

Prince charity

By **Carlomar Arcangel Daoana**, Staff Writer

Stripped of his bodyguards and royal status, Andrea Albert Pierre Casiraghi — declared by *People* magazine as “One of the 50 Most Beautiful Faces in the World” — would still be the kind of person that can make heads turn and apologize for it. Tall and lean, with sun-kissed skin, well-chiseled features and shoulder-length rockstar tresses, he was the focus of all eyes as he sauntered into the room, allowing himself to be photographed by countless cameras, squinting from what could only be the blinding lights.

This sports fanatic, wrapped in the brooding aura of an artist, knew exactly why he was here. He had prepared his speech beforehand, not one personal detail straying. Understandably, there was no segment devoted to question-and-answer or else someone would have asked how much he was worth, or perhaps croak, in perfectly healthy despair, “Will you marry me?”

This 22-year-old noble heartthrob, who is next in line if the Prince of Monaco, Prince Edward, doesn't produce a legitimate heir, was here to train the light on the development projects of the local chapter of AMADE Mondiale in close partnership with Virlian Foundation. A non-profit child-advocacy organization, AMADE Mondiale was founded by his grandmother, Her Royal Highness Princess Grace of Monaco (aka Grace Kelly, Hollywood's icon of elegance) in 1963 to “promote and protect children's rights on an international level, develop and support humanitarian aid programs and foster ethical and legal reflection in the area of the rights of the child.”

Virlian Foundation, on the other hand, features a network of 14 homes nurturing over 300 children, most of whom are victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation. A unique socio-civic organization, it is known for providing the children a home located in a normal community setting with real couples

acting as surrogate parents and social workers to guide their emotional and psychological development. There, they grow up having the feel of a typical Filipino family.

During his stay, Andrea, together with foreign volunteers, visited the imprisoned children at the Reception Action Center and the Manila Youth Reception Center, the communities at Payatas and Tondo that are a part of the AMADE/Virlian Family Programme and the AMADE home for juvenile mothers and their children in Manila. Concluding his stay was a visit at the two former US Naval bases in Clark and Subic to show support to Alliance for Bases Clean Up (ABC International), which fights for the rehabilitation of sites contaminated by toxic military waste and provides valuable assistance to the victims.

With Manila as his introductory lecture on philanthropy, Andrea is clearly following the footsteps of his mother, Her Royal Highness Princess of Hanover (nee Her Serene Highness Princess Caroline of Monaco). “As you know, our family, our country, is very concerned with doing social actions around the world,” Andrea said. “My mother, my uncle Prince Albert II have told wonderful things about the country despite the condition the children face: malnutrition abuse, slavery, lack of education...the list is very long. I want to help, myself. I'm also here to learn the wonderful program (of AMADE and Virlian

Foundation) as I get to get involved in more and more humanitarian action.”

Andrea added that the program was nothing but inspirational, prodding him to take a more proactive stance in creating viable and sustainable projects for children in need. “I have seen first-hand the projects these organizations carried out—the homes they've built, the children they've fed, and giving the children hope. I hope I can come back soon and be able to help and continue the foundation,” he affirmed.

An ideal project, he described, is a support structure that could stand on its own and be left in the care of the leaders of the community. “In the shanty town of Tondo where Virlian Foundation is doing excellent work, the staff is ready to leave. Now the program is able to continue through the community leaders. This is our vision of AMADE: we don't want to stay permanently in any give place in the world when the community can handle itself.”

Andrea was amazed by the optimism the children managed to show despite crushing poverty and lack of education. “What is memorable in this visit,” he shared, “is every child's smile in every place I went, particularly in Payatas, one of the worst places I've ever seen in my life. Despite the children living on a deadly waste mountain, where they scavenge garbage for a living, their faces were full of hope.”

The children danced and sang for him, something which appealed to the young royalty immensely. “I am especially impressed with the artistic talent of Filipino children. They are extremely talented singers and dancers with the potential to become stars,” he said.

Aside from children's welfare, Andrea's advocacy also includes the environment. A trip to Subic Bay and Clark Field opened his eyes to see “thousands of people who are slowly dying everyday with the contaminated water and soil” due to the toxic waste the American Navy left behind. “It's an everyday fight,” he said, describing the crusade in preserving the environment. “We only have one planet and we cannot afford to let it go to waste, especially with the state of our children.”

Andrea admitted that in order to alleviate the plight of children and the environment, people should

consolidate their efforts and resources toward this common goal. “There are many obstacles I have witnessed in the countries I've visited,” he said. “Truly, when we help each other, we give these children a better future.”

He asked the Filipinos to extend a helping hand: “Every action has a consequence and will make a difference. No step is too small. If you can only do one good action a day, it's a perfect day.”

Asked what has been the most important lesson his mother has taught him, Andrea replied, “I will only share the most important. My mother used to tell me, if you only have one glass of water to put out a volcano, you should do so.”

Together, as Andrea emphasized in his visit, you can extinguish the fire.

For more information on AMADE and Virlian Foundation, call 896-2289 or 895-5260 or log on at AMADE Mondiale's website at www.amade-mondiale.org



Out of the Box

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Life