

# **RHEUM FOR KIDS**

**December 9, 2018  
Shakey's E. Rodriguez**

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The Christmas season is a festive commemoration of the birth of Jesus, our Savior. We celebrate Christmas these days through joyous gatherings and gift-giving similar to what the shepherds and the three kings who witnessed Jesus's birth did years ago. We focus our attention to the children as they remind us of the simplicity and serenity of the infant Jesus.

Because of this, the Section of Pediatric Rheumatology of the University of Santo Tomas Hospital celebrated Christmas through a party dedicated for children diagnosed with chronic rheumatologic conditions, particularly those with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus and with Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. This activity has been a Christmas tradition by the section spearheaded by the chairman – Dr. Christine Bernal. In fact, Dr. Kathryn Yee-Lim and Dr. Ma. Theresa Collante (Training Officer of the Section) – both previous fellows and graduates of the training program – attended the said activity in support of the section's annual custom in providing joy to these brave angels.

Last December 9, 2018, 30 children, together with their companions, ushered the Christmas season with a festive get-together at Shakey's E. Rodriguez, QC. The program started with a prayer led by Anthony Catubig, a patient who has regularly attended the party for the past years. This was followed by an opening message by Dr. Bernal.

Captain Shakey's (the mascot of the establishment) subsequently entertained the children with a dance number.

To showcase the children's talent and to show the world that they are more than their diagnosis, three cute little lupus warriors namely, Joannah Grande, Aryanna Pendre, and Lime Ramos presented a K-pop dance number. Cristel Espiritu, a known lupus patient with impressive dancing moves, likewise danced to a famous Korean beat together with her sister. Marian Rodas, another lupus patient, on the other hand, left the audience in awe with her singing voice and ukulele skills.

Sumptuous lunch food was served for everyone. The famous Shakey's pizza, fried chicken, spaghetti, and caramel bars provided satiety to 30 little tummies that day. Unlimited ice cream was popular not just for the children, but for the adults who are kids-at-heart. An ice cream cart was provided by Dr. Sandra Navarra, the co-founder of PEARL (People Empowerment for ARthritis and Lupus) as a treat to the patients and their companions.

The children enjoyed playing the various games together with their pals – old and new-found friends, alike. They had fun playing paper dance, pass the message, longest Merry Christmas, and the C Game. The children's companions also took part in playing Hep-Hep-Hooray. Prizes were abundant, not just for the winners, but for all children who participated in

the games. Raffle prizes were also given to lucky attendees.

In the spirit of gift-giving, the children were given loot bags containing candies and some school supplies. Ultra-comfy blankets and yummy chocolate were distributed to all children provided by Pacific Concorde Container Lines, Inc. It is a private company who chose our patients to be their benefactors for their Christmas outreach program. The children were also handed cute stuffed toys courtesy of LUISA (LUpus InSpired Advocacy), a non-profit, non-government organization that provides support to patients braving a war against lupus.

Prior to the day of the party, LUISA already gave stuffed toys to the patients at USTH Joint and Bone Center and at the USTH OPD. These were the patients who for one reason or another could not come and participate in the Christmas party.

It was indeed a fun-filled, heartwarming day for our little community of children with lupus and arthritis, their family, and the USTH Pediatric Rheumatology doctors. Everyone was quite hesitant for the occasion to end since they immensely enjoyed the company and camaraderie of the other patients, their families, and the doctors who understand and support them in their health journey. Everyone went home with smiles on their faces and love on their hearts while excitedly anticipating the next Christmas get-together come 2019. ■

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- Dr. Christine Bernal
- Dr. Sandra Navarra
- Pacific Concorde Container Lines, Inc.
- LUISA (Lupus Inspired Advocacy)

PHOTOS (Left to Right, Top to Bottom): Anthony Catubig leads the group in prayer; Dr. Bernal welcomes all the attendees in her opening message; Captain Shakey's greeted the kids who were excited to meet him; Kids showcase their talent through a dance number; Dr. Bernal gives instructions for the children who will play in the parlor games; A lucky child at the OPD gets to pick a stuffed toy that he wants; Kids receive their stuffed toys from LUISA

