



# FCDC TODAY

Filipino-American Community &  
Development Center of Ocean County Inc.  
2014 Bayaning Pilipino Awardee  
November 2025

## Member Spotlight - Brian Suatengco



My name is Brian Suatengco and I am currently 29 years old. I was originally born in Cebu where I lived in an orphanage until I was 1. I was blessed to be adopted by my mother and father, Drs. Ramon and Loida Suatengco, who brought me back here to the States. They enrolled me in St. Joseph's Grade School where I was able to obtain my basic learning and fundamental religious faith. Catholic school was a blessing in that it brought me closer to God at such a young age. I was surrounded by like minded individuals as well as good spiritual leaders.

After grade school I attended Monsignor Donovan High School here in Toms River. It is now named Donovan Catholic. I spent those next 4 years preparing myself both mentally and spiritually for college. High school was fun and I was on the swim team all four years. I was the county champion in the 100 breaststroke my freshman year. My senior year I was voted boys team captain. Being a student athlete was both tiring and rewarding. It forced me to allocate time for my studies as well as my swim practice. It taught me time management skills, but more importantly, it taught me how to function efficiently when tired.

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After Donovan, I attended Rowan University where I studied Marketing. I was a member of the swim team my freshman year but ultimately decided to give it up to focus on school. College was harder for me as I had never been away from home for a prolonged period. It was a major adjustment for me, but I eventually got the hang of it. I joined the Filipino club on campus as well as attended as many on-campus events as possible. By doing so, I was able to make new connections and friends. I continued my studies there until I graduated in 2018. I currently work for Atlantic Printing and Design as an account manager, where I discuss with clients about their projects and how best to create them.

As a child I was unaware of my parents involvement in the community, and how integrated their roles were with this organization as well as FAMS. I was a member of the first FACES group, where I learned about Filipino culture and basic Tagalog through song and dance. I have fond memories of going to the Citta gym and attending class with my friends. Being that my parents were founding members, I was encouraged to attend every event and learn as much as I could about my culture. I have fond memories of performing at the FACES play, as well as breakdancing with my friends during Simbang Gabi. I am also so lucky to say that my wife was also a member of the inaugural FACES class. At the time I did not have any interest in her, but both being members brought us closer together as we got older.



I was also a member of the Ocean County YMCA swim team for as long as I can remember. I swam with the Tiger Shark team where I made State and National finals. My wife Gabby was also a member of the team, and we swam together until we went to college. We both lifeguarded together at Ortley Beach for 5 years, and she also attended both St. Joe's and Donovan with me. I think you see a pattern. I was lucky enough to marry her on April 30, 2022, and we now have 2 beautiful children, Sophie Grace and Benny Ramon.

It is a unique feeling now having children of our own. We recently attended the FCDC Halloween party where both my kids got dressed up. I remember not too long ago being one of the kids performing, and it's exciting to think that in a few years my kids will be up there dancing and singing. My family is looking forward to attending the FCDC Christmas party next month! My daughter in particular really enjoys the events. She's 2.5 years old now and starting to understand that these parties are a good time. I'm looking forward to watching both her and my son make friends with the other kids. They really are my whole world.

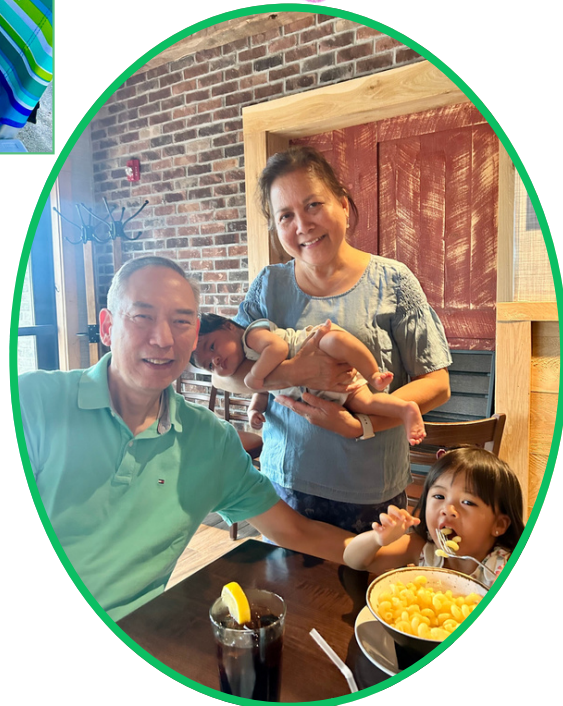


In my spare time, I love to spend time with my family going to the beach and boardwalk, paddle boarding, mountain biking, and especially surfing. My daughter loves the water and really enjoys riding in our kayak. Once she can confidently swim, she wants to learn how to surf. My wife and I used to surf together before having kids, and we're super thrilled that our kids want to take part in that activity with us. We find that the ocean heals both body and mind.

Balancing family life with work life can be stressful, but through support from family and loved ones, we find the strength to carry on. If there is one thing I've learned, it that we must never give up. Always continue to reach your goals, and never forget that family is forever.



grateful  
thankful  
blessed





## President's Corner

*by Jasmine Alcid*



# Thankful for everything

This Thanksgiving, we express heartfelt gratitude for good health, the warmth of family, and the steadfast presence of friends, especially within our Filipino community. Through FCDC, we practice bayanihan by looking out for each other, sharing meals, and keeping our traditions alive while we build roots here in our second home. We're thankful for the resilience that sustains us through challenges, the care of loved ones near and far, and the opportunity to extend generosity to neighbors and newcomers. May this season strengthen our bonds, honor our heritage, and enrich the broader American mosaic with the grace of unity and mutual support.

FCDC values the individuals involved in our programs and projects, as they not only enhance language skills and cultural understanding but also bridge the gap between elders and younger members. This connection fortifies intergenerational bonds and helps preserve heritage for future generations. By participating in events, volunteering, or assisting in program organization, you contribute to a lively community life that educates neighbors and promotes inclusion.

I could not let this Thanksgiving pass without saying thanks to all our sponsors and benefactors. Without their support, it would not be easy to organize and execute our activities. Maraming Salamat po to the generous people of FCDC and friends.

THERE IS  
so much  
TO BE  
Thankful  
FOR



# Gentle Reminders

- **Giving Tuesday - December 2**

- We will be doing our annual Facebook drive for those who want to donate to FCDC programs and activities especially to the youth. Some of the activities are educational programs like Filipino Camp and Ensemble where kids learn how to play popular Filipino songs through the special arrangement and direction of a professional. Donations will be accepted through PayPal, Zelle, or check.



- **FCDC Holiday Party - December 13**

- Join us as we celebrate the end of year with a Holiday Party! Signupgenius link have been emailed to you. Sign up before the seats run out. Limited seating only.



- **Dr. Rene Ynaya Scholarship**

- This is open to senior high school students who have an intention to pursue a 4-year college course. Stay tuned for the criteria which will be posted soon. Deadline of application: March 31, 2026.



- **Annual Membership Fee**

- Membership fee will be collected at the start of the year and is valid for the whole year. This fee (minimal amount of \$50 for the whole family) allows children in the family to participate in free Filipino camp, field trips (if any), ensemble, and other educational activities. Signupgenius link will be emailed for payments. Zelle, check or cash will also be accepted.





**FILIPINO-AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY & DEV'T. CENTER  
OF OCEAN COUNTY INC. (FCDC)**



**JOIN US**

***Holiday Party***

**FUN, DANCE, GAMES &  
COMMUNITY BUILDING**

**13 DECEMBER 2025  
SATURDAY  
6:00 PM**

**ST. BARBARA CREEK  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
2200 CHURCH RD,  
TOMS RIVER, NJ 08753**

**POTLUCK**

**SPACE IS LIMITED. SIGN UP NOW!**





## ***LETTER FROM THE EDITOR***

***by Jamie Mariano***

**November is the time to reflect on our blessings and to express gratitude for the things and people in our lives. It's also a time when families and friends gather to spend quality time and make another holiday memory.**

**As you break bread with loved ones this Thanksgiving, focus on all of the positive things in your life. Focus on the little things that you have that you might take for granted: clean clothes, a car to get you to work, a functioning dishwasher. Be grateful for the abundant food you will be eating and sharing with people who you care about and who care about you. Not everyone is so fortunate.**

**Working this Thanksgiving? Be grateful to have a job, even if it means missing the holiday. Who says your Thanksgiving has to be the same day our country says it is? Gather your friends and family on another day off. The day and time doesn't matter, only the moment does.**

**Be thankful for the little things in your life. The "little things" keep everything in motion.**

**Happy Thanksgiving!**



**ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT**  
by Ferlie Almonte  
*Speaker. Author. Life Coach.*

## ***P.I.N.K. POWER***

Looking back last month, October being observed as Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we could not ignore being surrounded by a sea of pink! October was even named PINKtober on many sites on social media. I even got featured on several pages of Crowns Magazine on their PINKtober issue, where my compelling story of Resilience through Cancer was shared, highlighting my many astonishing accomplishments and new journeys after having survived and thrived through breast cancer. (Please visit <http://crownsmagazine.com> to read the full issue where I was featured)

It made me reflect on what the color PINK symbolizes. A huge part of me wants people to remember more impactfully what P.I.N.K. stands for based on the lessons I learned, giving birth to Code P.I.N.K.

When life puts you to a test, it is an urgent summon for us to think P.I.N.K.!

**P~Persevere** through the pain. Be **Patient**. **P**reserve your **P**eace and stay **P**ositive.

**I~Innovate** solutions. Be **I**maginative in reinventing yourself and in finding solutions to **I**mprove your situation. Be **I**ntentional in designing your goals. Strategize your **I**mplementation to keep you moving forward.

**N~Never** give up. Avoid **Negative** thoughts. Stay in faith. Keep hope alive even when a part of you sees no point of continuing to fight. **Never** underestimate your power of resilience. And that miracles do happen.

**K~Kick Start.** Take action on your decisions. **Knowledge** is power when applied. Fuel yourself with **Kinetic** energy. No one can motivate you most powerfully but yourself! Get started. Launch and self correct on your course as you grow in your New Beginnings. Be **Kind** to yourself and others.

For more inspiring messages, follow @FerlieAlmonte on social media.

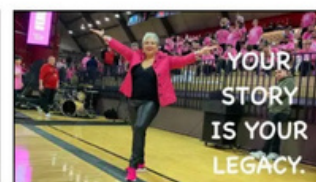
*When life knocks you down,  
think P.I.N.K.*

*Persist through pain  
Innovate solutions  
Never give up  
Kick start*

*Starting over is  
never easy, but  
**YOU ARE WORTH**  
another chance.*



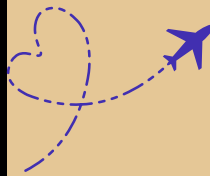
## LIFE AFTER CANCER



## A Heartwarming Gift of Books and Toys Reaches Children in the Philippines

A recent book drive from the FCDC members has brought joy to a private school in the Philippines—one that has generously opened its doors to the public so that more children can share in the gift of reading. What began as a simple act of giving has blossomed into a beautiful community effort to inspire young minds and offer access to books that many families cannot afford to buy.

We are grateful to our members Mary Latonio and her children along with Pearl Hann from collecting, sorting the books to sending them out.



Adding to this blessing, a toy drive was also conducted, where NEW toys were lovingly donated and shipped to Laguna, Philippines. These toys were distributed to children living by the railroad tracks—children who often face daily hardships yet light up with the smallest acts of kindness. Seeing their smiles as they received brand-new toys was a touching reminder of how generosity can uplift spirits and create moments of pure happiness.

Both the book and toy initiatives were made possible through the kindness of our FCDC members and community of Ocean County. We at FCDC hope that this growing circle of generosity will continue to spread, bringing more books, more toys, more smiles, and more opportunities to young children here in the U.S. back home. IF YOU WISH TO DONATE, KINDLY SEE THE ATTACHED FLYERS ON THE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS. Thank you for your support!





# Toy Drive

Please donate **NEW**, unwrapped toys for the

- foster kids through Just Believe, Inc. (Toms River, NJ)
- Children from mountain communities in Bukidnon
- Children living along the railway areas in Laguna

Accepting Donation Through  
**Friday, December 19th**  
 Drop-off Locations:

**RJ Sariling Atin** 1561 Lakewood Rd,  
 Toms River, NJ 08755

**Little Kusina** 1594 US-9, Toms  
 River, NJ 08755

For more information:  
[fdccteam@gmail.com](mailto:fdccteam@gmail.com)



# Book Drive

Please donate **BOOKS** that will be shared to the kids from the Philippines.

Books that are **SLIGHTLY USED** or **NEW ONES** FOR  
**ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL READERS.**



Accepting Donation Through

**Friday, December 19th**



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 Toms River, NJ 08755

**Little Kusina** 1594 US-9, Toms  
 River, NJ 08755

For more information:  
[fdccteam@gmail.com](mailto:fdccteam@gmail.com)



## Ocean County's Simbang Gabi 2025

Theme: "Jesus is the HOPE for this holy season"

**DEC 13**  
**ST. JUSTIN THE MARTYR ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 975 Fischer Blvd  
 Toms River, NJ 08753  
 President: Fr. Mark Kreder  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 18**  
**THE CHURCH OF ST. MARTHA**  
 3800 Harbertsville Rd  
 Point Pleasant, NJ 08742  
 President: Fr. David Swantek  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 14**  
**CHURCH OF ST. DOMINIC**  
 250 Old Squan Road  
 Brick NJ 08724  
 President: Fr. Carlo Calisin  
 Rosary 7pm Mass 7:30pm

**DEC 19**  
**CHURCH OF ST. MONICA**  
 679 W Veterans Hwy  
 Jackson, NJ 08527  
 President: Fr. Alex Enriquez  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 15**  
**ST. JOSEPH'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 685 Hooper Ave  
 Toms River, NJ 08753  
 President: Fr. Scott Shaffer  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 20**  
**ST. LUKE'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 1674 Old Freehold Rd  
 Toms River, NJ 08755  
 President: Fr. Mike Kennedy  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 16**  
**ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH**  
 619 Chestnut St.  
 Lakehurst, NJ 08759  
 President: Fr. Tito Ignacio  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

**DEC 21**  
**ST. MAXIMILLIAN KOLBE CHURCH**  
 130 St Maximilian Ln  
 Toms River, NJ 08757  
 President: Very Reverend Edward Blanchett  
 Rosary 5pm Mass 5:30pm

**DEC 17**  
**ST. MARY OF THE PINES**  
 100 Bishop Way  
 Manahawkin, NJ 08050  
 President: Fr. Vic Magdaraog  
 Rosary 6:30pm Mass 7pm

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



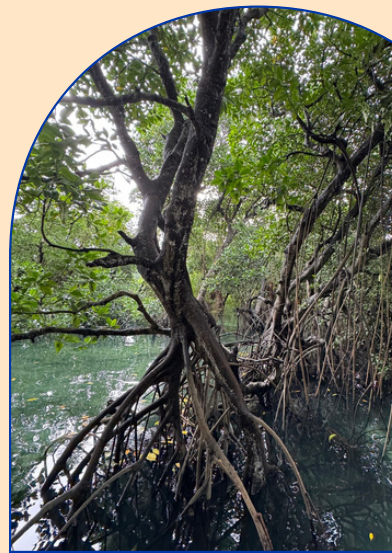
## My Summertime Madness by Zoe Jacinto



Over the summer, my family and I visited the Philippines and Japan. This was my first time going to the Philippines and my sister's second time. We went from John F. Kennedy International Airport to Haneda Airport.

When we landed in Haneda, Japan, we went to a convenience store, a camera store, Nishishinjuku Arcade, Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden, Uniqlo, and Seria Shinjuku Marui Annex. To eat, we ate ramen at a sit down booth restaurant where no talking was required between you and the chef. After, we went clothes shopping at Uniqlo. We hailed a cab and got driven to the Mega Don Quixote in Shinjuku that had 8 floors. Tired from all of the shopping, we hailed a cab back to the airport and slept on our way there.

Because we prolonged our shopping, we had to rush to the airport to get the bags we left at the airport bag storage and catch our flight. We were planning on staying there for 12 hours, but because of problems at the airport, we were there for less than 12 hours. Even so, my favorite part was the gacha machines, and my sister's favorite part was the camera store where she purchased a camera. After, we caught our flight to the Philippines to see family.



We took a flight to Ninoy Aquino International Airport to get to the Iloilo International Airport. I was travel sick after flying so much, but seeing family and experiencing many different cultures and activities made it worth it. When we got to the Philippines, my uncle drove us from the airport and to a condo. We stayed in the Philippines for 12 days. Because we went over the summer, we caught the Philippines' rainy season. Most of our sightseeing was canceled because of the bad weather, but we still managed to make our trip fun. Our condo was within walking distance to the mall, so on days where we weren't busy, we spent our time there.

At the mall, my dad had osso bucco, which ended up being his favorite entree. My sister's favorite food from the mall was the sisig and the potato on a stick from Potato Corner. We also spent time with our family praying with incense at the memorial inside of their family home and visiting the resting places of our departed relatives.

We tried local delicacies with our uncles, aunts, and cousins. We had a giant sio pao and tried hot piyaya. My favorite local delicacy was the hot piyaya and bibingka, which was my mom's favorite dessert.

In Iloilo, we crossed a suspension bridge in the forest to zipline, tried our hand at a shooting range, went walking in the Esplanade along the Iloilo River, visited old churches, schools and colleges where family attended, went to a cat cafe, the Museum of Philippine Economic History, Damires Hills Tierra Verde Leisure Farm, and Malumpati Health Spring and Tourist Resort. We also went to Guimaras Island and the Boracay Islands by boat and took a land trip. On the land trip, we saw 3D sand art at the beaches and the mangroves in Boracay. We were originally planning on swimming and island hopping, but the bad weather canceled our plans.

My favorite place we went to was the Malumpati Resort. At the resort, we went hiking, tubing, and sat in the hot “kawa” with flower petals. The kawa stayed warm because there was a fire lit under it and to take our pictures, a man showed his tree climbing skills and got a picture of us from a coconut tree. My sister’s favorite place from our trip were the mangroves in Boracay because learning about their root systems in school was very interesting for her.

Our third leg of our trip was back to Tokyo, Japan. This time, without the airport hassles, we had significantly more time. We visited the Gotokuji Temple, Shiro-Hige’s Cream Puff Factory, Yoyogi Park, Meiji Jingu Temple, Seria Shinjuku Marui Annex. My favorite part of this was the Gotokuji Temple. The temple was calm and peaceful even though it was very hot. We ended up buying lucky cat figurines and a wooden plaque to write our family wishes on.

When we arrived in New Jersey, I realized I was very homesick and jet lagged. Because of the time difference, going to sleep was a challenge and took a few days to return to normal.

One thing that surprised me out of this whole trip was that Japan was hotter than the Philippines during this time. One thing I will never forget is my bond with my cousins and the food we ate. I was very thankful for the opportunity to go to the Philippines and see family, try many different foods, adventure the many attractions, go shopping, and experience the culture around me.





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Jamie Mariano at  
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INTERNAL MEDICINE AND DIAGNOSTIC DIVISION  
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25 MULE ROAD • SUITES A 1 TO A4 • TOMS RIVER, NEW JERSEY 08755  
TELEPHONE: 732.240.0404 • FAX: 732.244.3555

**OLIVIA ORTIZ, M.D.**  
**EVELYN TIU, M.D.**  
1163 ROUTE 37 WEST, SUITE A-1  
TOMS RIVER, NJ 08753  
732-505-4007 • Fax 732-736-8811

**OSCAR T. ORTIZ, M.D.**  
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**FRANCISCO D. CRUZ, M.D.**  
1163 ROUTE 37 WEST • SUITE A-1  
TOMS RIVER, NEW JERSEY 08755  
732-736-1000 • FAX 732-736-8811

**Atlantic printing & design**  
467 Lakehurst Rd, Toms River, NJ 08755  
732.557.9600 | 732.557.9601 (f)  
775 North Main St, Manahawkin, NJ 08050  
609.597.2727 | 609.597.3715 (f)  
[info@apadnj.com](mailto:info@apadnj.com) | [www.apadnj.com](http://www.apadnj.com)  
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**Whiting Medical Associates, LLC**  
65 Lacey Rd STE A, Whiting, NJ 08759 Tel. 732-350-0404  
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**FCDC**  
**P.O. Box 1418**  
**Toms River, NJ**  
**08754**

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