

**SPECIAL MESSAGE OF SECRETARY FRANCISCO T. DUQUE III, MD, MSc.
DURING HIS VISIT TO CHD-METRO MANILA**

January 23, 2006
CHD-NCR, Mandaluyong City

GREETINGS (VIPs)

Good morning to everyone. Thank you for inviting me over to share in this celebration of life ...of selfless giving...and bringing hope to our youth through building a comprehensive and integrated adolescent reproductive health services network.

Today, we are honoring the heroism...the selfless dedication...and the extraordinary commitment of our blood volunteers to give their gift of blood and to save another human life---*ang ating mga Kapamilya...kaibigan...kadugo!* Truly, I am delighted to be making this distinction and recognizing our blood volunteers for this morning because they are proudly our own! They are the people we work with in the regional office of NCR making that difference today by rolling up their sleeves and making that precious act of donating their own blood. And rallying behind them are their friends and families who are courageously championing the Department's Voluntary Blood Donation Program.

I have always appreciated that power in every person --- the power to make a world of change and affect many other people in numerous positive ways. But it was overwhelming to learn that our heroes today are creating that difference at breakneck speeds and with a kindness that is now tremendously magnified! From an initial 27 blood donors in September 2004, the fight to donate blood and save lives has definitely caught fire and is now being fought by more than 150 blood heroes.

This, I believe, is the 'wave of human kindness' alluded to by a seventh grader from Boston, Alex Southmayd (South-me) the founder of the Give It Forward Today or GIFT Project.

The GIFT Project is a movement that was sparked by a movie that is surely known to many of us --- "Pay it Forward" which received much acclaim in 2000 because of spawning a powerful and revolutionary principle --- the concept of "exponential kindness in action." The theory is that every time we do someone a favor or share him a gift, in whatever form, the power of one multiplies exponentially which can truly make the world a better place.

Alex Southmayd explains how his brilliant idea works: "By positively effecting two lives TODAY and inspiring two human beings to "Give It Forward Today" to two people, we have created a wave of human kindness together...The G.I.F.T. Project,

creates the possibility that we can set into motion two extraordinary and powerful principles. The power of one and the power of exponential growth.”

Certainly, the gift of blood you give today is the gift of life for another person in great need. With every drop of safe healthy blood we share, we can bridge the life of a leukemic child, the unfortunate victim in a traffic mishap, the mother who profusely bleeds while giving birth, and the blood recipient spared from transfusion borne HIV.

We also hope to infect other people with our kindness and volunteerism through the safe blood we share and encourage more blood heroes in the coming blood donation sessions. Thus, let us willingly give the gift of life and Give It Forward Today!

This morning, we are also celebrating the generous gifts of our friends from Save the Children who shall be turning-over some equipment that shall be used to strengthen our capability to respond to the special health needs of our youth. The cities, which are involved in the Adolescent Friendly Reproductive health Services Network, shall no doubt benefit from this wonderful donation. With this grant, we hope to improve our leadership and make our services more accessible and responsive to the unique health needs of our youth.

Thank you and good morning.

