organizations in their financial needs. At times, MAS and AAP co-sponsor city-wide health expositions, providing education on prevention and a healthy lifestyle. The assumption that a student who is active in evangelism will become a successful professional and a strong leader in the church has proved true. We can count on his or her involvement and leadership in spite of the worldly influences that pervade academic and professional life.

The AMiCUS program in the South Philippine Union faces several challenges, among them the need to provide adequate support to the ever-increasing number of Adventist youth who, for a variety of reasons, are not able to enjoy the benefits of an Adventist college or university education. Despite the obstacles and pressures they face, thousands of Adventist students continue to let the light of Christ shine brightly in their lives as they advance toward their professional goals at public and private universities. □

Jonathan C. Catolico (Ph.D., Central Mindanao University) serves as AMiCUS coordinator and director of the departments of education and communication for the South Philippine Union. Address: P.O. Box 208; 900 Cagayan de Oro City; Philippines.



These MAS members in Kidapawan, North Cotabato, Philippines, sang for a Voice of Youth crusade.



Other MAS members helped in the construction of a public basketball court in the town plaza of Libas, South Cotabato, Philippines.



Adventist students and faculty at Central Mindanao University pose for this photo during a break in their Sabbath worship program on campus.