

Member Spotlight - Christine Lauguico

Growing up in Manila, my hometown, I was immersed in a vibrant fusion of Filipino culture and Generation X influences. The intriguing staple food of vendors calling out “balut, penoy!” and my mom’s love feeding us fishballs with sweet vinegar sauce are still vivid in my memory. My childhood was a whirlwind of laughter, adventure, and simple pleasures. It was because I grew up with my cousins with crazy and daring ideas, all while my dad imparted invaluable practical advice—like checking any holes in a mosquito net before bed.



HOLLAND RIDGE FARM, NJ



Portrait painting in action

As I pursued higher education, my passions for singing, dancing, and art flourished for a year in a Bachelor of Fine Arts program. However, they eventually shifted to a course that ultimately led me to graduate with a Marketing degree from the College of the Holy Spirit in 1989. Becoming a mother to Celina, John, and Eunice was a experience. Now, as I enter my sixth decade, the joy of having grandchild is unparalleled.

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As I continue my journey, my inclination towards art has been incredibly exhilarating. It ignites and accelerates my creativity, allowing me to explore a diverse range of artistic styles. In 2019, I joined the Fil-Am Community Devt Center (FCDC), an exhilarating experience that has allowed me to share my talents with the members of FACES, particularly during the art classes we organized together. Last 2021 , FACES organized its inaugural Kids Arts Show at the Toms River Art Gallery, and I was fortunate enough to be a part and lead the event. It was an absolute delight to witness the remarkable talents of the young artists, and we even had two shows in 2021 to showcase our work within the local art community.

Life in America can be challenging, but my 17 years as a Nursing Assistant have instilled in me unwavering resilience and an indescribable sense of joy. The FCDC holds immense significance for our Filipino community as a nonprofit organization that proudly honors our heritage and values. I am grateful to have served on the board since 2021.



Olpererhutte, Austria



Graffiti Art Lane, Melbourne



Astronomical Clock, Prague



FCDC's Art class

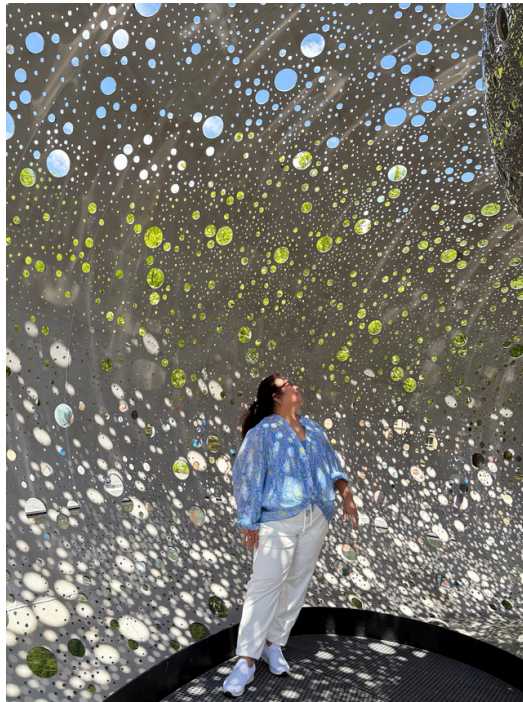
My art is a reflection of my very soul—each brushstroke, line, and color reveals my essence. I harmonize my values, art, and travels to share my talents with young children, using art as a powerful tool to enhance their critical thinking skills.

In conclusion, let me share this profound truth:

Art is the essence of life, and life is an art form—never relentlessly pursue what truly resonates with your heart.



Kaws' sculpture , Australia



Auroboros by Linda Lee, Australia



Poppies art, commissioned





President's Corner

by Jasmine Alcid

SCHOLARSHIP

Our Dr. Ynaya scholarship submission application deadline is March 31st. Please make sure to submit complete requirements. Winners will receive \$2,000 each to be used for their educational needs. Announcement of winners will be in May through FCDC Today.



Our annual traditional procession is happening on May 10, 2025 at St. Luke's Church. Have your kids participate by signing up on the signupgenius link emailed to you. There will also be refreshments, entertainment and socialization after the procession and mass. Hope to see you there!

FCDC BAND

We are creating a new group in FCDC to play Filipino favorites. If you want to be a part of the group, please sign up on the link emailed. There will be a professional to manage the initial practices. Children and adults are welcome!



FILIPINO SUMMER CAMP

Our 4th Filipino Summer Camp will be on July 14-18, 2025. It's free for annual members. It's a great way to learn about culture and tradition while having fun with friends. Volunteer time will also be given to teen camp leaders. Watch out for the signup link that will be emailed in May.



SPRING CLEANING

We are collecting gently used clothing, shoes for teens and adults, accessories, handbags and household items (small kitchenware). Donations will help support individuals and families experiencing homelessness and hardship. Donations will be sent to Just Believe, a non-profit group. Donations will be accepted on April 26, 2025, 2pm.

ANNUAL DUES

We appreciate those who have paid their annual dues for this year. We are reminding those who haven't sent their payments to use the signup genius link emailed to you. Annual dues help us operate our activities. This is also required to be able to join Filipino Summer Camp and field trips. Annual dues are due in January and good until December.





Filipino-American Community and Development Center of Ocean County, Inc. (FCDC)

presents

Dr. RENE YNAYA Scholarship 2025

A financial scholarship given to a graduating high school student attending a public or private school in Ocean County who will attend a 4-year college course.

Dr. Rene Ynaya was a cardiologist in Toms River who practiced his profession for over 50 years. He was a founding member of FCDC and FAMS (Filipino-American Medical Society) of Toms River.

Criteria/Requirements or Consideration

1. Open to FCDC/ FACES members or any Filipino-American students in Ocean County.
2. Student must be in good standing that demonstrates an interest in pursuing a 4-year college program.
3. Student must write an essay on why they have an interest in his/her chosen field (maximum of 350 words).
4. Student must submit a 3 year GPA in high school.
5. Student must submit 2 letters of recommendation from a teacher or influential adult in their lives (non-family member) as to why he/she deserves to receive the scholarship.
6. Student must submit a resume detailing extracurricular activities, years of membership and involvement in FCDC/FACES, and other volunteer/community services.
7. A photo must be attached.

Winners will receive \$2,000 and will be awarded at the end of the school year.

For questions/comments, please contact FCDC or email fcdcteam@gmail.com
Deadline of Submission: March 31,2025



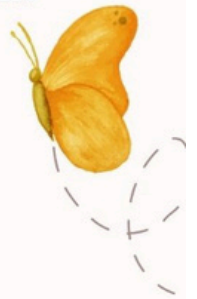
✦ Clean Out for a Cause! ✦

Donate Gently Used Items & Make a Difference!

It's time to clear out those closets, drawers, and storage bins!

We are collecting gently used

- ✓ Clothing (Adults & teens only -all seasons, all sizes)
- ✓ Shoes (in good condition)
- ✓ Accessories (hats, scarves, belts, jewelry, etc.)
- ✓ Handbags, Backpacks, Totes
- ✓ Household Items- kitchenware, NO linens or beddings



Your donations will help support individuals and families experiencing homelessness and hardship through Just Believe, Inc.—a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting those in need right here in Toms River, NJ.

Every item makes a difference!

OUR FACES KIDS, YOUTH (Barkada) and members will be dropping all their donations at their thrift store located at

734 Route 37 West, Ste. 5 (same plaza as Aldi)

Toms River, NJ 08755

on Saturday, April 26, 2025, 2 pm and

grab a bite afterwards!

♥ Thank you for helping us bring hope, dignity, and support to our community!



For any questions please email fdccteam@gmail.com



WORD OF THE DAY

Gigil: A New Addition to the Oxford Dictionary

The Oxford English Dictionary has officially added "gigil" to its extensive collection of words, recognizing the unique expression from the Filipino language. "Gigil" (pronounced GHEE-gheel) refers to the overwhelming urge to squeeze or pinch something irresistibly cute or endearing. Often associated with the intense feeling of excitement or affection, it perfectly captures the instinctive reaction many feel toward adorable babies, pets, or even loved ones.

This inclusion highlights the rich, expressive nature of the Filipino language and its growing influence on global culture. With "gigil" now part of the English lexicon, people worldwide can better articulate that delightful, uncontrollable feeling we have all experienced.



SANTACRUZAN
SAVE THE
date

**FCDC's 7th Santacruzán
LIVE procession!**

When: May 10, 2025, Saturday
St. Luke's Church,
1674 Old Freehold Rd, Toms River, NJ

Time: 2:00pm Assembly
2:30-3:30 Procession
4:00pm Mass
5:00pm Refreshments at the
St Luke's Social Hall

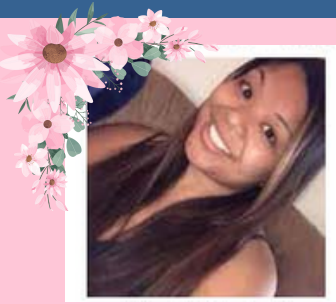
Potluck: Sign-up genius link attached

For any questions please email
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[CLICK HERE TO SIGN-UP FOR POTLUCK](#)



***LETTER FROM THE
EDITOR
by Jamie Mariano***



I can finally say that the holiday season has come to an end. Between holidays and birthdays, for me, the holidays are from October to mid-March. Despite the celebrations slowing down (they're not quite over since Easter is on its way!), parenting doesn't end. Soccer season is on the horizon for my daughter, and depending on what my sons plan to do, sports and camp sign-ups are also just around the corner.

I often wonder what life would have been like at my age with no kids, and I can honestly say I'd rather not have too much time on my hands! The hustle of being a mom has given my life meaning, and besides a career and serving my church (which I already have and already do!), what more could my life need if I were childless? Yes, I'd have more money ... but to do what? Travel? Eat more expensive food? Pay my bills on time? Done, even with kids, by the immeasurable grace of God.

All of us are on our own path. Some with kids, some without. Some with full-time careers that require clocking in and out, some with more flexible businesses that allow for more time with family and traveling. Some of us are thrill-seeking people searching for the next adventure. Some of us lead more quiet lives, sitting at home crocheting, reading, or watching television, and are content staying put instead of jumping on the next flight to an exotic destination.

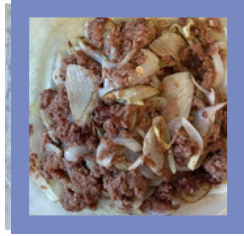
Our personalities and preferences dictate the kind of life we lead. Our circumstances and choices determine what happens to us as we try to live the life we want. I might be content and grateful for what I have right now, but that's the surface. Chip away at the iceberg of my life, and you'll see the depth of the sweat and tears, wrong turns, and bad judgment calls that brought me to where I am today.

Find what gives your life meaning and let that be what leads you to make wise choices, feel content with what you have, and allows you to dream of what might come next. None of our lives are identical. So, whether you're a busy mom and full-time employee, a world traveler, or you're a homebody content with books and the occasional guest, don't fall into the comparison game! Don't question if you're where you are supposed to be in comparison to others. Your timeline and your home life are uniquely yours.



COOKING INSPIRATION

by Zachary Lichter



There's one holiday that everyone celebrates during March and that is St. Patrick's Day. Whether you're Filipino, American, Irish, or have any other ethnicity, everyone's Irish on St. Patrick's Day. Now there is one dish that everyone eats during the month of March, and that is corned beef. Some American restaurants and Irish pubs will run a St. Patrick's Day special between March 1st through March 17th. Of course, corned beef will be one of the specials.

I have a confession to make. I'm not a big fan of corned beef and cabbage because of the smell and the taste. I remember my mom cooked it one year and I smelled it while I was playing outside with one of my friends because the window was open. It smelled awful and she stopped making it the year after. While eating corned beef is a St. Patrick's Day tradition, my Mom decided to cook me the Filipino version of corned beef. It's super easy to make and smells a lot better. I actually eat it every year on St. Patrick's Day. In fact, I made it last week and it tasted good.

What makes Filipino corned beef different from Irish corned beef is that you can buy it in the can at the grocery store under the brand, Libby's Corned Beef. You cook it with vidalia onions in a frying pan. The reason why I recommend this specific onion is because it's sweet. Be sure to serve it with rice because it takes away all of the salt from the corned beef. You can also eat it with a sunnyside up egg on the side. If you want to get creative, you can chop up a russet potato into tiny pieces and make a corned beef hash.

Here is my mom (Sharon Lichter) / Lola's (Nancy Ynaya) recipe for corned beef:

Ingredients

- 1 can of Libby's Corned Beef (You can add more if you want)
- 1 sliced vidalia onion (You can add more if you want)
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil (You can also spray the frying pan with Pam Cooking Spray, which is healthier)

Directions

1. Spray the pan with vegetable oil or cooking spray and add the onions
2. Saute the onions until they become soft
3. As the onions are cooking, you can open the can of corned beef. Read the directions very carefully on how to open the can because there is a key on the side of the can that is supposed to help you open it.
4. After the onions have soften, pour the can of corned beef into the frying pan
5. Crush the corned beef with a spoon and mix with the onions until it is fully cooked.
6. Share and enjoy!

Ensuring Inclusion for All: A New Committee for Disabilities and Accessibility at FACES

Hello everyone! My name is Matthew Villanueva, and I'm a junior at MATES. I have been part of FACES for as long as I can remember. This organization has been a huge part of my life, and I'm excited to start a new committee focused on disability awareness, accessibility and inclusion (The Disabilities and Accessibility Committee).

Many individuals with disabilities, like my brother David, who is on the autism spectrum, face barriers to participation in events. Sensory sensitivities, for example, can make it challenging for some members to fully take part in our activities. Inspired by organizations like the Theatre Development Fund (TDF) in New York—which provides accessibility accommodations so individuals with disabilities can better experience Broadway shows, I also want FACES to be a place where everyone can participate comfortably.

One of the key goals of this committee is to create a system where members can access accommodations based on their needs. This could include sensory-friendly modifications, quiet spaces, or other supports that they may need/request.

Accessibility goes beyond sensory needs as well. As someone with food allergies, I know firsthand how difficult it can be to participate in group activities when safe food options aren't available. That's why another priority of this committee is to provide allergy-friendly options, to make sure that food served at FACES events includes alternatives free of most common food allergens.

As I start this committee, my goal is to focus on three key areas:

1. Raising Awareness – Many people don't understand disabilities simply because they can't imagine what it's like to have them. Our committee will help educate our community through social media campaigns, FCDC newsletter articles, and discussions that challenge misconceptions.

2. Improving Accessibility – We'll work to make community events more inclusive by suggesting accommodations like sensory-friendly spaces, allergy-friendly options, as well as sign language interpreters, or accessible seating for those with mobility challenges.

3. Building Friendships and Support Systems – Sometimes, what people with disabilities need most is an accepting environment. By hosting inclusive social events, we'll create a space where everyone—both with and without disabilities—can come together, have fun, and support one another.

How You Can Help:

Starting this committee is just the beginning. If you're a FACES member who wants to make a difference, you don't have to be an expert or have direct experience with disabilities to get involved—all you need is a willingness to learn and advocate for others.

Here are a few ways to help:

- **Join the committee and be part of the conversation.**
- **Listen to individuals with disabilities and their families to understand their needs.**
- **Educate yourself on the different kinds of disabilities**
- **Encourage your school or community to be more inclusive in their events and policies.**
- **Spread awareness through social media, art, or writing.**

Disability inclusion is something we should all care about. By starting this committee, I hope to make our FACES/FCDC community a place where no one feels left out. Change starts with you, and I believe that together, we can create a more inclusive and understanding community for everyone!

**Contact
Us**

**If you wish to join, kindly email me at
matthewvillanueva0220@gmail.com**



ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT

by Ferlie Almonte
Speaker. Author. Life Coach.

HOSPITAL REDEFINED

A trip to the hospital is rarely something people look forward to going unless it's for a happy occasion like the birth of a baby. More often than not, a visit to the hospital is a result of an accident, an illness, injury. Some catastrophic or life-threatening. Those bring us to our knees. Whether we are aware or not, hospitals often change us. The tough softens. The sweetest ones turn into warriors. So many people who take life for granted suddenly feel vulnerable. Some feel a new sense of urgency to live fully and boldly with whatever time they've got left, Others realize what matters most in life. Priorities shift. Hospitals bring out the raw truth. In ourselves, life's nice and harsh realities, our belief system, and how we can apply the lessons we learned from being in a hospital from different points of view.

For this month's issue of the FCDC newsletter, I've decided to share this profound reflection by Pope Francis on hospitals. It invites us all to be introspective on how the true beauty of humanity humbly unveils itself in its loving and purest form, in hospitals.

Definition of "HOSPITAL"

By Pope Francis

"Hospital walls have heard more honest prayers than churches ...

They've seen far more sincere kisses than kisses at airports ...

It is at the hospital that you see a homophobic being saved by a gay doctor.

The "patricinha" doctor saving the life of a beggar ...

In the ICU you see a Jew taking care of a racist ...

A police patient and a prisoner in the same ward receiving the same care ...

A rich patient in the liver transplant queue ready to receive the organ from a poor donor ...

It is at these times when the hospital touches the wounds of people that universes intersect on purpose divine and in this communion of destinies we realize that alone we are nobody!

The absolute truth of people, most of the time, only appears at the moment of pain or the real threat of definitive loss.

Hospital, a place where human beings strip off their masks and show themselves as they are in their true essences.

This life will pass quickly, do not fight with people, do not criticize your body so much.

Don't complain so much.

Don't lose sleep over the bills.

Be sure to kiss your love ones.

Don't worry so much about making the house spotless.

Goods and assets must be conquered by each one, do not dedicate yourself to accumulating inheritance.

Keep the dogs closer.

Don't keep the bowls.

Use the new cutlery.

Don't skimp on your favorite perfume, use it for a walk with yourself.

Wear your favorite sneakers, repeat your favorite clothes, so what?

If it is not wrong, why not be now?

Why not take a break?

Why not call now?

Why not forgive now?

Christmas, Friday, the next year is very much expected, when you have money, when love comes, when everything is perfect ...

Look, there is no such thing as perfect.

The human being cannot achieve this because he was simply not made to complete himself here.

Here is a learning opportunity.

So, enjoy this life essay and do it now ...

Respect yourself, respect others; follow your path and leave the path chosen by other people, respect : do not comment, judge or meddle ..

Love more, forgive more, embrace more, live more intensely and leave the rest in the Hands of the Creator.”

~Pope Francis



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