

# A GUARDIAN ANGEL

by Annie Schwechheimer



photo:

**D**odong T., age 16, is the elder son of poor, hardworking parents who live in Ozamiz City, Philippines. Dodong's father drives a bicycle cab, and can barely meet his family's basic needs. Dodong and his younger brother Jobert were forced to beg to help the family. One day in 2003, Father Don Kill, a Colomban priest who runs a home for abused and neglected children, noticed the boys. When he asked why they weren't in school, Dodong replied that he couldn't walk and relied on his younger brother to get around. Father Don asked the boys to live at the home he runs. With permission from their father, the next day Dodong and Jobert moved into Father Don's home.

Dodong's story is sad. At age eight, he ran a high fever. His parents rushed him to a public hospital where he was diagnosed with leukemia. Told that they would need to pay for a blood transfusion to save his life, Dodong's parents sold most of what they owned. But the transfusion didn't work: Dodong's body and joints began to swell. The doctor believed that Dodong contracted polio from the blood transfusion, and told his parents that Dodong probably would die.

But Dodong didn't die. Instead, he languished as a beggar on the streets for eight years until that fateful day when a guardian angel walked into his life. Intrigued by Dodong's malady, Father Don questioned the diagnosis of leukemia and polio. He took Dodong to the University of Santo Tomas Hospital in Manila, an international hemophilia treatment center. There, Dodong was properly diagnosed with hemophilia. Father Don set out to



**Partners in care:** Father Don Kill visits with Laurie Kelley (left) and Annie Schwechheimer (right).

help Dodong receive the treatment he was unknowingly denied for years.

Father Don contacted St. Jerome's, his home parish in Ohio. The parish put him in touch with the Northern Ohio Chapter of the NHF, which referred him to Project SHARE. Father Don emailed us requesting factor and educational materials. But SHARE cannot donate factor to patients who are untrained in infusions.

Undaunted, Father Don called hematologist Dr. Mary Chua at Santo Tomas Hospital. Within a week, we received a surprise, upbeat email from Father Don: he had sent Dodong to Santo Tomas Hospital, accompanied by a local nurse, to learn how to infuse. Dodong also had a complete physical and dental exam. SHARE immediately sent a small donation of factor to Dodong, with a check to cover the cost of transportation to Manila. Dodong is now infusing himself!

Dodong's life has been transformed by the international teamwork of Project SHARE, the Northern Ohio Chapter, Santo Tomas Hospital, St. Jerome's and Father Don. Although Dodong acknowledges that he will never walk again, he has accepted his limitations and is grateful for his many blessings, all due to his guardian angel. ☺

*Father Don Kill visited Project SHARE in August to express his gratitude, learn more about hemophilia, and bring more factor to Dodong. We are currently trying to raise \$600 for a wheelchair ramp for Father Don's van, to make traveling easier for Dodong. Would you like to help us? Please contact Project SHARE to make your donation, and make a difference in the life of this special teen.*

To learn more about Project SHARE<sup>SM</sup> and how you can help patients like Dodong, please visit [www.kelleycom.com/iha/projshare.html](http://www.kelleycom.com/iha/projshare.html) or contact Director Annie Schwechheimer at (978) 352-7657 or [annie@kelleycom.com](mailto:annie@kelleycom.com).