



FCDC TODAY

Filipino-American Community &
Development Center of Ocean County Inc.
2014 Bayaning Pilipino Awardee
May 2026



Member Spotlight - GILLIAN REESE ALCID



Sophomore year is a whirlwind for Gillian, whose daily schedule is very hectic. Balancing a rigorous academic load, she is also deeply involved in research at school. Just recently, she attended the Delaware Valley Science Fair where she received a Roy F. Weston Memorial Award for Environmental Sciences.

When she isn't immersed in her studies or research, Gillian dives into the world of swimming. Participating in year-round swim competitions challenges her physically and mentally, teaching her the importance of discipline and perseverance. Practice sessions are grueling and invigorating, providing her a welcome reprieve from the rigors of academia. Though her evenings often ended with long hours of homework, the thrill of racing against her peers fills her with motivation. The smell of



CONTENTS

Member Spotlight	Page 1-3
President's Corner	Page 4-11
Editor's Note	Page 12
Attitude Adjustment	Page 13-15
Little Library	Page 16-19
Ads	Page 20

chlorine becomes as familiar to her as the pages of her textbooks. Her weekends are often spent competing, wherein she always attempts to drop times on her events. If she does, it's a happy moment.

Despite her busy schedule, Gillian finds solace in music, playing clarinet and piano. She has played since grade school and has participated in school events and performances. As a member of FCDC Ensemble, she is learning to appreciate popular Filipino music that otherwise she wouldn't have an opportunity to listen to. She enjoys her time with the members of the Ensemble and always looks forward to the next rehearsal. This is in addition to being a member of FCDC and serving as a Camp Leader during Annual Filipino Camp. She also participates in cultural performances during events. This year, she is the Reyna Elena of FCDC Santacruz.



Believe



INSPIRE



Gillian enjoys the world of art. She loves to draw and put colors into her imagination on paper. Whenever there is a chance, even a simple label on the food, she would draw around it and make it very elaborate. Even the activity schedule calendar at home shows her impressive drawings of her favorite pet dog, Charlie.

Amid her packed schedule, Gillian cherishes the moments she spends with her friends, knowing that these connections serve as a counterbalance to her rigorous lifestyle. Whether it's diving into a shopping spree at a local mall, where laughter echoes through the aisles as they try on quirky outfits, or discussing the latest trends over boba tea, these outings provide a much-needed escape from her responsibilities.

Above all, Gillian enjoys spending time with family. She discovers places through travel with her parents and siblings, and sometimes with her cousins, and occasionally learns about the history of places and events.



family
is
EVERYTHING



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Jasmine Alcid



SANTACRUZAN 2026

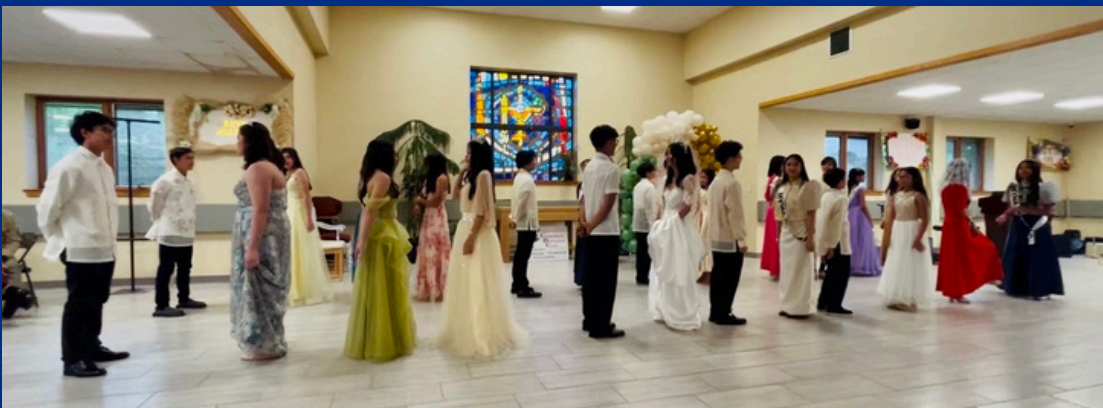
The Santacruzán celebration at FCDC was a beautiful display of faith, culture, and community spirit. Children proudly processed under the beautifully decorated arches at St. Luke's Church, dressed elegantly as representations of the Blessed Virgin Mary alongside their escorts, angels, and the honored Reyna Elena, Gillian Alcid with Constantine, Thomas Alberto. The procession reflected the rich Filipino tradition of honoring the search for the Holy Cross while showcasing the grace and dedication of the children and their families. The Holy Mass that followed brought everyone together in prayer and thanksgiving before members gathered for an evening of fellowship, socialization, and dinner.

The celebration became even more meaningful as Fr. Mark Nillo shared the rich history and significance of the Santacruzán tradition, reminding everyone of the importance of preserving Filipino faith and heritage for future generations. Guests were also treated to a formal dance performance by the children, whose poise and elegance delighted the audience. Adding to the festive atmosphere, the FCDC Ensemble performed two beautiful Filipino songs under the direction of Michael Rosin, filling the evening with pride, joy, and appreciation for Filipino culture. The event was truly a memorable celebration of devotion, tradition, and the strong unity within the FCDC community.

FCDC extends its heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated Santacruzán committee, all the participants, supportive parents, generous sponsors Mr. and Mrs. Steve Gallagher, Fr. Mike Kennedy, pastor of St. Luke's Church, and every volunteer and supporter who helped in one way or another to make this event a great success. Their time, generosity, hard work, and commitment made it possible to continue this cherished Filipino tradition in a meaningful and memorable way. Through everyone's collective efforts, the celebration became not only a joyful community gathering but also a lasting reminder of the importance of faith, culture, and unity.







See more photos on our FCDC Facebook page

Congratulations!

Congratulations!

**Filipino-American Community and Development Center
(FCDC)**

presents

Dr. Rene Ynaya Scholarship Awardees



Elysee Lucia Jacinto



Axl Perono



Elizabeth Tupaz



Jason Batin



Julian Miles Panerio


All applicants have been reviewed and approved by the Scholarship Committee after careful consideration of the criteria.
Each winner will receive \$2,000.

5th FILIPINO CAMP



1. The Annual Filipino Camp is happening from July 13-17, 2026 with July 17 as the field trip. The field trip is only open to children who will attend the camp.
2. Children as young as 5 years old are welcome, as long as they are potty-trained and able to participate.
3. The camp is free to all members who have paid their annual membership fee for the current year. Family membership is \$50/year. Payments are accepted on signupgenius membership link emailed previously. Other modes of payment are also accepted - Zelle, check, cash. If you have any questions, please email fcdcteam@gmail.com
4. To sign up, watch out for the signupgenius link that will be emailed on the 1st week of June. Attendance is on a daily basis. Please indicate which days you are attending.
5. Space is limited.
6. After you sign up your attendance on signupgenius, you will need to fill up a Google sheet indicating your contact numbers, allergies, health concerns and other pertinent information. This will be emailed to you.
7. Children will be required to bring their lunch daily.
8. Children who leave the camp without permission will not be allowed to return.
9. Campers will need to be dropped off at 8:30am and picked up at 3:30 pm by parents or designated persons. Please don't forget to sign in and out daily.
10. We wish all participants to learn, make friends and have fun!

BASIC LIFE SUPPORT TRAINING



The recently concluded Basic Life Support (BLS) Training Program held on May 9, 2026, in Toms River was a valuable and rewarding learning experience for FCDC teachers, facilitators, and participating high school students. Throughout the five-hour course, participants gained essential lifesaving knowledge and skills, including how to properly perform CPR on adults, children, and infants, operate an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and administer the Heimlich maneuver during choking emergencies. The training emphasized the importance of quick and effective responses in emergency situations, empowering attendees to act confidently when needed.

The program combined instructional videos with hands-on practice, allowing participants to apply what they learned through guided exercises and demonstrations. Under the supervision of certified instructors Vishnu, Daarsh and Chloe, attendees practiced critical techniques and received immediate feedback to ensure proper execution. The training culminated in a written examination and return demonstration, both of which were successfully completed by participants, earning them certification in Basic Life Support from American Heart Association. Chloe is also an active member of FCDC.

FCDC is proud of everyone who dedicated their time to this important training and looks forward to having more members equipped with lifesaving skills that can benefit our families, schools, churches, and communities.





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

May kicks off graduation season. This is a time of reflection, hope, and inspiration. Graduating students who anticipate their next chapter, hoping for opportunities that will catapult their careers and lead them to their calling.

It has become tradition for FCDC to feature the Class of 2026 in the newsletter, either in June or July. We include any graduate from preschool to postgrad. If you or a family member is part of this year's graduating class, we would be honored to feature all of you in our upcoming graduation issue.

Congratulations to the Class of 2026! May God bless you and lead you. I hope that you find success in your new chapter. Never stop learning, never stop growing, and never stop aiming to put your best effort in whatever you strive to accomplish.





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



IN PERFECT SYMPHONY: Lessons ***from the FCDC Ensemble***

The beautiful sounds that filled the reception hall during the Santacruzian celebration at St. Luke Roman Catholic Church were more than just music. They were the sound of growth, dedication, teamwork, culture, and hope.

One of the highlights of the event was the inspiring performance of the FCDC Ensemble, a youth group nurtured and supported by Filipino-American Community & Development Center of Ocean County, Inc. through its cultural enrichment, educational, and empowerment programs. Under the guidance and leadership of Maestro Michael Rosin, this remarkable group of young musicians showcased not only musical talent, but discipline, confidence, and unity.

Watching them perform was truly awe-inspiring.

It has not been long since this ensemble was formed, yet these young individuals played together so harmoniously and magnificently — in perfect symphony. Their music reflected far more than technical skill. It reflected patience, practice, encouragement, and the power of believing in young people.

Many of these students began with little or no musical background. Yet through commitment, guidance, and teamwork, they learned to read musical notes, understand rhythm, play instruments, and most importantly, work together toward a common goal. Their performance was proof that when young people are given the right environment, mentorship, and opportunities, they can flourish beyond expectations.

The FCDC Ensemble reminds us of an important lesson in life: we are all “rock stars” in our own unique way.

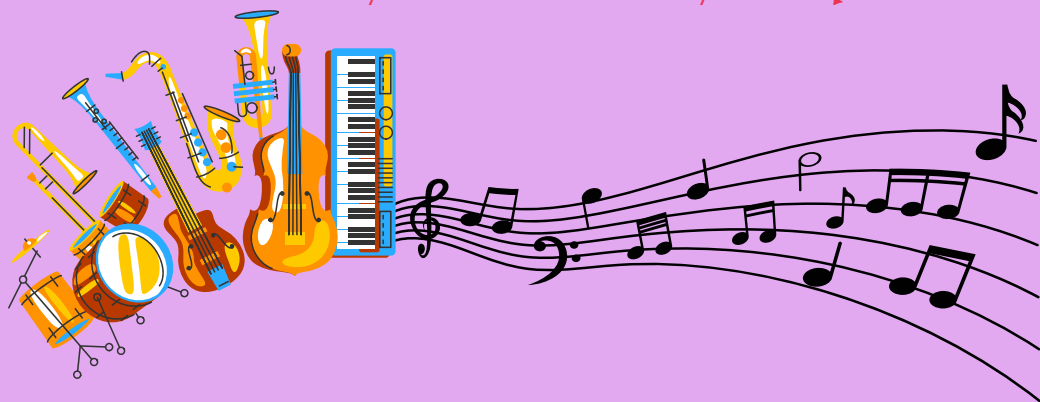
Each one of us has been gifted with something special — a talent, a passion, a calling, or an assignment meant to contribute to the world. Our gifts may differ. Our journeys may unfold at different paces. Some may excel in music, others in leadership, service, academics, creativity, sports, entrepreneurship, or compassion. But every gift matters.

This ensemble also teaches our youth that growth does not happen overnight. Excellence is built through consistency, courage, humility, practice, and perseverance. Every beautiful performance begins with mistakes, uncertainty, and learning. Yet when young people continue showing up, continue practicing, and continue believing in themselves and one another, they begin creating something extraordinary.

Equally powerful is the lesson of teamwork.

An orchestra or ensemble succeeds not because one instrument overpowers the others, but because every musician understands the value of harmony. One may carry the melody while another provides rhythm or support — yet all are equally important. In today’s world, where individuality is often emphasized, groups like the FCDC Ensemble remind us that collaboration, respect, and unity are essential ingredients for success.

Programs like those offered by F.C.D.C. of Ocean County are invaluable because they do more than teach skills. They help shape character. They build confidence. They foster cultural appreciation and community pride. They create safe and uplifting spaces where young people can discover who they are and what they are capable of becoming.



In a time when many youth face distractions, pressures, and uncertainty, organizations that invest in mentorship, education, arts, and empowerment are helping create future leaders, innovators, and compassionate human beings.

The performance at Santacruzán was not simply entertainment. It was a celebration of possibility.

It was a reminder that when communities come together to nurture and uplift their youth, beautiful things happen — not only in music, but in life itself.

The future sounds bright. And judging from the magnificent performance of the FCDC Ensemble, the next generation is already learning how to create beautiful harmony together.

For more inspiring messages, follow @FerlieAlmonte on social media



Clear Your Shelf, Fill a Heart The Power of a Little Free Library By Gabrielle and Marinelle L Latonio



Do you ever wonder how to dispose of that one stack of books you don't want to read anymore? Do you ever ask yourself the silly question, "Do books go in the garbage or recycle?" Well, the answer is simple. They should definitely never be dumped in either one! But where do I bring the books when I don't want them cluttering my home? A Little Free Library. of course!

The Magic Hiding Inside the Wooden Box

Have you ever seen a wooden box on post in a front yard with a couple of books lined up inside? You've found yourself a Little Free Library. Basically, you check it out and see if there's a book that looks promising, take it. It's free (obviously). Don't forget to bring two books for donation. It's not a requirement but it's one of the best ways to upcycle books. After all, getting rid of them is a waste of money. And imagine all the people who are itching for a new read. All Little Free Libraries are chartered, and there's some unregistered boxes on posts you can also look for. And of course, if you see a shelf on coffee shops there's a big chance you can donate there too.

In 2009, a Wisconsin teacher named Todd Bol built a mini model of a one-room school. It was tribute to his mother who was a teacher. She was a delicate bookworm. Todd filled the little model and displayed it on post in his front yard. His friends and neighbors adored the cute idea, so he constructed several more models and gave them away. Todd's model was the first Little Free Library!

Rick Brooks was yet another fan of Todd's "mini library" thought when the two were discussing potential enterprises. Together, they saw opportunities to accomplish a variety of goals for all humanity. Todd and Rick were originally inspired by the catchy "take a book, leave a book" collections in coffee shops and public areas, and most definitely by the philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

The next years to come were golden for Todd and Rick. Little Free Library received the Innovations in Reading Prize Award from the National Book Foundation in 2013. Todd and Rick also were awarded the Movers and Shakers award from the American Library Association that same year, marking their leadership in the library industry. In 2014, a book was even written about the thriving organization of...you guessed it, Little Free Library! That same organization accepted the Library of Congress Literacy Award in 2014 too. Rick Brooks stepped down from his important position in Little Free Library, retiring that year also.

In 2018, Todd Bol sadly passed away from cancer. His last words gave hope: "I really believe in a Little Free Library on every block and a book in every hand. I believe people can fix their neighborhoods, fix their communities. And develop systems of sharing, learn from each other, and see that they have a better place on this planet to live."

Today, Little Free Library has a supporting staff of 25, helping the world through Todd's last words. There are about 200,000 Little Free Libraries standing in 128 different countries as of 2025. The nonprofit organization is truly an important staple in the world of libraries.

Giving is Better Than Storing

It's not just about dumping unwanted books. Think about Todd's last words, it's just so crucial that communities should learn from one another. And why not build your brain from a good book in the meantime? It's a surprise that the power of reading can actually do something so healthy for our planet, right?

But you must know, the upbringing of positivity starts with you. Donate books, pick out books, repeat the process whenever you like. If you're even feeling more than generous and you would love to start a Little Free Library of your own, check out the Little Free Library website! Just search up 'little free library' on your search engine.

It's so easy to donate books, and all you have to do is find the closest one to you! If you haven't seen one around town, fidget your way through the website until you find the choice to find the library closest to you. Remember to bring all the books cluttering your safe space, and of course, take a new book! All people of all ages are fighting against the enemy - endlessly scrolling on your phone. Be the upstander and pick a new read.

Even if you're not exactly the greatest reader, even if you're skimming through this article due to boredom, try out Little Free Library. It might be a turning point of how many hours you have on your phone now. Plus, everyone's heard of the studies that reading prevents all kinds of memory loss. Take a book, leave a book. It's that simple.

The Ripple Effect

Putting all your books in the shredder or the dump is a massive waste of money, knowledge, and paper. Help level up the IQ average, even fiction books do the job! That's a reason why Todd and Rick loved Little Free Library, because the knowledge waiting to be spilled inside a book is oh-so-valuable.

Imagine this. You just left a children's book in a Little Free Library. A kid, about six years old, discovers the newly placed paperback and takes it in the car. They're way too excited to start reading, they're jumping for joy. The second they get in their bedroom, the book's already been popped open, and the pages are turning with glee. Sure, a big percentage of juveniles don't appreciate books and dread when they're assigned a textbook to read for homework. But this is an opportunity. An opportunity to learn to love reading.

Now, the child is exhilarated to receive a different book. And it didn't even cost a dime. They decide to bring a couple of books with them to give away, and then the cycle starts all over again with a new child. This is possible after all. It's not difficult to spread joy, one chapter at a time.

There's countless ways to project the ripple effect to it's fullest. More ripples? Hit as many Little Free Libraries as you can. Bigger ripples? Increase the amount of books you drop in each library. Todd and Rick were up to something, weren't they?

Proof of the Little Free Library Phenomenon

Here's some true facts that the Little Free Library movement is working just fine!

- 1. There's actually a Free Little Free Library in Antarctica! Even the penguins are getting their reading worths!**
- 2. In a survey, children read 49% more often when a Little Free Library is available.**

Wow!

- 3. According to survey, 73% of people say they've met more neighbors because of a nearby Little Free Library.
- 4. In the USA, there are about three Little Free Libraries for every public library. Save some room for actual libraries my friend!
- 5. Since the birth of the first Little Free Library, an estimated 400 million books have been shared throughout the global network.

Take a Book, Leave a Book

You have the checklist, you have the proof. So why not go and check out the wonderland of Little Free Libraries? Donate your books and get new ones! It's basically an endless deal, get as many books as you can carry for the price of nothing! Even start a Free Little Free library if you're feeling generous. We can learn the system of sharing of what we have, building our community, tying relationships and moving mountains – all of these with a power of a good book! Isn't that insane? Now shut off your device and let's get going!





SHARE YOUR STORY
Email our Editor-in-Chief
Jamie Mariano at
jamiefcdctoday@gmail.com



Renewal of Memberships

- Fred Mariano and family
- Victor Nimanand and family
- Sharon Lichter and family
- Celina Gomez and family
- Rhett Yap and family



FCDC
P.O. Box 1418
Toms River, NJ
08754

**To join us or renew
your membership,
visit our website at
www.fcdcnj.org
Thank you for your
support!**

Find us on Facebook.

