



Madeline Lopez



Leia Ramirez



Ali Al Qais



'Shooting' for



COMMUNITY REPORT

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BIG-HEARTED photographers have snapped into action to help raise funds for the sister of a Bahraini expat who is suffering from cancer.

Jenny Ramirez, 29, who lives in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, was diagnosed with lymphoid leukaemia in January – a type of cancer of the blood and bone marrow.

Her family was stunned by the discovery and at first did not know how to handle the news. Her sister, Leia, 26, who lives in Exhibition Road, Manama, was distraught but made it her mission to support Jenny in any way she could.

Leia said: "We are a very close family. It was so upsetting when we were told because no one in our family, even within the older generation, had suffered from this type of illness. We were very shocked and it was hard to accept it at first but we are there for her and will always support her no matter what."

During Jenny's treatment, Leia made an appeal on the Facebook social networking site asking family, friends and relatives for blood donations. A member of the Middle East Shutter Squad (MESS) came across Leah's post and took it upon himself to stage a fund-raising event for her cause.

Photographer Bryan Nepomuceno, 30, an office administrator at Gulf House Engineering, was touched by Jenny's story and struggle with funding for her treatment and medication. A one-year chemotherapy course costs around 250,000 peso (approximately BD2,200).

He said: "When I found out that Jenny was sick, I felt I had to help her. It's a very worthy cause.

"I had spoken to my wife Jescy for ideas on what to do and she came up with the suggestion of a MESS function. I thought: 'brilliant, let's hold a photography workshop to promote photography in Bahrain and raise funds for Jenny's treatment at the same time'. MESS members agreed and we started organising it right away."

The workshop, called Shoot for a Cause, rallied more than 35 photographers and sponsors. The Manama Municipality and MC Grow Group (Ru Ru Tower 1 management) supplied the workshop venues, Cinnabon Seattle Best Coffee offered dessert, Extra Coffee Shop provided lunch for all and Volvic water was given by Everest Trading Services.

Professional and amateur photographers gathered on Friday at Al Andalus Garden in Gudaibiya at 7am for a lesson in how best to take an impressive portrait or glamour shot. An array of beautiful models stepped in for the good cause too donning outfits supplied by Bong Rosas Collection in Riffa.

Bahraini Ali Al Qais, 28,



STEPPING OUT: Model Jo-Ann Ronquillo poses in Andalus Garden and, below right, membe

from Hidd, who has recently taken up photography as a hobby, found the workshop both useful and a heart-warming event.

He said: "This is my first time attending a photography workshop and I thought it was great. It gave me a chance to meet others who want to learn more about photography. It was my first time taking pictures of models as I usually take pictures of landscapes.

"However, the driving factor for me was to raise money for Jenny. While I don't know her personally I was more than happy to donate whatever I could.

The way I see it, not only did I partake in a hobby that I love but I also helped someone too."

Filipina photographer Dulce Sevilla, 22, from Gudaibiya, added: "It was wonderful to see so many people getting together for a good cause. We should have even more events like this."



Jenny Ramirez

After the morning shoot, all photographers made their way to Ru Ru Tower 1 for a session in editing their images by *GulfWeekly*'s very own ace photographer Ryan Bayona. The event carried on until 4pm.

At the end of the day, BD258 was raised, approximately 29,400 peso. Leia said: "This is an amazing amount. While the registration fee was BD5 for photographers, some donated more and others who couldn't attend put some money in the pot afterwards.

"I can't express how much this means to me. I am so thankful for all the love. My entire family is touched by the gesture. This money will certainly help with Jenny's treatment."

Jenny had recently completed two sessions of chemotherapy in a bid to beat the disease. Medics have advised her to undergo one more session.

More fund-raising events are being lined up by MESS in the near future to help Jenny's cause.