

# State of dental Health in California a silent epidemic, says Sen. Gloria Negrete McLeod

by RENE VILLAROMAN  
AJPress

GLENDAL—“In 2000, the United States Surgeon General called the state of dental health in America a silent epidemic. Not much has changed since. Many poor children, the elderly and many minorities are silently suffering from oral disease that are progressive, diligent and becoming more complex over time,” declared State Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod during the 43rd Anniversary and Inaugural Ball of the Southern California Filipino Dental Society held at the Glendale Hilton Hotel on Saturday, March 21.

“We all know that oral diseases can affect an individual’s physical appearance, ability to eat and communicate and economic productivity, and the ability to perform at home and school and on the job,” Senator McLeod said. A report by the California Health Care Foundation also stated that one-fourth of all adults and 28 per cent of children in California have untreated oral condition. The report added that school children with infected and painful teeth miss more school days

than children with healthy teeth and that 65 per cent of children ages 6 to 8 have untreated tooth decay, more than twice the national average.

Senator McLeod said that oral disease is five times more common than asthma, and access to preventive, restorative dental services continue to be problematic not only for the uninsured, but also for those who are publicly insured. For a majority of poor and uninsured Californians, according to the report, seeking care for oral health becomes the last priority, resulting in an increase in emergency hospital visits.

“California suffers no shortage of dentists; our supply vary by county and the more room a county has, the fewer the dentists to serve the community,” Senator McLeod lamented. The state of California ranks 7th in the nation for dentist per 100,000 residents, said the report.

There are over a hundred thousand Filipinos in Los Angeles County. “In the upcoming census, we expect the numbers to increase,” said McLeod. “We know that minorities want to see doctors, nurses and dentists who speak their own

languages. Our challenge – yours and mine – is to encourage more minorities to enter the health care field,” Senator McLeod told the dental society members. “And we need to encourage more dentists to serve in rural areas and in areas where there are dental health care shortages,” she said.

Incoming SCFDS President Renato “Rene” Calugcugan said that part of his program of administration would be to eliminate lengthy discourses of what they plan to do; instead “the newly installed officers will be conducting shorter and more efficient ceremonies.” The incoming officers were installed by Ilcos Sur Governor Deogracias Victor Savellano.

“Suffice it to say, that we will do what it takes to continue to keep this organization in the forefront of organized dentistry,” Dr. Calugcugan promised. “We are prepared to pay the price of success. With our dedication, hard work and unremitting devotion to the things we wish to achieve,” the incoming President declared.

“Three years since I took office the society was able to award scholarships to



Outgoing President Mary Satuito congratulating incoming President Rene Calugcugan.

AJPress Photo by Rene Villaroman senior dental students and deliver dental services in the poor communities in the Philippines,” announced Dr. Mary Satuito, outgoing President. “This organization has inspired us to flap our wings and to achieve our dreams,” Dr. Satuito said.

## Extradited Filipina faces embezzlement charges

PAGE A1 ◀

Lingad, 37, is accused of allegedly embezzling more than P75 million (\$2 million) from her former employer, the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) in the Philippines.

Lingad has been living in San Diego for the past three years. She fled from the Philippines to the US in 2004 before UCPB authorities could file criminal charges against her for theft.

“The UCPB is glad that Lingad will finally be sent back home to face charges,” said Los Angeles Attorney Morel Callueng, who was hired by UCPB to oversee legal paperwork in the US.

“She’s been on the run for more than five years, have stalled the original extradition but now she’ll be facing the criminal charges against her.”

NBI Agents were here last December to extradite Lingad. However, Lingad’s attorney’s filed a last minute appeal with the Ninth Circuit. The appeal was denied in February and NBI agents have 60 days to extradite Lingad.

Upon her arrival to the Philippines, Lingad will be charged with falsification of documents and 25 counts of qualified theft.

If convicted, she faces 20 to 40 years in jail for each count. (Joseph Pimentel)

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