

QC erects special anti-drug school for young 'users'

By Maricel V. Cruz

IN A bid to educate the youth on the impact of illegal drug use and addiction, the Quezon City council led by Vice Mayor **Joy Belmonte** has announced plans to put up a Quezon City Special Anti-Illegal Drug Education Center to serve as the primary educational institution in the city for drug abuse prevention.

“What we want for all our children is for them to have a bright future. Through the right education, counseling, and values formation, we can help them have the strength to resist illegal drugs,” Belmonte said.

Belmonte’s statement came as the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Director-General Aaron Aquino said current methods to teach young people about illegal drugs are “inadequate and outdated.”

“This is something we want to help with at the local government level,” Belmonte said.

The first of its kind in the country, she said the youth-focused anti-drug education center will be responsible for the development of teaching modules and materials in coordination with the Department of Education and for the dissemination of these materials to elementary, secondary, and tertiary public and private schools.

The center will also undertake up-to-date information campaigns and other drug prevention activities for out-of-school youth, street children, and informal sectors, she added.

Based on Quezon City's drug code, the proposed focus areas of the education program will be concerned with adverse effects of the abuse and misuse of dangerous drugs, preventive measures against drug abuse, services available for intervention, treatment and rehabilitation, and misconceptions about the use of dangerous drugs.

Belmonte cited that she had already put up several Special Drug Education Centers (SDECs) in the city to cater to street children and out-of-school youth. Each SDEC provides values formation education, skills training, and counseling services for youth at-risk and their families.

But Belmonte stressed the need for a centralized office to coordinate the city's education efforts to combat drug use and abuse.

The Special Anti-Illegal Drug Education Center will be under the supervision of the **Quezon City Anti-Drug Abuse Advisory Council**, of which Belmonte is presently the chairperson.