



# FCDC TODAY

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

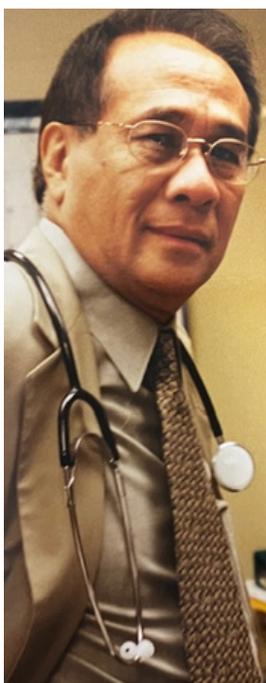
## Member Spotlight - Dr. Dante Martinez



Dr. Dante & Mrs. Lisa Martinez

I was born in the town of Pasig, Rizal, Philippines. I was the third of five children of wonderful parents. First of all, my dad was a unique man, well admired and loved by his constituents and anyone who came to know him.

He was the Barrio lieutenant. He was U.P.-educated, trained in Fine Arts, the winner of an Austrian award for his rendition of "Birheng Walang Dambana" - "Virgin Without An Altar," depicting a barefoot woman standing on dirt with broken glasses. He was a wonderful poet who wrote amazing poems; fortunately, I possess his ledger. As a husband to my mom, he had no equal; he practically revered her like a goddess. He painted life-sized portraits of the Philippine presidents, displayed at the Malacanang Palace



Dr. Dante's parents



Dr. Dante's Tatay's painting

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He was a community leader, so well admired and respected that a street was named after him even in his lifetime. When he passed away, hundreds lined both sides of the street on the way to his old hometown of Pasig to rest in eternal peace. Him as our father, we were so fortunate. When he came to the USA for a visit, people who got to meet him said I was so lucky to have a father like him. And my mom, she was a beautiful woman, charming, and friendly. She was a jeweler by occupation, and her children were her foremost jewels. Myself, I was the President of my high school graduating class of Rizal Provincial High School. I was also nominated and elected as Class President at FEU Institute of Medicine, and I was elected (running for the position was against my will) as a District Counselor in the town of Pasig, Rizal.

In 1966, I arrived in the USA and went for a medical internship in Pittsburgh, PA. Leaving my family behind at the airport, I glanced back to look at my parents, and saw the tears falling down from their eyes. The site broke my heart and I cried as well. I was about to embark on a new horizon in the USA, but still thinking that this was temporary and I would return to the Philippines to practice medicine. I had spent four years training in Medical Residency at St. Vincent's Medical Center in Staten Island, NY, as Chief Resident on the fourth year. Then proceeded for Gastrointestinal Fellowship training at St. Vincent's Hospital in NYC. I started medical practice in Toms River, NJ, in 1971.

I am married to my wonderful wife, who is a Registered Nurse at CMC. I have four children. One son is an owner principal consultant of Vend Connect, LLC. His wife, an Attorney, is a partner at Vend Connect LLC. Another son is a Kidney Care Director of Patient Advocacy and Educational Program Davita. His wife is a F5 Cyber Security Company National Partner Manager. They have two sons, a U.S. Air Force pilot - Aeronautical Engineering student and a Mechanical Engineering student. Our daughter worked in the Federal Government as Chief of the Victim Assistant Program at Homeland Security Investigations and



Director of Victim Assistance at the Human Trafficking Institute. Her husband is an Attorney, President & CEO of the National Music Publishers Association. They have two daughters. Our other son is an Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management SHU. He oversees all marketing and communication strategy as it pertains to prospective student recruitment, as well as manage the Admissions event planning. His wife is a Pediatric Occupational Therapist. They have a son.

I am proud to say that I am blessed to have a wonderful, loving family and always enjoy being together with them. I have guided and watched my children grow and realize their dreams. Now I am enjoying my grandchildren, and seeing them grow as well, each one is special to me. It's a lot of fun!

As for my hobbies, I enjoy several things. Amongst them are boxing. I used to box when I was young. I enjoy reading, karaoke, golf, traveling, times when I get together with family and friends, and functions with FCDC. Initially I was a member of FAMS and then, together with my wife, we are members of FCDC. It's an honor to be part of an association and community that strives to do good.

I like to believe that my life was a productive one. As a physician, I was able to help others attain a better health, save lives even, at times. Yes, it's indeed a powerful thought. I am so grateful to the Almighty God and to my parents for guiding me to be that person. And to the young people, I'd like to tell them that a good education is like a sail boat, a vehicle that will take them to their isle of success and happiness. Go on board and steer it. The island that you can see and reach, is waiting for you.



Dr. Dante's paintings



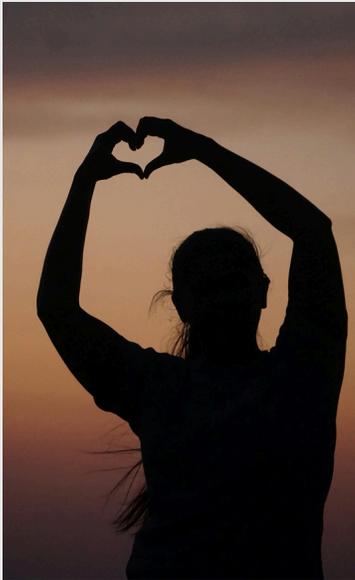


## President's Corner by Jasmine Alcid



February is recognized as American Heart Month, a time to raise awareness about the importance of caring for our hearts and preventing cardiovascular disease. For many families, including Filipino families, heart health should be a priority because heart disease remains one of the leading causes of illness worldwide. Taking care of our hearts means making mindful daily choices—staying active, managing stress, and scheduling annual check-ups with our healthcare providers. Regular screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar can help detect concerns early and prevent serious complications. Prevention, combined with education, empowers us to live longer and healthier lives.

As Filipinos, we can continue enjoying our rich culinary traditions while preparing our favorite dishes in healthier ways. Classic meals such as adobo, sinigang, and pancit can be cooked using lean meats, more vegetables, less sodium, and healthier oils. Choosing grilled or steamed options instead of fried foods and practicing portion control can make a meaningful difference. Alongside proper nutrition, regular exercise—whether walking, dancing, or participating in community activities—strengthens the heart and improves overall well-being. Equally important is caring for our mental health, as stress and emotional strain can affect heart function. When we maintain balance between physical health, mental wellness, nutritious eating, and regular medical care, we build a strong foundation for a healthier lifestyle for ourselves and future generations.



## SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

The Dr. Ynaya Scholarship application is now open to all Filipino-American senior high school students with an intention to pursue a 4-year college course. Please check out the criteria in this issue.

Tip: All requirements must be complete. We encourage the applicants to list all extra-curricular activities and FCDC involvement.

## SAVE THE DATE

Santacruzán: May 23  
Filipino Summer Camp:  
July 13-17

## FCDC ENSEMBLE

Looking for more players for a performance in May and June. Please contact [fcdcteam@gmail.com](mailto:fcdcteam@gmail.com) for more information.

**SANTACRUZAN**  
SAVE THE *date*

LIVE procession!  
When: May 23, 2026, Saturday  
St. Luke's Church,  
674 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  
Hotluck: Sign-up genius link attached  
For any questions please email  
[fdccteam@gmail.com](mailto:fdccteam@gmail.com)




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**F.A.C.E.S**  
FILIPINO AMERICAN CULTURAL ENRICHMENT STUDIES  
*summer camp*



**CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH'S FUNCTION HALL**  
415 WASHINGTON ST.  
TOMS RIVER, NJ

**9-3 PM**

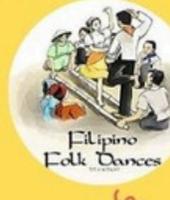


**13-17**  
*July*  
**2025**

RSVP  
6/30/26  
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**Filipino-American Community and Development Center of  
Ocean County, Inc. (FCDC)**

**presents**

**Dr. RENE YNAYA Scholarship 2026**



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](mailto:fcdcteam@gmail.com)

**Deadline of Submission: March 31, 2026**



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

***by Jamie Mariano***



**As you've read in the President's Corner column, February is heart month.**

**I want to reiterate the importance of taking care of our bodies. We have to have a balance of preserving our health while also enjoying some indulgences. After all, Easter is coming up and some of us celebrated Valentine's Day, and both holidays usually coincide with chocolate!**

**As you maintain a healthy lifestyle, remind yourself that a treat or a skipped gym session isn't going to set you back all that much. The problem is when eating healthy and exercising aren't a routine part of our schedule.**

**As busy people, fitting in time to exercise and to make healthy meals might seem hard and burdensome. We're all tired! However, incorporating the time and adding it to our calendars, the same way we schedule everything else, can be the first step toward maintaining our heart health.**

**While fact-checking for this article, I found out that forming habits doesn't actually take 21 days. More recent studies say that it takes an average of about 66 days or could take almost a year. This might explain why New Year's resolutions don't hold up!**

**So, if you've already kicked those resolutions to the curb and replaced carrot sticks with cookies, you're not the only one. The best part is, you can take it day by day and make small changes that will lead to big results. Depending on who you are, that could mean many different things: take a walk for 20 minutes a day, drink less soda,**

or eat less rice (whoa! Did I really just say that?). Whether it takes you 66 days or 365, all you can do is try. Do it for yourself. Do it to be present for loved ones (and FCDC events!). Do it so that you don't have to see your doctor so much (unless you're Tita Lisa Martinez, who's married to one that happens to be our member spotlight this month!).

Taking care of your heart extends to taking care of others. If you're not showing love and care to yourself, how can you take care of those around you? It's not always good to be selfish, but you definitely want to put yourself first when it comes to being mindful of your body, heart, and mind.





## **ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT**

**by Ferlie Almonte**

***Speaker. Author. Life Coach.***

## ***JOY IS THE NAME OF THE GAME***

**The flame of the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan-Cortina was just extinguished, but the fire lit in the hearts of many will keep burning in their souls. The heartwarming lessons and heartbreaking stories we learned awakened in us many emotions and inspirations.**

**The stories of the struggles, sacrifices, meltdowns, breakdowns and sweet victories humanize the experience of watching the Olympics.**

**When Alysa Liu stepped onto Olympic ice, something felt different. There was no visible weight of expectation, no tight grip of pressure to podium — just pure, unfiltered joy. In a sport often defined by razor-thin margins and relentless pursuit of medals, her performance radiated freedom.**

**Liu's Olympic skate wasn't just technical — it was emotional. She smiled. She breathed. She looked like a young woman skating because she loved it. And that joy was contagious.**

**What makes her presence even more powerful is the journey behind it. Once hailed as a prodigy and two-time U.S. national champion as a teenager, Liu stunned the skating world when she stepped away from the sport at just 16 years old. Burned out and ready to experience life beyond competition, she chose herself over expectations — a courageous move in elite athletics.**

**Her eventual return wasn't about reclaiming titles. It was about rediscovering passion. The comeback reflected maturity, self-awareness, and balance. She returned not as a child prodigy chasing history, but as a young woman skating on her own terms**

Behind her success stands her father, Arthur Liu, whose sacrifices helped shape her path. A single parent who worked tirelessly to support his daughter's dream, he rearranged his life around early practices, coaching fees, travel, and the immense demands of elite figure skating. His belief in her never seemed rooted in medals, but in her happiness and growth.

Perhaps most inspiring is Liu's sportsmanship. In an environment where competitors can feel like rivals first and friends second, she consistently shows warmth and compassion. Whether congratulating fellow skaters, offering encouragement, or celebrating others' successes as genuinely as her own, she reminds audiences that excellence and kindness can coexist.

Her Olympic performance became bigger than a score. It became a statement: that joy is powerful, that stepping away is sometimes necessary, that coming back is brave, and that character matters more than medals.

In a high-pressure world, Alysa Liu's lightness felt revolutionary.

We can all learn from this. The mindset. The grit. The unshakeable desire to FIND JOY in what we do. And make history.

For more inspiring messages, follow @FerlieAlmonte on social media





**GABRIELA SILANG**  
National Museum, Phils.



**DIEGO SILANG**



As we celebrate Heart Month, we honor a love story shaped not only by devotion—but by courage, patriotism, and sacrifice. The love story of **Diego Silang and Gabriela Silang** remains one of the most inspiring stories in Philippine history.

Diego Silang was born on December 16, 1730, in Caba, La Union (then part of Ilocos). Growing up under Spanish colonial rule, he witnessed firsthand the injustices suffered by his people—experiences that would later fuel his call for reform and self-governance.

Gabriela Silang was born March 19, 1731, in Santa, Ilocos Sur. Raised in a disciplined and faith-centered home, she developed resilience, intelligence, and strength of character from an early age.

Gabriela met Diego in Vigan after she was widowed at a young age. United by shared convictions and a deep concern for their community, their partnership grew from mutual respect and a common vision for justice. They married and became allies in both life and revolution.

In 1762, during the British occupation of Manila amid the Seven Years' War, Diego Silang led one of the earliest organized revolts against Spanish rule in the Ilocos region. He advocated for autonomy and rallied fellow Ilocanos to stand against oppression.

On May 28, 1763, Diego was assassinated by individuals bribed by Spanish authorities.

Yet courage carried on.

Gabriela Silang stepped forward to lead the rebellion, becoming the first female revolutionary leader in Philippine history. From the mountains of Abra, she continued the fight with remarkable bravery and determination. On September 20, 1763, she was captured and publicly executed in Vigan at just 32 years old.

Heart Month reminds us that the strongest hearts are those filled with conviction, compassion, and courage. Diego and Gabriela Silang's love was rooted not only in affection for one another, but in a shared devotion to freedom and justice for the Philippines.

Across generations, women from the Philippines have founded and led numerous organizations dedicated to advancing the rights and welfare of Filipino women and children.

Their legacy continues to inspire generations—proving that when hearts unite in purpose, they can shape history.





**SHARE YOUR STORY**  
 Email our Editor-in-Chief  
 Jamie Mariano at  
[jamiefcdctoday@gmail.com](mailto:jamiefcdctoday@gmail.com)

NEW/Renewal of FCDC Memberships  
 Jerome Seno & Family  
 Pam Uy-Cruz & Family

**THANK  
 YOU!**  




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