

BAYANIHAN

"Bayanihan" literally means, "being a bayan (village)," and is thus used to refer to a spirit of communal unity and cooperation.

A newsletter of the Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago (FACGC) ©

PABASA* SA RIZAL CENTER THE WOODEN CROSS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

By Rowena Luna

The Rizal Center, dubbed as the "home away from home", has been a place of cultural, social and religious activities of Filipino Americans in the greater Chicago area. Those activities were disrupted for five (5) years when a rogue board of directors mounted a hostile takeover of the FACGC and the Rizal Center in January 2017. The disruption has extensively damaged the physical facility and the psyche of the Chicago FilAm community. Now, the community is back to undo the damage.

One of the revered traditional activities disrupted was the "**Pabasa**", the reading of the Passion of the Christ. Over the years especially in the decade of 2000, FACGC together with the Joy Dance Club and the First Saturday Devotees would hold the **Pabasa** on the Saturday preceding Palm Sunday. The last one held was in 2016.

On March 15, 2023, FACGC Director Mae Lant, Chairperson of the Programs Committee called for a meeting to determine if it is feasible to do the **Pabasa** again at the Rizal Center. During the meeting, I mentioned that we needed a cross and informed the group that we had a wooden cross that was a prominent feature in the past *Pabasas*. (**Continued on next page**)

"Pabasa Sa Rizal Center"

April 01, 2023
8:00AM -
1332 W. Irving Park Road
Chicago, IL 60613

Contact persons:
Mae Lant (219) 669 4829
Rowena Luna (773)726-4873

Pabasa* - the reading of the Passion of the Christ

(Continuation)

That wooden cross was fabricated by the past president of Joy Dance Club, Pepito Tiangco. I inquired about its whereabouts and nobody could tell me where it was stored. FACGC Director Sally Richmond suggested that I look for it in the meditation room.

With mixed feelings of anxiety and excitement, I went up to the meditation room and saw that the pews, the chairs, and the religious icons were gone. The room was empty. The leather parchment Way of the Cross, a creation by FACGC director Willi Buhay, was removed. The life sized statue of our Blessed Mother was relocated to a small and dirty room behind the ladies room in the main floor. FACGC director Carmen Estacio sensing that the statue was being treated poorly decided to take it home for safekeeping. It was with the thought that someday Mama Mary will make a triumphant return to the Rizal Center.

The wooden cross was nowhere in sight. I know that after the last *Pabasa* in 2016, I personally placed the cross behind the blue curtains. My natural instinct was to look behind the curtains and when I parted the blue curtains, *lo and behold*, the wooden cross was right where I placed it in 2016. I reverently embraced the cross and said “Nandito ka lang pala, (You’re just right here) all these five years watching silently from the back of the curtains.”

YES! YES! During the five year litigation, there were apprehensions in our hearts if the Filipino American Community in Chicago will ever get the Rizal Center back. We did not know that during those five long years someone we do not see, someone behind the curtain was keeping vigil over the Rizal Center silently. We are sorry for this wavering faith and thank the Lord for His everlasting love.



We invite all of you to come to the *Pabasa* on April 1, 2023 at the Rizal Center, relive the Lenten experience and see the wooden Cross that was behind the curtain, JESUS, who never abandoned us.



Rowena Luna is an active volunteer in the Chicago Filam community. She is a registered nurse by profession and is a charge nurse at the post anesthesia care unit (PACU) at the West Suburban Medical Center. Rowena is a BSN graduate of the UERMMC College of Nursing.

Healing and Visioning at the Rizal Center



For the past six years, I could not drive down Irving Park Road toward the Rizal Center without thinking about the events of April 2017. The painful memories of being forced to move the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (**AFIRE**) office in the face of hostile leadership governing the center was the opposite of the spirit that brought us there in the first place.

By Michael Aguilar

The following is a brief attempt at capturing a reflection on the sentiment of myself and others on the AFIRE staff, board, and membership who were tenants of the Rizal Center and who believed in the possibility of building a Filipino community center that everyone could call home. Even in spite of its long, tumultuous history, I still believe the Rizal Center is a place we can build together toward a bright future for our community.



Members of AFIRE Chicago in November 2016 in the basement of the Rizal Center.

In the Summer 2016, we had moved the AFIRE office from our beloved one-room space in the Progress Press, Inc. print shop to the basement of the Rizal Center. Once we entered the building it was clear the building was steeped in history and possibility. Everything from the furniture to the art work and the countless artifacts told a rich story of the Filipino community in Chicago.

It was also clear that the building needed a lot of care and maintenance. There were challenges with heating in the winter but the AFIRE team made it work and did our best to make it feel like home. (**Continued on next page**)

(Continuation)

In November 2016 we invited the Filipino community to our new office and we joyfully welcomed over 100 guests to the Rizal Center. For the first time in many years, there was an intergenerational cross-cultural party filled with art, music, food, laughter, dancing, and celebration of our mission. Many people were excited to know the Rizal Center in this new way and be a part of shaping its future alongside AFIRE.

That excitement quickly faded as the new year started in January 2017. Elaine Lehman took several actions to undermine the governing Board and mission of the Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago leading the long, protracted legal battle. Unfortunately, AFIRE was also a target for removal from the center. I will never forget the sound of Elaine Lehman ordering Chicago Police Department officers to remove AFIRE staff and dozens of senior citizens from the building. In the aftermath, we called for accountability and a restorative justice process. Those calls for accountability were refused. As we were removed from the building, our allies from across Chicago lended a hand. Advocates from Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Chicago were immediately there to support us. Friends from the Korean Americans HANA Center called us to offer aid and shelter for as long as we needed it. Many other Asian Americans stood alongside us as we continued to seek reconciliation and accountability. That journey of healing in our community continues. Even with Elaine Lehman gone, we must continue to believe in the possibility of a community space filled with everything our community needs to thrive.

We have to invest in people to make good decisions responsive to the changing needs of our community. And finally we must explore our healing as a community and build a collective vision for the Rizal Center. ###

Michael Aguilar is the former Executive Director of the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE). He is an attorney and community organizer and current Program Director at the Crossroads Fund, a public foundation supporting community organizations working on issues of racial, social, and economic justice in the Chicago area.

How to help in rebuilding the Rizal Center and making it truly “home away from home” for everyone.**VOLUNTEER**

Becoming a volunteer has many benefits. You'll be joining a team of volunteers working together in solidarity to build community. To volunteer, please email Sally Velasco-Richmond at sallyvelascor@yahoo.com or call her at 773-541-1725. For more information go to <https://rizalcenterchicago.org/volunteer-opportunities>

SPREAD THE WORD

Please share this newsletter with your friends, family, and community. Like our **Facebook** page at <https://www.facebook.com/rizalcenterchicago> and visit our **website** at <https://rizalcenterchicago.org>. Email us at: hello@rizalcenterchicago.org for any comments or suggestions for improvement.

A gift from a *FilVet** family



FACGC director and Lead of Fundraising and Development Circle Marilou Tabo (R) receiving a generous donation from Marilou Juachon (L). The gift is in honor of her late father, Jose V. Juachon, fondly called Manong Joey by his friends in the Rizal Center. Manong Joey is one of the thousands of Filipino WWII veterans* (FilVets) in America who lobbied the US Congress in passing the Filipino Veterans Equity Compensation Act of 2009. The Act authorized the U.S. government to release a one-time, lump-sum payment to eligible World War II (WWII) Philippine Veterans.

How to help in rebuilding the Rizal Center and making it truly “home away from home” for everyone.

DONATE

Please help restore Rizal Center as our home away from home. Kindly send your check payable to FACGC to 1332 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60613.
For online contribution, please go to:
<https://circapintig.networkforgood.com/projects/172580-bayanihan-for-rizal-center>

STAYING with the MISSION: The Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago will continue to pursue its charitable mission as set forth in its tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) of IRS code. (<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/exempt-purposes-internal-revenue-code-section-501c3>)

Home Away From Home: For more than five decades, Rizal Center played its unique role of providing Filipinx/a/os a “tambayan” (hang out), a club house, a cultural stage, a place for celebrating or a just safe space for “Kumustahan” (meet and greet). Now, this “home” is poised to realize the mission of our pioneers: to work in solidarity with Filipino Americans in promoting economic and socio-political empowerment anchored to the spirit of *bayanihan* (people working together).

Lumingon*



By Christine "Tina" Mindo

Some of my fondest childhood memories were from my adventures at Rizal Center, where I would spend countless weekends in the 1980s and 1990s, tagging along with my parents when they attended meetings for the Filipino organizations they belonged to.

I wandered the floors of Rizal Center, watched the "Dance Lovers" practice ballroom dancing, sat in the big woven wicker chairs in the formal room, played around in the basement with the other kids, and learned choreographed dance routines for several cotillions I was in.

Sadly, my visits there became less frequent as I grew up, but over the decades, I would sometimes drive past that yellow building on Irving Park Road thinking: "I wonder who goes there now..."

I remember the Rizal Center of yesterday: vibrant, alive, and bursting at the seams, with all things Filipino. My kids are 2nd generation American-born Filipinos and are just as hungry as I once was to learn about our Filipino culture.

Now that Rizal Center has re-opened its doors, it is my desire to help set in motion the experiences that will inspire our young Fil-Am's tell their own kids about how their parents looked back, remembered the past, and made a new way for our community's future.



*Lumingon (*To look back*)
Photo by Rainier Ridao on [Unsplash](#)

I am eager to see a cross-generational, cultural revival in our Fil-Am community in Chicagoland, with its heartbeat once again at the Rizal Center. We are resilient, proud, and collectively brilliant. We still need each other.

Kaya natin 'to! We can do it!

Christine "Tina" Mindo is a Chicago-born Fil-Am mother of two and a faithful daughter of Christ. After living in Northern California for 13 years (where she finished law school, had a solo immigration law firm, and started a family), she moved back to Chicago where she finds fulfillment in her work as a humanitarian and being of service to others however she can.

Pambansang Gunita?



Akda ni Ogot Sumulong

Naging matagumpay ang teleseryeng “Maria Clara at Ibarra” kamakailan. Bukod sa pagsasadula ng “Noli me Tangere”, maraming napukaw ang atensyon sa mga kustombre, pananamit at pananalitang Pilipino noong huling kalahati ng ika-19 siglo CE.

Sinundan ito ng “Ang mga Lihim ni Urduja” na tungkol naman sa magiting na mandirigma na pinaniniwalaang taga Pangasinan noong kalagitnaan ng ika-14 siglo CE. Maraming nag-usisa dahil inipahihiwatig nito na may angat na kultura, wika, kalakalan at teknolohiya ang mga ninuno natin noon ayon sa ulat ng kilalang Arabong manlalakbay na si Ibn Batutta. Binusisi ng ilang mananaliksik at iskolar kung tutoo nga bang nakarating siya sa kapuluan ng Pilipinas kulang-kulang na isang daang taon bago naligaw sina Magellan sa Limasawa.

Ang kultura ng sinaunang Pilipino ay binura ng Espanya pagdating at pinalitan ng kulturang piyudal, Kristiyanismu at karukhaan ng mga katutubo.”

Nang pumasok ang Amerika sa eksena, binura naman nito ang kultura ng kurus at buwis at pinalitan ng kulturang kolonyal, edukasyon para sa mga office managers nila dito at karukhaan ng mga magsasaka.

Ngayong tayo na ang namamahala sa sariling bayan, binubura natin ang ilang bahagi ng na kasaysayan at pinapalitan ng kultura ng edukasyon para sa brain drain/manpower exporting, talambuhay ng mga political dynasties at kahirapan ng magsasaka at manggagawa.

Sa kultura ng pagbubura at kahirapan, tanging mga wika natin ang nanatili laban sa mga pananakop. Sila ang nag-ingat ng ating mga sinaunang bugtong, salawikain, awit, kurido, uyayi at alamat. Sila ang sumukat ng lalim at lawak ng dunong, talino at galing ng ating mga ninuno. Sila ang lumikha ng mga mapa ng pakikipagkalakalan at paglalayag sa karagatan na naging palatandaan ng ating pagkabansa (“nationhood”) at pagkamakabayani (“nationalism”).

Sa kanila, matatarok natin ang mga binurang pambansang alaala at mababanaagan ang tindi ng ating pambansang karanasan. Sa kanila rin natin matatanto ang mailap na pambansang kaakuhan (“national identity”) ng ating bayan. Sa gayon, tayo ay magkaunawaan at magkaisa sa pag-ahon ng bayan sa nanggitatang kahirapan ng ating kasaysayan at kultura.

Sambit ni Jose Rizal sa linya ni Simon kay Basilio sa ika-7 kabanata ng “El Filibustirismo”, “ang wika ay ang kaisipan ng bayan”. Tara na’t busisiin pa lalo ang ating nakalipas. Ukipkilin ang mga iniwang at di pa natatagpuang yaman ng mga ninuno upang mabuo ang ating pambansang gunita.

Gamitin na ang ating mga wika*!

Si Ogot Sumulong ay Retirado. Interesado sa nagbabagong anyo at kasalukuyang paggamit ng ating wika at panitikan. Nahihilig din sa mga paksain hinggil sa sinaunang kasaysayan ng bayang tinubuan.

*Filipino ang pambansang wika ng Pilipinas, na nakabase sa wikang Tagalog.

ANG DALAN PADULONG SA PAG ANGKON SA CITIZENSHIP*



By Vangie Lavado

"If you love your work' you will never work a day in your life."

Ang Estado sa Illinois maoy pinuy-anan sa 1.8 milyon nga mga imigrante. Sa maong mga imigrante, 850,000 ang US citizen, ug ang laing 370,000 ang kasamtangang kwalipikado nga mahimong citizen.

Sa pagsugod nako ug trabaho sa Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE) niadtong Agosto, 2018, dinihi ko gibutang sa programa sa NAI (New American Initiative). Kining maong programa sa AFIRE ang mitabang sa mga Green Card holders nga gustong mo aplay ug US Citizenship. Alang kanako, usa ka dakong hagit ang maong trabaho. Dunay daghang pangalan sa mga Pilipino nga anaa sa listahan. Kada adlaw, ang among buhat mao ang pagtawag sa mga ngalan nga anaa sa listahan. Usahay motubag, kadaghanan dili motubag ang mga tawagon. Kinahanglan ang dakung pasensya aning maong trabaho kay ang tumong mao man ang pagtabang sa komunidad sa Pilipino. Kada adlaw, among tan-awon ang telepono kung dunay miss call o voice mail. Tanang voice mail o missed call maoy tawagon aron makita o mabati nila nga seryoso ang maong opisina sa pagtabang bisan kinsa.

Pinaagi niining akong trabaho, nakabaton ko ug daghang higala ug milambo ang pakig relasyon, pakig lambigit sa mga Pilipino sama kanako. Sa sulod sa lima ka tuig nga trabaho sa AFIRE, dili na nako maihap ang kadaghan sa Pilipino nga nahimong citizen sa Amerika.

Sa wala pa ang Covid 19, halos kada bulan dunay Citizenship Workshop. Ang Organizer niadtong panahona nga si TJ Collanto, kugihan kayo nag mo outreach sa mga Pilipino business establishments ug sa mga simbahan diin daghang Filipino parishioners.

Niadong April, 2021, kwalipikado na ko nga mo aplay busa akong nasinati kung unsay bation sa usa ka aplikante. Nasinati nako ang kakulba, kabalaka ug kahadlok. Apan sa akong eksperyensya, dili diay angay nga bation ug kahadlok kay ang mga tawo nga nag silbi sa mga aplikante dunay kahibalo ug matinabangon sa tanan aron mahimong sayon ang mga buluhaton.

Kung unsay akong natun-an sa dihang ako mismo ang nag aplay, akong gipaambit sa tanang aplikante aron mahimong sayon alang kanila. Busa, akong gina awdag ang komunidad sa mga Pilipino dinihi sa Chicago ug ang tibuok Estado sa Illinois nga kung kwalipikado na nga mo aplay, ayaw sayangi ang higayon. Ania ang AFIRE nga motabang sa mga aplikante. Ang AFIRE mao ang modala kaninyo sa atong partner Agency, ang Erie Neighborhood House. Motabang sila aron ang inyong damgo nga mahimong citizen inyong makab-ot.

Daghang benipisyo ang atong matagamtam kung ikaw usa ka citizen sa nasud sa Amerika. Makaangkon ka sa tanang katungod, benipisyo ug responsibilidad sa usa ka hingpit nga miyembro sa Estados Unidos.

Busa, ayaw sayanga ang dakung oportunidad nga naa ga hulat kanatong tanan.

###

Gihugugma ni Inday (Vangie Lavado,gipanganak sa Midsayap, North Cotabato) ang iyang trabaho, busa wala siya nagtrabaho bisag usa ka adlaw sa iyang kinabuhi.

**Cebuano language is named after the island of Cebu, and is also known as Bisaya, Sebuano, Sugbuhanon, Sugbuhanon or Visayan. It is the second most spoken language in the Philippines.*



By Mae Lant

Naimbag nga aldaw yo amin, kakabsat ken kailian. Agyamyaman kami kadakayo amin nga tumartaripato ti programa tayo nga pudno nga puso (**heart truth**). Daytoy nga programa ket naidaton kadatayo nga sangkailian nga Pilipino. Ti sakit ti puso ket maysa nga kangangatuwan nga problema ti Pilipino ditoy America. Kadagitoy nga panawen, bassit nga sukisok ti mabasbasa tayo maipanggep ti sakit ti puso, atake nga mangparparalisado ti kakailian tayo.

Pudno nga puso ket programa nga mangpadas nga mangsukisok ti Kultura tayo nangnangruna kadagidi ugali nga makadadael ti puspuso tayo, kas dagiti makan nga nangato ti manteka ken

Pudno nga Puso*

asin na, bassit nga panagwatwat ti bagi, panagsigsigarilyo, ken bassit nga turog ken panaginana.

Duwa nga grupo ti nalpas tay napalabas nga duwa nga lawas, nga nakaited ti sungbat kadigit saludsod ti National Institute of Health. Ti resulta na ket dakkel nga tulong para kadatayo tapno maatipa ken nasapa nga pannakaamo nu kasano tay nga pasayaaten ti biag tayo.

Kadagiti nag participar ti panagsulisok ditoy Rizal Center, agyaman kami appo ti an anus ken interes yo. Sapay kuma ta agnanayon ti interes you maipanggep ti salun at tay nga Pilipino ditoy America.

Naipapusuan nga yaman mi kadakayo amin. Diyos ti agngina. ###

Mae Lant came to the US in 1979 and finished her Post Graduate Course in Psychiatric Nursing at University of Illinois, College of Nursing in 1989. She has been an active volunteer at Rizal Center since 1987 when she founded the Kultura Pilipina Dance Company of Chicago. She learned Ilocano in high school. Ilocano is an Austronesian language spoken in the Philippine. It is the third most-spoken native language in the country.*

The Heart Truth

This program aims to evaluate and improve the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's "The Heart Truth and Healthy Heart, Healthy Family" curriculum and supporting materials to ensure that the resources are relevant for education in heart disease in the Filipino community. Filipino Americans are among the three largest communities of Asian Americans in the United States, and they have a higher ranking of heart disease risk factors, including hypertension and diabetes, than other subgroups. Curriculum evaluation is outdated because it has been over a decade since the curriculum was first used.

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

NIH National Heart Lung Blood Institute Heart Truth® Curriculum Evaluation

Do you care about the heart health of Filipino and Filipinx/a/o American Communities? We are recruiting participants to chikahan about NIH NHLBI Healthy Hearts, Healthy Families curriculum in 90-minute focus groups.

Principal Investigators:
Melissa Palma, MD, MPH
Angela Ebreo, PhD

Contact research@fylpro.org for more information.

THE heart TRUTH® Community Subcontract Program

Receive a \$75 stipend for participation!

tayo **FYLPRO** **NIH**

ELIGIBILITY

- Over 18 years old
- Have Filipino heritage or identity as Filipinx/a/o American
- Lives in the US
- Community Health Worker/Barangay Health Worker
- Health professional or Health professional student
- Caregivers and persons living with heart disease

Contact research@fylpro.org for more information.

THE heart TRUTH® Community Subcontract Program

Receive a \$75 stipend for participation!

tayo **FYLPRO** **NIH**

Of Sinag Dreams and The Rizal Center



By Geraldine Martinez-Benz

A few Sundays back, I was in a Zoom meeting with five other filipino-americans to discuss an art grant Rizal Center could apply for. Interestingly enough the move wasn't initiated by an artist but a lawyer named Christine.

This is one of the many surprises I have encountered since I ventured into the Filipino community outside of my small group of friends. I must confess I have heard a lot of negative talk about Filipino organizations in the U.S. even when I was still living in the Philippines.

How we were fragmented, and couldn't get together into a one cohesive group because of our regionalistic mindset having grown up in a country composed of 7,100 plus islands. This was at the back of my mind when I started *Sinag*, a Filipino American art collective in greater Chicago. Yet two years later, we are still growing and members are nothing but supportive of each other.

This first online meeting with the Rizal Center group proved to be a very promising and positive experience

In fact, when it drew to a close I remarked that when I wrote about my dreams for *Sinag* and the Rizal Center, these seemed eons away. But now a month after, I see a glimmer of hope. Faint it maybe, but I will take it.

So what are these dreams?

Back when I was working as a manager for an apparel company in the Philippines,

in a team building exercise the moderator asked us to visualize what our brand would look like if sky's the limit. Using the same method this is how I see what *Sinag* and Rizal Center would be if we have a generous arts grant to fund it:

- A studio where artists can share a large room, in shifts or gather as a group to talk ideas, work together or just shoot the breeze.
- Holding a Philippine themed art and cultural workshops (during summer and/or school breaks) for Filipino American students. Classes can include painting, origami, puppet making, learning Tagalog, Baybayin, cooking, music, art therapy, recycled art, digital art, film-making etc. Student materials and snacks will be shouldered by the grant. These will be taught by different *Sinag* members and guest artists. After the workshop there will be an exhibit, program and reception.
- A space for *Sinag* to exhibit maybe 2-3x a year.
- A paint by number mural similar to Disney parks where guests of Rizal center, be they artists or non-artists, young and old, can paint a small area of the mural designed by local Filipino American artists, literally leaving their mark and making them a part of the Rizal Center. A great bonding time for families and friends. Won't that be fun?

I am sure there are a million ideas out there for what Rizal Center could be. Just as I am sure other Filipino American have their own dreams for the place. This building has been the home to groundbreaking advances like the Filipino WWII Veterans Equity Compensation Act of 2009 (please see photo caption on page 5) and adding the Tagalog translation to Illinois voting ballots in 2020.

But the thing is during the meeting nobody talked of their own advocacies. In attendance were Jerry Clarito (FACGC board chairman), Ging Mascarenas (founder of Circa Pintig), James Bulosan (artist, art therapist and former art teacher), Mae Lant (FACGC director), and Christine Mindo, (please her article on page 6).

(Continued on next page)

(Continuation)

The talk was centered on the arts and how to best approach the grant application. I came out of it impressed by the sincerity of the people to do something and the ideas that were brought up.

While I am excited about the prospect, there is also a cautionary voice about not setting myself up for disappointment. But isn't that true for anything that is important in our lives? There will always be gambles and risks involved just like marriage, change of career in pursuit of a passion, choice of what degree to take in college, the decision to have children. And the need for patience...lots of it.

Good things take time. It is a daunting task but we are Filipinos, nothing is ever handed to us on a silver platter. Overcoming adversities is in our blood, if we work together, we will get things done. As the legendary artist Willie Buhay told me, the building where Rizal Center is in now was purchased back in 1974 by Filipino Americans, including the janitor, chipping in \$5-\$50.

If they could make a dream come true back then, why can't we do it now?

If you share my dreams or have one of your own, please volunteer. Let your friends know. They might just surprise you with wanting to get involved too.

###

Geraldine "Geri" Martinez-Benz is a Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate with a major in Painting from the University of the Philippines – Cebu City. She has shared her love for the visual arts through several summer art workshops in the Philippines which she organized and facilitated. She has exhibited in the Philippines, Chicago and Evanston. She is the founder of Sinag Filipino-American Artists of Greater Chicago, @sinag_chicago_art in Instagram.

Filipina American is 2023 Skokie Idol Champion

Trina Milo-Nicolasin brought the Skokie Theater audience up on their feet with her hauntingly beautiful rendition of "She Used To Be Mine" from the musical Waitress, and her stirring cover of Brandi Carlile's "My Story." Both songs that she sang during the finals held at the Skokie Theater on March 10 showcased her vocal range and the quality of her tone. The judges praised her command of her instrument; with her low notes resonating throughout the theater and the power notes mesmerizing the audience.

The contest started with a weekly show via Zoom with contestants submitting video recordings of themselves singing tunes according to a weekly theme and musical genre. Mrs. Milo-Nicolasin sang the Filipino song, "*Ikaw*" for Heritage Week (<http://bit.ly/3nnzjtn> at 49:32 mark). Skokie Idol was launched by Wendy Kaplan and Wayne Mell of the Skokie Theater in 2014 and the annual winners in both the teen and adult divisions were presented in a concert as part of the Village of Skokie's Wednesdays on The Green next to the Skokie Village Library.



This year's concert will feature Mrs. Milo-Nicolasin along with Teen Division winner Maya Zamir at 7pm on Wednesday, July 5 at 5187 Oakton St, Skokie IL 60077. For more information about the concert, please contact the Skokie Theater at (847) 677-7761 and The Skokie Chamber or Commerce and Industry.

GLOBAL BAYANIHAN IN ACTION

Gawad Kalinga (GK) Chicago Celebrates a Night of Hope and Gratitude

Holiday Inn, Skokie, IL

The night of March 25th was dubbed as GK Hope Ball 2023 to raise funds for the benefit of the development of the North Cotabato Productivity Hub in the Philippines.

More than raising funds, the GK Chicago core group provided the space and time for the gathering of GK advocates from different parts of the country, recommitting to their mission of building villages for the poor in the Philippines, and making **HOPE** a dream and a reality in ending poverty for five millions of Filipino families by 2024.

Different speakers recalled the enormous work done by GK for the last 20 years. On her part, GK Chicago Board member Josie Disterhoff opened her speech by acknowledging the presence of many GK advocates and re-introducing GK to all guests.

*“I am delighted at your presence tonight to learn about and support our organization called **Gawad Kalinga**. Thank you to our guests from Texas, Maryland, Missouri, California, and of course, Chicago.”*

Before her ask for support, Josie punctuated the glorious achievements of GK from building homes, preschools, and community centers to creating kitchens, running schools for young agriculturists, and creating access to markets. She highlighted the strategic and pioneering anti-poverty interventions like the North Cotabato Productivity Hub.

She said, “ GK has taken what it has learned from the past 20 years and wants to work with communities into productivity, first in terms of food sufficiency for the community, then in terms of economic stability. The North Cotabato Productivity Hub in Mindanao for which we are requesting your support, is one of 3 concurrent pilot projects.”

The North Cotabato Productivity Hub aims to:

- establish community agri-enterprises that can increase family income by at least P5,000 (about USD100),
- build employable and income generating capabilities among the youth for the agri-sector,
- improve health and well-being to reduce annual medical expenditures,
- and create savings and investment mechanisms to support quality education.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.gk-usa.org/>



John Disterhoff (R) reading the message of GK Chicago Board member Josie Disterhoff (L)