

# QC DRUG SURRENDERERS TO BE TRAINED AS HAIRDRESSERS

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Around 300 drug users who have surrendered and are undergoing rehabilitation in Quezon City could become gainfully employed after they quit the habit under a city government plan to train them as barbers and hair stylists.



The hairdressing project will be handled for free by 25 volunteer professional hair stylists from the Australian charity Hair Aid, according to Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte.

In an interview with the Inquirer on Thursday, Belmonte said the training was part of the after-care component of the city's rehabilitation program.

"We have to check and make sure they (former drug users) are able to maintain a drug-free lifestyle," she said.

The project was proposed by the Australian nonprofit, which had a similar project for solo parents also in Quezon City.

The "graduates" of the community-based rehabilitation and treatment program being implemented by the Quezon City Anti-Drug Abuse Advisory Council would be trained by Hair Aid for five days starting January 2019.

They will also be given free starter kits of high-end hairdressing tools.

"These will be kept in the barangay so they can borrow and use them when they have customers," said Janet Oviedo, head of the women's unit of Belmonte's office.

3,800 volunteers

Hair Aid has more than 3,800 volunteers who raise money for their own airfare to travel to other countries to teach haircutting skills for free. Its volunteers have worked in Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia.

"We love coming back here to the Philippines, because we're always so welcomed by the community and it is an honor to share our skills," the nonprofit's founder, Selina Tomasich, said in a statement. Belmonte said the project would help make sure that the former drug users' "new, clean lifestyle is sustainable."

They will include "all genders, because we are the most gender-sensitive city in Metro Manila," she said.

Hair Aid had earlier trained 151 solo parents in Quezon City—80 as haircutters and the rest as manicurists, Oviedo said.

"Most of them were teenage mothers and others were abandoned by their husbands. Vice (Mayor Belmonte) wanted the project to empower them and to give them financial freedom and stability," she said.

Around 30 percent of the solo parents who had been trained are already employed in spas and parlors, she said.

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Joy Belmonte Quezon City Vice Mayor