

## Most Outstanding Filipino Organization in the U.S. Celebrates a Decade of Special Achievements

When the National Federation of Filipino-American Associations (NaFFAA) honored the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce (PACC) Texas by voting it as *Most Outstanding Filipino-American Organization in the U.S.* at their national convention in San Diego, they used three broad categories in their search for the winner – **Community Service, Trade Development and Aid to the Philippines**. The Texas Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce excelled in all three categories and was chosen from 160 nominees from more than 3,600 Filipino organizations in the country.

PACC Texas is official host of the successful incoming Business Missions and Investment Roadshows from the Philippines and the main organizing sponsor of the popular Texas Trade Missions to the Philippines which have boosted the Philippine economy by generating business opportunities between its delegates and Philippine-based business owners. It is also the proud sponsor of the award-winning Consular Outreach programs in Dallas, Houston and the Rio Grande Valley that have helped more than 30,000 Filipinos in Texas and neighboring states and saved them more than \$14 million in travel costs by not traveling the 1,600 miles to the nearest consulate in LA.



NaFFAA awards "Top Fil-Am Organization" Award to PACC Texas.



Comforting children displaced by typhoon Haiyan.

The PACC Texas is unique among U.S.-based chambers of commerce that focus mainly on business. The Texas Filipino Chamber has a dual mission to aid the Philippines during its times of need. It was one of the first Filipino organizations to give rapid response to the massive devastation wrought by typhoon Ondoy in Luzon and typhoon Haiyan in Eastern Visayas, as well as to Hurricane Harvey which submerged Port Arthur, Houston, Galveston and other south Texas cities and affected millions of families including Filipinos. In the last 10 years, PACC Texas' mantra has been to make a difference in people's lives.

The special award, the first of its kind, is called the "Alex Esclamado Memorial Award for Outstanding Community Leadership" named after the late NAFFAA founder, former Philippine News publisher and community activist. Because of Esclamado's 40-year vigilance advocating equal rights and unity for Filipinos in America, some historians have described him as a modern-day Filipino Cesar Chavez. The national federation that Esclamado founded 20 years ago is now active in 50 states comprising 12 regions and is now run by young leaders. There are now more than 3,500 Filipino organizations in the country, representing close to 4 million Filipinos in North America.

The Board of Judges that evaluated the many nominees and selected the winners of the Top Organization award included a Who's Who in the National Fil-Am community leadership: Publisher-Columnist Greg Macabenta who created the AE Memorial Awards with GMA7; foremost Good Governance advocate and philanthropist Loida Nicolas-Lewis; Lawyer, Columnist and USP4GG President Rodel Rodis, award-winning Community Activist Gloria Caoile; White House AAPI Commissioner Rozita Lee; and the widow of the great Alex Esclamado, Mrs. Lourdes Mitra-Esclamado.

## PACC Texas was conceived in 2007 in the Manila Hotel

PACC Texas as a state organization was born in 2007 in the Manila Hotel during its first Trade Mission to Southern Luzon and was formally organized in Texas in 2008. It was founded by then PACC President and now Honorary Consul in Texas Ethel Reyes-Mercado who was joined by the following leaders of the Dallas and Houston communities in forming the new statewide organization: Tito Refi, Flor Guinhawa, Bobby Reyes, Daisy Acuna, Carlo and Grace Rodriguez, Nap and Nene Ramirez, Richard and Nena MacDonald and Gus Mercado. In 2015, the state organization was joined by the Filipino leaders in Rio Grande Valley who formed a chapter in McAllen under the leadership of Merpu Roa. In 2017, a new chapter was launched in San Antonio representing Central Texas, headed by Roberto Sibug. With the planned formation of a fifth chapter in West Texas next year, PACC Texas will be covering the entire state which is geographically bigger than California. It is poised to become the largest and the most dynamic Filipino state chamber in the nation, if it is not already.

For the last decade, PACC Texas has served the very fast growing Filipino community in Texas and its neighboring states, and for 10 years, has been the official program implementation partner of the Philippine Consulate-General and the Philippine Honorary Consulate in the state of Texas. Ethel Mercado was appointed as Honorary Consul, a full-time but non-paying position, by the Aquino administration four years ago and was re-appointed in 2017 by the Duterte administration.

### Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino sa America

The PACC Texas organized, funded and hosted the biggest-in-the-country Consular Outreach Programs in Dallas, Houston and McAllen, that have benefitted close to 30,000 Filipinos from the entire state of Texas as well as neighboring states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana and New Mexico. Over the last 10 years, the project collectively saved these Filipinos millions of dollars in travel costs by not having to fly to L.A. to renew passports, apply for Dual Citizenship, and to register for Absentee Voting privileges. According to the records of the consulates, the projects organized and hosted by PACC Texas broke all national records in turnout, and numbers of Absentee Voters registered, out of about 50 non-consulate cities served by DFA's Consular Outreach Program. Texas was Number 1 in turnout 10 years in a row. Former Consul-General Mary Jo Aragon described the project as *"community service at its finest."*



PACC Dallas volunteers with Con-Gen Cruz and staff. First Outreach in Houston with former DCG Dan Espiritu



First Outreach in the Rio Grande Valley

The dedicated officers and volunteers of PACC Texas were also instrumental in assisting Honorary Consul Ethel R. Mercado in providing support and assistance to homeless Filipinos who had been victimized by human traffickers and unscrupulous recruiters, as well as to temporary workers who are mistreated and abused by their employers. The admirable partnership between the Honorary Consulate, the Philippine Consulate-General and the PACC Texas has successfully advocated temporal and spiritual support to Filipino victims of injustice, discrimination and crimes in the state of Texas.

The Chamber has also given active and sustained support of Texas-based "Dreamers" to prevent the young Filipinos' deportation by taking their cases to the Federal courts with the support of FALDEF and NAFFAA. They have been focusing on the Southwest U.S, with their many military bases and abundance of battered and abused Filipina mail-order brides. Consul Mercado and the PACC volunteers also help Filipinos in prison for arguably unjust causes. Example: 18-year-old Fil-Am Gabriel Hall who is now on Texas death row. PACC Texas supported the young Filipino student and worked with the defense lawyers to bring his family members and former teachers to Texas to give testimonials and plead for his life.



Fighting for Filipino "Dreamers" in the courts.



Supporting Filipinos in prison.



Helped 8000 Fil-Ams in Texas reacquire Filipino citizenship.

## Kaanib ng Bansang Pilipinas sa Pagpapalago ng Ekonomiya at Kabuhayan

On the invitation of two Philippine Presidents, PACC Texas sponsored and organized three successful Trade and Investment Missions to the Philippines that together generated more than \$50 million in annual new businesses, or about a half-billion dollars in the last 10 years for the delegates as well as for their new partners in the Philippines. Philippine Ambassador Jose L. Cuisia described these trade and investment missions as a “noble and patriotic effort on the part of Filipino-American business leaders that provides the much-needed catalyst for bridging trade and business opportunities between U.S. businessmen and Philippine-based partners, especially the small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs).” According to PACC’s development partners in the NEDA and the DTI, the three Trade Missions organized by PACC Texas continue to grow and bear fruits every year. The financial success stories range from multi-million dollar high-tech outsourcing transactions (Verizon), to imports of coco-sugar and other agri-products (Quezon and Houston); from call-center and BPO outsourcing (Taguig and Dallas), to real estate deals (all over Luzon), to large-scale importation of Philippine parols and other fine Filipino handicrafts (Pampanga and Denton), among numerous other success stories.



Texas Trade Mission to 5 Calabarzon Provinces



Business Matching with Local Business People



Thanks to perennial partner Dr. Mina Gabor



All thumbs are up for Subic and Zambales province



President Aquino warmly welcomed the delegation.



Gov. Vilma Santos-Recto toasts PACC



Pasay City -- First sister Chamber of PACC Texas



Grateful hosts gave symbolic key to their city.



Newest sister chamber – Davao City Chamber

The Chamber has received numerous citations from grateful provincial governors, heads of government agencies and local chambers of commerce who represent the hundreds of small-and-medium business enterprises (SMEs) who have benefitted from PACC Texas’ trade and investment missions. These include top provincial and local officials in the provinces of Rizal, Batangas, Laguna, Quezon, Cavite, Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac, Zambales, Bataan, Aurora as well as the administrators of Subic Bay Development Authority and Clark Development Corporation. PACC’s partner agencies, the NEDA, DTI and DOT continue to communicate to update the Chamber on the continuing successes of the businesses that the trade missions have spawned. PACC Texas’ business alliances with its sister chambers also play a major role in maintaining business relations and facilitating new business between Texas and their respective cities. These sister chambers include: Pasay City, Muntinlupa, San Fernando, Batangas, Lipa, Olongapo and Davao.



Hosted Incoming RP Investment Missions Texas Gifts for Phil. Ambassador & Mrs. Jose L. Cuisia Amb. Cuisia thanking Hon.Consul Mercado and PACC

The organization’s sponsorship and support of incoming Business Missions and Investment roadshows have also been as impressive as the outgoing trade missions that they have organized. They hosted the 2015 and 2016 Philippine Investment Roadshows in Houston and Dallas led by Ambassador H.E. Jose L. Cuisia Jr., Dr. Bernardo Villegas, Consul-General Leo Herrera Lim, Trade Commissioner Jose Ma. Dinsay and top Philippine CEOs. According to Ambassador Cuisia and Head of Mission Dr. Bernardo Villegas, their “Texas stops were the biggest and the best, among the 24 cities that their Philippine Investment Roadshows visited.”

## Tulong sa Bayan (Humanitarian Aid to the Philippines)



Treated record 1,641 indigent medical patients in one day.



PACC helped children in flooded Laguna.



RGV volunteers distributed goods to flood victims

PACC Texas gave rapid response to Ondoy, Sendong, Pablo and Haiyan disasters with timely donations of cash, clothes, medicine and hundreds of new wheelchairs. The humanitarian medical missions organized by the group in the wake of massive floods in Metro Manila and Southern Luzon treated a record 1,641 medical and dental patients in one day. The PACC Texas-led “Operation Save Lives” initiative raised more than \$1 million in donations which were sent directly to the victims and partner NGOs on the ground. Conduit recipients included our sister chambers, the ICCP Foundation, LBC Foundation, Philippine Red Cross, One World Institute, Gawad Kalinga, and the Dioceses of the eastern Visayas provinces strongly hit by Typhoon Haiyan. PACC Texas was also one of the first to respond to the devastation by Hurricane Harvey.



PACC donated 100 new wheelchairs to handicapped victims who lost their homes.



Texas shipped 15,000 boxes of goods to victims of typhoon Yolanda.



Helped Tahanang Walang Hagdan, a sanctuary for indigent paraplegics.



Dentists ran out of anesthesia but kept going on patients' request

PACC Texas also adopted the Hilantaga-an island in northern Cebu for immediate repair of 49 fishing boats, houses, a central water pump and big electric generator, and a full year of reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in partnership with the 6,000 residents of the island, and the Manila-based ICCP Foundation.

The Texas Chamber also helped several deserving NGOs in the Philippines and gave them sustained support, including “Tahanang Walang Hagdan”, a sanctuary for indigent paraplegic Filipinos; the Boys Reformatory School in Tanay, Rizal, and the Golden Acres (sanctuary for abandoned seniors); One World Institute in the hinterlands of Mindanao, and ICCP Foundation – PACC’s partner in adopting the neglected island in northern Cebu.

## Kaanib ng Bansang Pilipinas sa Pakikibaka

As the Texas affiliate of NaFFAA and USP4GG, PACC Texas organized and led successful rallies at the Chinese consulate in Houston Texas, as well as in front of the Chinese Embassy in Makati, Philippines to protest Chinese intrusions into Philippine territorial waters, in violation of international laws. The Chamber members also joined the national boycott of made-in-China products from 2012 to the present, organized by USP4GG.

PACC members joined national simultaneous peace prayer rallies and candle-light vigils in 300 U.S., Canadian and other overseas cities including Dallas and Houston, as active members and supporters of the USP4GG and NAFFAA.



Texas Filipinos took part in prayer rallies for peace



PACC officers led protest rallies in front of Chinese embassies in Houston and in Makati, Phils.



## Tulong sa mga Kababayang Negosyante sa America

True to its main mission to support the business objectives of its members, the PACC Texas chambers regularly sponsor and organize monthly entrepreneurship seminars (30 ongoing development programs in the three cities) for Chamber members who are business owners and self-development programs for professional members who do not own a business.

The different topics that are covered include: Organizing and starting a small business; Finding capital for your start-up small business; Banking for small businesses and Personal Finance for business owners and professionals; Seminars on Small Business Administration (SBA); Taxation panel forums consisting of private tax experts; Immigration panel forums consisting of USCIS spokesmen and private immigration attorneys; Health and Safety; Federal and State Laws on Payroll and Personnel; Employee Training and HR Development; Employee Health and Retirement Planning; Doing Business in the Philippines and Participation in Trade & Investment Missions; Hosting Incoming Investment and Outsourcing Missions from the Philippines; Showcasing PACC Members' Products and Services; Recognizing Outstanding Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs. The free seminars are open to members and selected guests.



PACC Texas is a rich chamber, rich in projects, rich in volunteers and rich in funds. Focusing on business development, community service and humanitarian causes, PACC Texas is always frugal and efficient. It is the only big organization in Texas that does not hold galas. Photos show their officers being inducted in very simple ceremonies. Hon. Consul and President Emeritus Ethel Mercado inducted the Houston Chamber, while State President Gary Ilagan inducted the officers and board members of the Rio Grande Valley and San Antonio chambers.

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