

# People and Events

## FilAms Gear Up for a Grand Celebration in 2009

*The 111th Anniversary of the Declaration of Philippine Independence*

by LYDIA V. SOLIS

THE Jose Rizal Community Hall of the Philippine Consulate General overflows with patriotic Filipinos and Filipino Americans every time Grand Chairperson Darna Umayam calls for a gathering, the most recent, on February 10th.

Starting with an "acquaintance" meeting on September 29, 2008, to draw-up plans for a grand celebration in 2009 of the 111th Anniversary of the Declaration of Philippine Independence, it was succeeded by two General Assembly meetings held late last year and early this year. Each time, Umayam seemed overwhelmed by the show of genuine support by the FilAm community. (Never mind if all the meetings have been properly caloric.)

The Independence Grand Ball will be held Saturday, June 13, 2009, 6 pm, at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites, Downtown Los Angeles.

"Come hungry as the menu includes a nine-course Chinese Lauriat dinner plus one drink with two live bands setting the tone for the evening's entertainment," said Umayam. Tickets have been on sale since, on a "First Pay Basis" at \$59.00 per person.

"Senator Chiz Escudero," announced Umayam, "has accepted our invitation to attend our grand ball." According to the grand chair, personal friend and Secretary of Energy Angelo Reyes is definitely attending. "And we have sent invitations to Vice President Noli de Castro, Senator Manny Villar, and Batangas Governor Vilma Santos, and but no response from them yet," she added.

"To date," reported Financial Officer Leah Dinsay, BSN, RN, during the latest meeting, "1,200 tickets have already been sold." Umayam added that "2,400 tickets have been distributed. Our goal is to sell 1,950 tickets, so we will have money left over after expenses for our charitable missions in the Philippines."

"Her name fits her achievement," someone quipped. "But I'm not that superwoman," Darna claims.

Judging from the attendance though of more than a hundred people each meeting, with distinguished VIPS no less, headed by Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon, Deputy Consul General Dan Espiritu, Tourism Director Annie Cuevas, and Deputy Tourism Director Manny Ilagan, among others, it must be Darna's good karma and/or her numerous "Dings" that make it happen. (Remember Vilma Santos' film "Darna," the fictional superheroine character created by Mars Ravelo? In the movie, Darna has a brother named Ding, her sidekick, played by Nino Mulach.)

"The burning fervor of Filipinoism," says Umayam, "displayed by an enthusiastic group of civic leaders, professionals in varied fields, and media sectors, as well as committed representatives of Filipino American organizations has really touched me tremendously. They have all accepted the challenge of shouldering the responsibilities in the preparation of a dinner gala and ball for the 111th anniversary when our Philippine Independence was declared."

Significantly, Umayam has created 111 executive committees to ensure that our Freedom Day celebration would be nothing but grand. She opted to appoint committee members instead of having an election, which was wholeheartedly supported not only by Naomi Palma-Armada, founder and executive director of the Philippine Heritage Institute International, who spoke on the advantages of selection rather

than election during the first meeting, but also by other community leaders.

Umayam, an American Field Service Scholar to the United States, and a cum laude graduate of Mass Communications from the University of Santo Tomas, calls on every Filipino "to join and rekindle that Filipino spirit once again." She repeats the call for all Filipinos "to manifest a deep sense of national commitment and patriotic connection to our country, the Philippines.

"Let's look back at our nation's glorious past," she continued, "with appreciation in the proclamation of our independence on June 12, 1898, by General Emilio Aguinaldo in Kawit, Cavite - the high point of the Philippine Revolution of 1896. This revolution was the first peoples' war of independence fought by Asians against colonial Spain that marked the fruit of our forefather's 300 years of blood, sweat and tears."

The FilAm community has responded to her call, judging by the brisk sale of tickets and support for the "Memorabilia Book" with paid advertisements and pledges solicited, as reported by the Ways and Means Committee Chair Mel Campano.

Consul General Mary Jo Bernardo Aragon made an announcement, during her welcome remarks in September last year, that the Philippine Consulate will give its full support towards the event.

"This is the only meeting I attended," said Deputy Consul General Dan Espiritu, during his closing remarks in September, "where there are no objections from the attendees. It's all positive."

Vice Chairperson Jojit Paredes, who also serves as Vice Chair, Internal Affairs, emcees during the Philippine Independence Day meetings.

Other volunteer "'Dings" for the grand ball are: Secretary General Rene Villaroman; Recording Secretary Shirley Lumanog; Financial Officer Leah Dinsay; Assistant Treasurers Emelita Liguigan and Yolanda Valerio; Parliamentarians Abraham Lim, ESQ, and Antero Pagunsan, Esq; Ticket Distribution Chair Trinity Foliente; and Ways & Means Chair Melinda Campano.

Seating Arrangement Chairmen Rico Campano, an architect and Eli D. Umayam, Darna's engineer husband (who already made the down payment at the Bonaventure "to secure the venue"), will be working with members of their committee; namely: Robert Knock, Edgar Zalameda, Omar Ombra, William Brandt, Manny Liguigan, Manny Ferrer, and Enrico Valerio. (According to Umayam, the committee has a fool-proof system to avoid table switching.)

Event Coordinators: Sylvia Molina and Rodel Lumanog; Musical Director Willie Manacs; Entertainment Chairman Cora Pastrana and Vice Chairman Edith Ombra; Food Chairmen Ellen Ferrer and Evelyn Brandt; Organization Sponsors Chairman Edith Knock; Community Relations Liaison Cathy Manlapaz; Reception Chairman Zenaida Sulit-Zoleta and Vice Chairman Naomi P. Armada; and Color Guards Coordinator Manny Salomon, who is also the liaison for Carson City.

Other Regional Coordinators include: Dr. Atonis and Mrs. Rillea Pax, Orange County/Riverside; Angel Rice, Palmdale/Lancaster; Tessie Lightholder, San Bernardino/Pomona/Chino Hills/Fontana; Sonny Landero and Vivian Aguilar, Las Vegas; and Jegg Dayola, Philippines.

PPP-USA, Inc. (Dan Baltazar, president) will make sure memories of the 111th Anniversary of the Declaration of Philippine Independence Day will be preserved



Philippine Independence Day Vice Chairperson Jojit Paredes emcees during meetings. Photo shows him assisted by beauty queen Ms. Charlene Brandt. Photo by Lydia V. Solis

for posterity. Videography is up for bids with a deadline of March 30th.

Darna and her little helpers, (the "Dings" in her life till D-Day), led by Leah Dinsay, always end their productive meetings with surprises galore for everyone, and "a big thank you from the heart" to all attendees.

For further information, you may contact Darna B. Umayam at (323) 258-4879; E-mail: darnabumayam@hotmail.com; or Jojit Paredes at (818) 481-4304; E-mail: jparedes@aol.com. ■

## Thomasians USA to host fundraising luncheon

THOMASIANS USA, University of Santo Tomas' Alumni organization in the United States and registered as a nonprofit, 501(c) organization, will host a fundraising luncheon on Saturday, April 4, at "Intramuros Restaurant", located at 101 Brentwood Drive, South San Francisco, California.

In its recent Advisory Board meeting, Alice Bulos, President of Thomasians USA, announced that T-USA's Executive Board has decided to forego the traditional dinner-dance celebration held annually to celebrate its anniversary. Given the current global economic crisis, T-USA will instead hold a fundraising luncheon to mark its 22nd anniversary.

Since its inception, T-USA has embraced "Educational Empowerment" as the cornerstone of the organization's philanthropic mission. It has sponsored mentoring and several scholarship

programs, foremost of which are the "Adopt-a-School" Program with Westmoor High School and the "Off-the-Street/Off-to-School" scholarship in partnership with Philippine International Aid (PIA).

T-USA relies on donations from corporate sponsors and individual donors to provide funds to continue to provide financial assistance to its current 10 scholars under the auspices of the "Off-the-Street/Off-to-School" program, and is looking for ways to increase its number of scholarship and literacy programs and to add another school in its "Adopt-a-School" program. Today, more than ever, T-USA is seeking the support of its members, donors and corporate sponsors to join in breaking the cycle of poverty through "Educational Empowerment."

The luncheon will be held from 12 noon to 2:00 p.m. For those who love to dance, T-USA has

made arrangements to provide music and dancing after the luncheon. Ticket/Donation is \$35 per person.

Thomasians USA is inviting all members, alumni, sponsors and friends to attend this event. To register for the fundraising luncheon or for further information, please send e-mail to:

ThomasiansUSA@gmail.com or contact the following:  
Alice Bulos - 650.872-2301  
Mely Fernandez - 415.334.7055  
Bea Delgadillo - 415.652.2879  
EstelleOloresisimo - 415.595.9248  
Adela Capistrano - 650.873.3403  
Candy Duazo - 415.587.2968

Reservation and ticket payments should be made no later than March 27, 2009. No tickets will be issued at the door. Please make your check payable to: Thomasians USA. ■

## AICPA 2008-2009 Scholarship

THE Philippine American Society of Certified Public Accountants (PASCAPA) is currently offering sponsorship to eligible students for the AICPA 2008-2009 Scholarship for Accounting Students through its umbrella organization, the National Council of Philippine American Canadian Accountants (NCPACA), in cooperation with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). Competitive merit-based awards of up to \$5,000 for outstanding accounting students who, in the opinion of the NCPACA Selection Committee, show significant potential to become Certified Public Accountants.

NCPACA Scholarship will be awarded on July 4,

2009 for the 2008-2009 academic years. All application materials must be received by the NCPACA by May 15, 2009.

For more information, please contact any of the following:

Monette Santillan (818) 970-8317 or monettesantillan@hotmail.com  
Member, NCPACA Scholarship Committee  
Glo Cajanap (818) 913-1991 or gcajanap@hotmail.com  
Chair, PASCAPA Convention Committee for NCPACA  
Francine Clara (818) 482-3245 or frc962002@yahoo.com  
President, PASCAPA 2008-09. ■



Best news during the latest meeting from Financial Officer Leah Dinsay, BSN, RN: "To date, we have already sold 1,200 tickets!" Photo by Lydia V. Solis