



DR. JOEY Castro (center), chair of LIFE Scholarships, enjoys the time he spends with students of Rizal High School.

## *With Gas for Life, program for kids becomes more than a pipe dream*

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

MADRID MERCADO ONCE THOUGHT that she would never fulfill her dream of going to college. Her family just did not have enough money for her education.

Michael Vincent Garcia had felt the same. He had been passed around from one relative to another following his parents' separation. For Garcia, completing high school even seemed to be out of reach.

Fortunately, they won a scholarship provided by Every Nation Leadership Institute (ENLI), and now, they are on their way to completing their studies.

Manila Autogas, the country's first all-Filipino Liquefied Petroleum Gas refilling station and vehicle conversion center, wants other underprivileged students to get the same chance at a better life through its Gas for Life program.

Under the program, 10 centavos of every liter of LPG sold at the stations go to the scholarship fund.

Manila Autogas CEO Jerome Gutierrez said his company joined forces with ENLI because he believed in the cause of promoting education among the youth.

Manila Autogas cited studies, which show that at least one in 10 Filipinos of school age do not go to school because they could not afford the tuition.

Gutierrez said embracing the cause of funding the education of poor yet promising youth gave him one more reason to build his company and sell more LPG.

"It's not all about business," Gutierrez said. "It is also about do-

ing your part for the community and nation-building, and also about educating the next generation."

Customers also get into the act by patronizing Manila Autogas stations.

### **CORPORATE CITIZEN**

#### **Institutionalized support**

Gutierrez was confident that he would be able to put more scholars through school as sales of LPG have been on the rise because more taxicabs and private vehicles have been converting their engines to run on LPG.

Manila Autogas has seven LPG refilling stations in Metro Manila, with plans to expand to 12 full service stations and 12 kiosk-type outlets this year.

Now that Manila Autogas has institutionalized its support for Life Scholarships, the foundation's board mem-

bers are confident that they would be able to put more students through school, with increased contributions from the Gas for Life Campaign.

#### **Values**

The scholarship program started in 2003 with three students. The program grew to 25 students in a year, 28 in the second, and to 100 today. As many as 18 have graduated and are now employed, productive citizens. Another 20 will graduate this year.

Life Scholarships supports high school students in Rizal High School in Pasig, as well as college students in schools such as De La Salle University, University of the Philippines, University of Makati and the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasig.

Life covers education expenses, such as tuition, meal and transportation allowance, uniform and school supply expenses, and other legitimate academic expenses.

It also takes care of the development of the scholars as individuals, guided by the values of leadership, integrity, faith and excellence.

The scholars also go through character-building activities to complement their education, such that they are encouraged to not only get good grades but serve their families and communities as well.

#### **World of difference**

"The smallest contributions make a world of difference," said David Bonifacio, executive director of the Life Scholarship Program. "At 10 centavos for every liter of LPG sold by Manila Autogas, the help will surely go a long way, especially with the increasing number of LPG consumers today."

Gutierrez said LPG sales have been increasing because it costs 30-40 percent less than gasoline, and yet performs just as well.

The increasing trend augurs well for the scholarship program, which targets youth who are hungry for education and life of Christian values.

"We are currently funding seven students and we give the scholarship fund every month," Gutierrez said. "We will continue to do that."

That's good news for students like Mercado and Garcia.



AN ATTENDANT refills an LPG-fueled taxi at a Manila Autogas kiosk on Quirino Avenue. Part of what the company earns is set aside to fund the scholarship program for deserving children.