



# FCDC TODAY

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

## Member Spotlight - Posthumous

A Tribute to Dr. Elena Buenviaje  
by Dr. Jose Ramon Suatengco

I was recruited to join Dr. Elena Buenviaje's practice in 1992, as a gastroenterologist. From the very beginning, she was more than a colleague—she was a mentor, guide, and an older sister to me.



Elena built and ran a successful medical practice, grounded in excellence, discipline, and compassion. At the same time, she devoted herself generously to the institution, serving actively on the Hospital Planning Board, where her judgment, foresight, and steady leadership helped shape the hospital's direction.



Dr. Elena with husband Tony Buenviaje

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As my own involvement in community work grew, Elena once again stood beside me—this time as a board member of FAMS. Through FAMS, we found opportunities to serve both locally and in the Philippines, extending care beyond the walls of our practices. Later, when FCDC was created as a more diverse and inclusive organization, Elena continued to support and strengthen that vision.

Through all these years, Elena was the ultimate host—opening her home for countless meetings, gatherings, celebrations, and conversations. Many of the successes of these organizations were shaped around her dining table, in her living room, through her warmth, generosity, and ability to bring people together.

Above all, Elena loved her family deeply—especially her husband Tony, their two daughters, and her grandchildren. Her pride in them was evident in every conversation and every smile.

Today, we are in a better place because of Elena. Her influence lives on in our institutions, our organizations, and in each of us who were shaped by her presence. She should not be forgotten—and she will not be.





# PRESIDENT'S CORNER

## by Jasmine Alcid



The past year has been a truly successful and meaningful one for our nonprofit organization. We are deeply grateful for the active participation and enthusiasm of our members, most especially the children, whose energy, creativity, and commitment brought our programs to life. Their involvement continues to be the heart of our organization. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the parents and benefactors whose constant support, generosity, and encouragement made our activities possible. Together, this collective spirit of cooperation and service has strengthened our community and allowed FCDC to thrive.

As we move forward, the organizers remain committed to building on this success by keeping our activities engaging, purposeful, and relevant for all members. We will continue to create opportunities that inspire learning, unity, and cultural pride, while ensuring that Filipino traditions are celebrated and passed on to the next generation. With the continued support of our members, families, and benefactors, we look ahead with optimism and dedication to another year of growth, connection, and service.

**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

~~Y~~otluck: Sign-up genius link attached  
For any questions please email [fcdcteam@gmail.com](mailto:fcdcteam@gmail.com)



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join/  
us!**

Visit our website at  
[www.fcdcnj.org](http://www.fcdcnj.org) to become  
a member or renew your  
membership.  
Thank you for your  
support!

**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**

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



## **LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**

**by Jamie Mariano**



**I'm not a winter person. I like fall the most, but I'm also obsessed with the beach and swimming (sort of) deep into the ocean. I like snow and winter scenery, but once the snow falls and I get to look at it for a while, I'm over it and could go for some warmer weather. In the winter I complain about the freezing temperatures, and when it's summer I complain about the scorching heat. There's no satisfying me when it comes to temperature (I also play with my thermostat too much!).**

**I'm sharing this because I came to realize that some of us tend to wish for something else instead of enjoying what we have now. This is glaringly obvious when it comes time to order food. I take forever because I want to make the right choice, and sometimes I do. Other times, I wish I had ordered something else, even though I'm enjoying eating what I asked for.**

**For 2026, I urge all of us (well, all of you who are like me) to live in the moment and love what we have. We live in a free country and in a world of many options. As much as we want to experience all of it, we cannot do and consume everything we want. We have to be satisfied with what we can do, with what we can attain, and with what we have already.**

**Always looking for more will always make you feel like you don't have or aren't doing enough, and it will fill you with regret and emptiness instead of joy.**

**Free yourself from what the "what if's" and the "I wish's." It's okay to dream and pursue your goals, but while you're looking forward to future experiences and achievements, find the balance of also staying and living in the moment. What you have right now is enough, so even if you don't fulfill some of your dreams, I hope you love the life you have right now.**

**Oh, and by the way, in case you might've forgotten: you are also enough.**



We are excited to introduce a new monthly feature in our newsletter: Bayani (Heroes) – a series dedicated to celebrating inspiring heroes from the Philippines and Filipino history, created especially for our youth. We will start with our national hero - Jose Rizal.

In Filipino culture, the word Bayani means hero – someone who leads with courage, integrity, compassion, and service to others. Through this series, we aim to introduce our young readers to remarkable Filipinos who have shaped history, culture, and community in powerful ways.

Each month, we will spotlight one Bayani – from national heroes and artists to leaders, innovators, and everyday individuals whose stories continue to inspire pride, resilience, and a deep sense of identity. These stories are meant to educate, spark curiosity, and encourage our youth to reflect on how they, too, can embody the values of a modern-day Bayani in their own lives.

We invite our families and young readers to join us on this journey of learning, reflection, and celebration as we honor the heroes of our past and present – and inspire the heroes of the future. Calling our youth members who wish to write and highlight a hero for our upcoming newsletter issues, kindly email us at [fcdcteam@gmail.com](mailto:fcdcteam@gmail.com) or to our editor at [jamiefcdfctoday@gmail.com](mailto:jamiefcdfctoday@gmail.com)

Maraming salamat, and we are excited to share our first Bayani feature with you this month of January!



## Dr. José Rizal Way

By Therese Alberto

On December 12, 2025, in Queens, New York, the intersection between Woodside Avenue and 59th Street was renamed “Dr. José P. Rizal Way,” in honor of the national hero of the Philippines. This was thanks to the efforts of Steven Raga, the first Filipino American member of the New York State Assembly, and Julie Won, a member of the New York City Council. By doing so, they hoped to highlight the impact the Filipino community has made. As Julie Won said, “This co-naming speaks to our ethos as a district of immigrants and honors the contributions and culture of our neighbors in the Filipino diaspora.”

There was no better choice to represent this influence than Dr. José Rizal; as the national hero, his life was the embodiment of pride in Filipino heritage. Born in 1861, while the Philippines was still under Spanish rule, Rizal longed for the reform of his country. He recognized the flaws and injustice Spain had in its treatment of the Philippines. In response, Rizal was an advocate for many values that still hold up to this day. As a well-educated writer and physician, Rizal knew how to bring visibility to his causes. In 1887, Rizal published a book called, *Noli Me Tangere*, a Latin phrase meaning “Touch Me Not.” The novel aimed to expose the corruption of the Spanish colonizers, bringing the exploitation, inequality, and immoral acts to the forefront of its story. The novel was a success; it became a driving force for the Philippine reform movement. Dr. Rizal kept writing to advocate for equality, democracy, and to show the value of his culture before colonization.

To further his cause, Rizal formed “La Liga Filipina.” The society had the goals of promoting Filipino unity, uncovering brutality and injustice, supporting education, and developing reforms. While the group was nonviolent and never spoke of revolution, the Spanish Government still felt threatened, so they exiled Dr. Rizal to Dapitan. He stayed there for four years until the uprising and revolt of a different Filipino Nationalist group. Despite having no association with the group, Rizal was blamed and consequently executed by firing squad in 1896, at the age of 35. Even in the face of death, José Rizal held fast to his beliefs; he still held hope that his beloved country could find freedom. In his last poem,

“Last Farewell,” he stated:

Farewell, my adored Land, region of the sun caressed,  
 Pearl of the Orient Sea, our Eden lost,  
 With gladness, I give you my Life, sad and repressed;  
 And were it more brilliant, more fresh and at its best,  
 I would still give it to you for your welfare at most.



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Although his death was a tragic loss, this final act of violence and corruption fully assured the people that independence from Spain was the right cause. Finally, in June of 1898, as Rizal had always dreamed of, the Philippines gained independence from Spain.

Through his remarkable life, strong values, and his work, José Rizal truly earned the title of national hero. His display of speaking for reform is one to be emulated by all, especially the youth. As he famously said, “The youth is the hope of our future.” He strongly believed in the power young people have in shaping society and bringing change. From his life, the youth of today can learn to be vocal about the injustices around them, to keep their values in the face of persecution, and to act on those beliefs.

#### FCDC article on Jose Rizal street Outline

1. Intro- street named in honor of Filipino National hero
2. Who is Jose Rizal- a force for change
3. Conclusion- What young people can learn from him
4. Be vocal about the injustices around you, keep your values despite persecution
5. Act rather than be complicit



Photo courtesy of the  
 Philippine Consulate General  
 New York, USA

#### Sources:

[https://newyorkpcg.org/pcgny/2025/12/14/new-york-names-a-street-after-dr-jose-rizal-honoring-his-ideals-and-the-filipino-migrant-community/?utm\\_source=newsletter&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=2026-01-08&utm\\_campaign=PCGNY+Newsletter+The+Briefer+Vol+2+Issue+12](https://newyorkpcg.org/pcgny/2025/12/14/new-york-names-a-street-after-dr-jose-rizal-honoring-his-ideals-and-the-filipino-migrant-community/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=2026-01-08&utm_campaign=PCGNY+Newsletter+The+Briefer+Vol+2+Issue+12) <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jose-Rizal>  
[https://www.philippine-history.org/la-solidaridad.htm#google\\_vignette](https://www.philippine-history.org/la-solidaridad.htm#google_vignette) [https://www.kapitbisig.com/philippines/poems-written-by-dr-jose-rizal-my-last-farewell-by-dr-jose-rizal-english-version-of-mi-ultimo-adios\\_87.html](https://www.kapitbisig.com/philippines/poems-written-by-dr-jose-rizal-my-last-farewell-by-dr-jose-rizal-english-version-of-mi-ultimo-adios_87.html)



# Book Drive - Ilocos Sur by Pearl Hann



In November 2025, I was asked by my cousin, Shirley Anne Tamargo Tolentino, for book donations for our family's barangay, Pangpangdan, Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur. With the help of fellow FCDC member and Little Free Library stewardess, Mary Latonio and her children, Rayden, Gabrielle, and Marinelle, we petitioned the help of the Filipino family owned grocery store and restaurants, RJ's Sariling Atin and Little Kusina, by placing donation boxes there. We were happy with the results. At the annual FCDC Christmas party in December 2025, we were happily overwhelmed with the book donations by the FCDC leadership team. Mary and I once again joined forces along with my friend, and packed the balikbayan boxes for the Philippines and shipped them. the books will be put to good use in my father's barangay and a commemoration to his parents, who also loved to read.





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

### ***WHEN MOTIVATION HONEYMOON IS OVER***

Did you know that about 80% of New Year's resolutions are abandoned by February? Many fail early as the second week of January.

What's the purpose of declaring New Year's Resolutions if we do not have the heart, willingness and commitment to keep those promises to ourselves?

What resolutions do you recycle year after year? Lose weight? Exercise more? Quit smoking? Spend less time on social media? Call your parents more often?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO MAKE THOSE CHANGES IN YOUR LIFE? Is your BIG WHY COMPELLING ENOUGH to make you stick to your resolutions? Here's what I found when I researched on the reasons why people relinquish their New Year's resolutions.

On a positive note, data shows that only about 9% to 10% of people successfully keep their resolutions throughout the year. About 23% quit in the first week, while 64% abandon goals by end of January. Ugh!

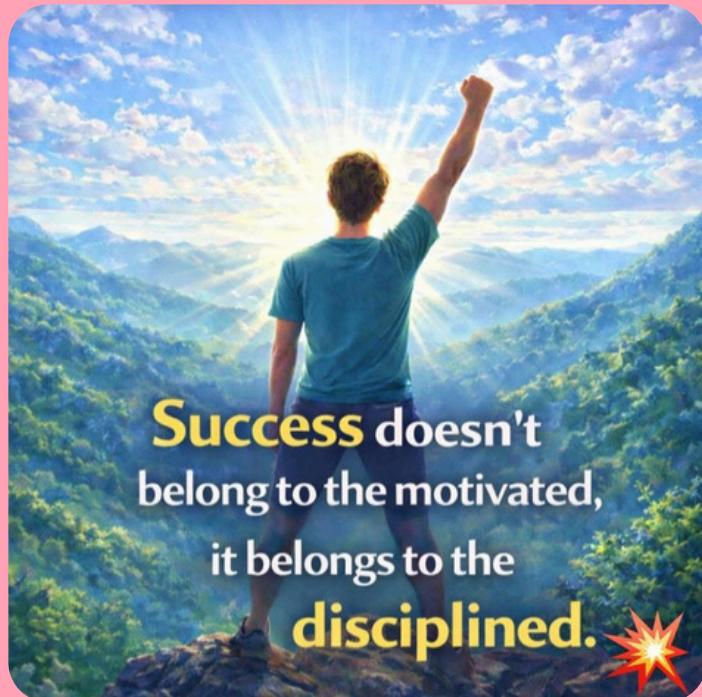
Here are some factors that affect New Year's Resolution Abandonment:

- "Quitters' Day": Did you know of such day? The second Friday in January is the day most people abandon their fitness goals.
- Initial Drop-off: Data shows that about 22% of people in the UK failed to keep their resolutions just six days into the year.

- **Long-term Failure Rates:** Studies show that 81% of people drop their resolutions within two years. This is disheartening considering one had initial success, right?
- **Here's Why They Fail:** Common reasons for abandonment include a lack of a solid action plan, setting unrealistic goals, and dwindling motivation. Yeah~ the Motivation Honeymoon is over.
- **Accountability Issues:** In 2026, only 20% of people reported they would actively hold themselves accountable for their resolutions, a sharp decline from previous years. Can having accountability partners help? Why not?
- **JOLT OF MOTIVATION:** Despite high failure rates, 80% of people still feel confident they can achieve their goals at the start of the year...WHAT WE SAY and WHAT WE ACTUALLY DO MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

**YOUR BIG WHY, INTEGRITY, COMMITMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY, DISCIPLINE** and the **JOY** and **PRIDE** in yourself knowing you are doing something challenging but lasting and life transforming, will help you keep your vow long after the motivation honeymoon is over.

For more inspiring messages, follow [@FerlieAlmonte](#) on social media

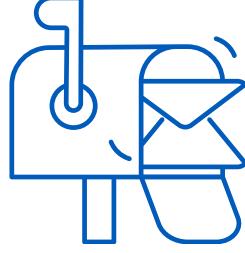




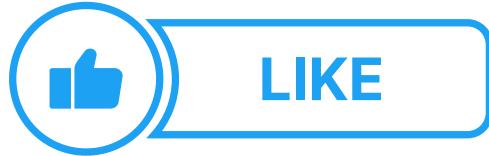
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Jamie Mariano at  
[jamiefcdctoday@gmail.com](mailto:jamiefcdctoday@gmail.com)

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**THANK  
YOU!**

  
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