

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

PACCAL celebrates Women's History Month

PAGE A1 ◀

their chosen professions," ConGen Rebong said.
 Betty Buenviaje, PACCAL's president, on the other hand challenged the evening's guests to face the challenging times ahead. "I believe that as a woman and a community leader, there are many challenges that we must tackle head-on. There are many times that we may feel discouraged because of the pressure, but with the strength that God gives us, we can overcome them all," she explained.

This year's women achievers awardees are Ledy Almadin (community service), Analisa Balares (young professional), Zorayda Baluyot de Leon, M.D. (medial profession), Araceli Mendoza, R.N. (nursing profession), Juliet Payabyab (humanitarian), Corazon Rivera (business), Rhodora Ursua (health and human serice) and Maureen Javier Varco (performing arts).

Analisa Balares, CEO and founder of Womensphere, honored her grandmothers as she delivered the response on behalf of the eight other awardees.

"My perspective now on the role of women in the society and everything I do now is shaped in large part by the legacy of my parents, and my grandmothers," she shared.

Balares explained that her parents were both raised by women who got widowed early in life, and eventually became responsible in raising their respective families as single mothers.

"My grandmothers were strong and powerful women. They did everything—from washing other people's clothes to planting rice to planting and selling vegetables and fish to growing copra—to raise their families. Not only did they raise my parents with dignity and values, they raised them with a love for life, a deep sense of faith and generosity of spirit that defy the fact that they were in an impoverished situation," Balares added.

Every year for the past ten years, PACCAL has been celebrating the courage, vision and determination of women, through the organization's Women Achiever Awards.

"I reminisce 10 years ago when PACCAL first started celebrating the achievements of Filipino-American women," Linda Mayo, PACCAL's executive director wrote on her message. "I look back at the wonderful contributions of women around the world, fighting for the right of suffrage, for education, for battered women, for equal rights," she added.

This year's awardees come from diverse fields. Rosemarie Parreno received her award for her efforts in the field of education, specifically for her efforts in teaching English as a second language. Last month, *New York Times* honored

Parreno at the *New York Times* ESOL Teacher of the Year awards.

Parreno currently teaches ESL (English as Second Language) at Hostos Community College in the Bronx and at P.S. 75. She arrived in the US as an exchange teacher scholar at the Northern Illinois University. Prior to this post, she was an ESL teacher/supervisor at the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), a US-funded organization for refugees bound for America.

Ledy Almadin is the awardee in the field of community service. She is currently the president of the Catholic Action of Mary, a lay organization at the Resurrection Parish in Jersey City. The organization sponsors many religious activities in the community such as the Pabasa, Salubong, Simbang Gabi, pilgrimages and the Santacruznan.

Dr. Zorayda de Leon is the current president of the Hudson County Medical Society and as such, she has been very active in raising funds for the organization's various medical missions. Araceli Mendoza, the current associate director in the Renal Division of the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City and the Vice President of the Philippine Nurses Association of New York, is this year's awardee in the field of nursing.

Juliet Payabyab is no stranger to community service as well and this year, her humanitarian efforts are being recognized by PACCAL. Payabyab is the first woman president of the Philam Lions Club, the first Filipino Lions Club in the East Coast. She was also a two-term president of the Philippine American Communities Executive Council (PACEC), an umbrella organization of Filipino American civic organizations.

In the field of business, this year's awardee is Corazon Rivera, the indefatigable woman behind Bona Tierra Realty, which she established with her family back in 1988. Rhodora Ursua, on the other hand, is the honoree in the field of health and human service. Ursua is the director of Project Aspire, a community-based research project aimed at improving health access and cardiovascular health status of Filipinos in NYC and Jersey City.

Maureen Varco is the lead female vocalist for Opera 3000 and has performed in numerous shows and theatre productions. She is this year's honoree in the field of performing arts. (*Momar Visaya*)

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