



Shawn Askinosie (center) visits the children of Malagos, Davao City. Askinosie is the first chocolate maker to import cocoa beans from the Philippines in over 25 years.

## HOW CHOCOLATE SAVES THE DAY

NEAL WEBSTER TURNAGE shares how the ubiquitous chocolate *tableya* helps nourish the children of Brgy. Malagos, Davao City.

Estrella Villanueva, principal of the Malagos Elementary School, used to wish away noontime. It's the most painful part of the day, the time she has to face the fact there are kids in her school that are malnourished, impoverished, and for whom lunch is out of the question. But change is afoot at her school in Davao City, hope has crept into the schoolyard, and so today Villanueva is less intimidated by the hour at hand.

She rises from her desk, walks fitfully outside into a communal eating area filled with long tables, where uniformed kids are gathered. Unlike in some days past, food appears to be plentiful. It's a fortified soy rice meal and is consumed with single-

minded focus. Villanueva watches. The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) *tableya* project, she's pleased to see, is working.

*Tableya*—tablets of ground roasted cocoa beans used to make hot chocolate—had never figured into Villanueva's problem-solving process. She wasn't even sure there was a solution, only that "kids would be absent or go home because they didn't have food."

Then Shawn Askinosie, a small-batch chocolate maker—he sources his beans directly from farmers to create single-origin chocolate bars then profit-shares with them—from Springfield, Missouri, and Convey of Hope, a relief organization,

stepped in. Together they developed a plan: use *tableya* to create a sustainable lunch program whereby no child goes hungry.

Askinosie discovered the hunger problem during a recent visit. When students in Springfield later began to communicate online with Malagos students, the need became pronounced. "I decided to create a solution...one that was sustainable," recalls Askinosie.

"I asked the PTA to create *tableya* for us to sell," continues Askinosie. They complied, and then shipped the product to Missouri in the same container as the cocoa beans he exported.

Villanueva found Askinosie's out-of-the-box approach inspiring, "a way to help the kids and their families, the school and the local farmers," she says.

Says Askinosie, "I purchased 800 units of *tableya* for US\$1 each. We sell each unit for \$10 and the \$9 profit goes directly to fund meals." Each *tableya* sold (at [www.askinosie.com](http://www.askinosie.com)) translates into 232 meals.



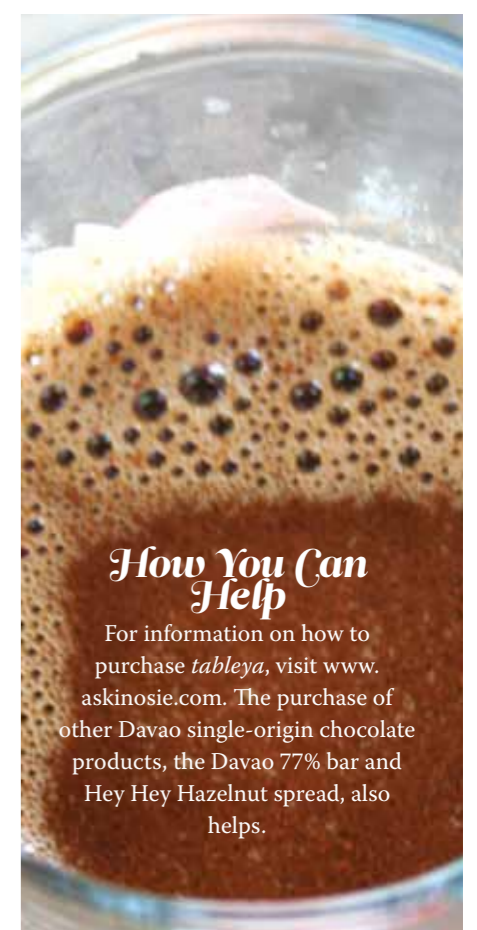
In the Philippines, a popular way to prepare *tableya* is to mix ground peanuts with cocoa beans while being cooked. It gives a richer, more intense flavor.

Villanueva and Askinosie have set a goal: sell 111,000 units of *tableya* to fund an entire year of school lunches for all 579 students. They're already one-third of the way there.

"This is an effective way to feed an entire school without any donations," explains Askinosie. "We plan to duplicate the model in other parts of the world where we source cocoa beans (i.e., Ecuador, Honduras, and

Tanzania). The project works because of the investment of the PTA in the nutritional future of their children."

Villanueva agrees. "The PTA is very positive about this because it's self-sustaining. Change will happen if we cooperate with one another, and, I hope, our children's nutritional status and academic performance will improve, too."



### How You Can Help

For information on how to purchase *tableya*, visit [www.askinosie.com](http://www.askinosie.com). The purchase of other Davao single-origin chocolate products, the Davao 77% bar and Hey Hey Hazelnut spread, also helps.

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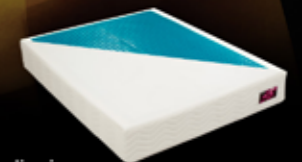
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