

NAFFAA NEVADA CELEBRATES A MILLESTONE YEAR: HONORING THE 2026 AWARDEES WHO ELEVATE OUR COMMUNITY'S SPIRIT

By: Gloria T. Caoile

A sense of excitement and pride is palpable across Nevada's Filipino American community as we eagerly anticipate PIDG '26. NaFFAA Nevada takes great pride in recognizing this year's exceptional awardees - individuals and partners whose tireless efforts, exemplary leadership, and dedication have profoundly impacted our community, leaving a lasting legacy for generations to come.

This year is truly exceptional, with our honorees embodying the very essence of our community: resilience, generosity, vision, and a commitment to service.

2026 NAFFAA NEVADA AWARDEES & THEIR SPECIAL CATEGORIES:

- **G BANK - CORPORATE PARTNERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD**
 - For long-standing support of Filipino American initiatives and financial empowerment
- **NEUROLOGY CENTER OF NEVADA - HEALTHCARE LEADERSHIP & SERVICE AWARD**
 - For years of compassionate service and commitment to community wellness
- **HUMANA - "COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD"**
 - For years of steadfast support for NaFFAA NV programs, senior outreach, and community health advocacy
- **JOHANN SAYSON, FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, PHLV RADIO-MEDIA LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY VOICE AWARD**
 - For uplifting, informing, and uniting our Filipino American community through media
- **TRANS PACIFIC MULTI SERVICES - COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT & SERVICE AWARD**
 - For helping families navigate essential services and supporting NaFFAA NV events year after year
- **CMC BOUTIQUE - CULTURAL HERITAGE & SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARD**
 - For uplifting Filipino culture through fashion, creativity, and community presence
- **ACDC (ASIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL) - COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP & ADVOCACY AWARD**
 - For empowering immigrant families, advancing civic engagement, and strengthening cross-community collaboration
- **ARTHUR DE JOYA - SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARD**
 - For leadership across multiple Las Vegas food establishments, his unwavering support for small business owners, and his years of service to NaFFAA

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Neurology
CENTER OF NEVADA



Johann Sayson



Arthur De Joya



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ANNA LADAO
Vice President

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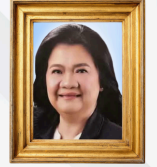
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HONORING THE VISIONARY SPONSORS WHO ELEVATE NAFFAA NV PIDG '26 AND THE 2026 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

By: Gloria T. Caoile

Behind every vibrant community celebration, dedicated sponsors lay the groundwork for lasting impact. As NaFFAA Nevada prepares for the highly anticipated PIDG '26, we pause to recognize and express deep gratitude to the sponsors whose support not only ensures a resounding success but also empowers six exceptional Filipino American scholars in 2026, setting the stage for their goals, aspirations, and future leadership roles.

Their generosity embodies the bayanihan spirit of collective uplift, where every individual's rise contributes to the community's prosperity. When one thrives, all flourish.

OUR SPONSORS ARE ARCHITECTS OF OPPORTUNITY, CRAFTING PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE LEADERS.

Including: G-Bank; Asian Community Development Council; Neurology Center of Nevada; Boyd Gaming; Naumino LLC; AAPI Chamber; and Humana.

Thanks to our sponsors, NaFFAA Nevada proudly presents scholarships to six outstanding Filipino American students, acknowledging that their potential and future leadership are within reach. Yuan Drei Hernandez from Clark High School will attend College of Southern Nevada; Nino John Quiba, valedictorian from Northwest Career and Technical Academy, will attend College of Southern Nevada; Leann Porcher from Sierra Vista High School will join College of Southern Nevada; and Maverick Aaron Santos from Rancho High School will attend University of Nevada Las Vegas.

Two other recipients are talented individuals: Fayeline Paloma, Southwest Career & Technical Academy, and Francisco Nicolas Almero from William V. Wright Elementary School.

"Our sponsors are the driving force behind this year's success, fueling our programs, fortifying our community, and opening doors for our scholars," expressed Doc. Michael Sta. Juana, President of NaFFAA-NV. Katrina Ojeda is the Scholarship Director.



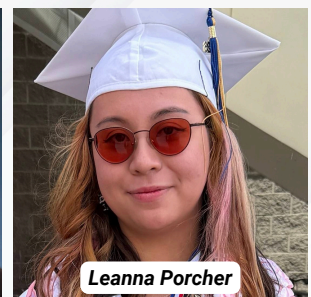
Yuan Drei Hernandez



Maverick Aaron Santos



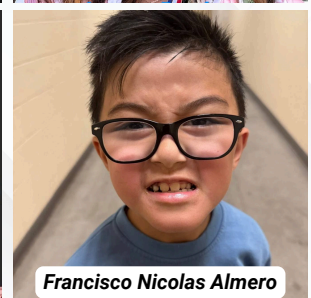
Nino John Quiba



Leann Porcher



Fayeline Paloma



Francisco Nicolas Almero

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NAFFAA NV COMMISSIONERS



KATRINA OJEDA
Board of Disabilities



SALLY BALECHA
Optometry Board



JACQUE DE JOYA
Women's Board



ANNA LADAO
Board of Aging and Disability



JENNIFER VINUYA
Board of Health

This year carries an added note of pride for our community as five exceptional Filipina leaders were appointed by the Governor of Nevada to serve on key statewide boards. Their appointments reflect not only their professional excellence but also their deep commitment to uplifting families, protecting vulnerable communities, and strengthening Nevada's civic landscape.

With great pride, NaFFAA NV honors our Commissioners:

Katrina Ojeda - Board of Disabilities; Sally Balecha - Optometry Board; Jacque de Joya - Women's Board; Anna Ladao - Board of Aging and Disability; and Jennifer Vinuya - Board of Health.

Their leadership is a powerful reminder that when Filipina women rise, entire communities rise with them. Their service will inspire generations.

"This year's awardees embody the heart of our mission. Their service uplifts families, strengthens our institutions, and inspires the next generation of Filipino American leaders. NaFFAA Nevada stands proud to honor them," expressed Dr. Michael Sta Juana, President, NaFFAA NV.

With momentum building, NaFFAA Nevada invites the entire community to join us for the 128th Philippine Independence Day Gala - a night of culture, unity, and gratitude for the leaders who continue to elevate our community.

This year's honorees will take center stage as we celebrate their contributions and the bright future they help shape for Filipino Americans in Nevada.

THE MAGIC IS REAL. THE EXCITEMENT IS GROWING. AND NAFFAA NEVADA IS READY FOR ITS MOST UNFORGETTABLE YEAR YET.

"Our community thrives because of people and partners who show up with passion, integrity, and love for our heritage. These honorees remind us that when we work together, we rise together," exclaimed Anna Okol-Ladao, Vice President, NaFFAA NV.

COMMUNITY IN ACTION: NAFFAA-NV HOLDS IMPACTFUL 2026 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The NaFFAA-NV General Membership Meeting on May 16, 2026, at Celebrity Center Las Vegas, was a resounding success, drawing 67 members who gathered with purpose.



President Dr. Michael StaJuana brought the meeting to order at 3:15 pm, setting the tone for an empowering afternoon. Sebastian Ladao, Youth Liaison Officer, led the invocation, followed by the National Anthems, passionately sung by the NaFFAA-NV Chorale. Keynote updates were provided by Jacque de Joya, National Board of Trustee, and Sally Balecha, President of the Desert Mountain Region, who shared insights on the organization's vision.

The focal point of the meeting was an enlightening presentation by Lorena Portillo, Clark County Registrar of Voters, on the upcoming elections, highlighting the importance of informed participation. Her dedication was recognized with a Plaque of Appreciation, presented by the officers. The meeting also highlighted upcoming events, including the Candidates Forum, 128th Philippine Independence celebration, and Fund Raising Raffle, led by Leo Belmonte, Jacque de Joya, and Sam Buban, respectively.

A community collaboration segment followed, featuring door prizes and a birthday celebration, made possible by generous contributions. VP Anna Ladao provided a delightful cake to commemorate the occasion. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 pm, followed by a reception, graciously hosted by Seafood City Supermarket and Fabulous Las Vegas. Gratitude is extended to the door prize sponsors: Margarita Hizon, Wilma & Benedick Gonzales, Gina Landero, Minda Banaria, Fiesta Cargo, Engr. Romy & Atty. Nadia Jurani, and Ellen Stokes. Appreciation also goes to the talented performers, NaFFAA-NV Chorale, Phil-Am Dancers, and Valley High School Fil-Am Teachers, as well as the dedicated committees: Dr. Bernaldo Salvador (Registration), Eden Galido, Asela Engel, and Olympia Ramones (Food Service), Amy Goldberg (Speaker Committee), and the Valley High School Fil-Am Teachers (Usherettes).

Las Vegas Fil-am Community Engaged with Candidates

The Fil-Am community gained an empowering experience through the Candidates Forum held on May 16 at 5pm at Celebrity Center Las Vegas, a collaborative project between Fil-Am Power and NaFFAA-NV that facilitated engagement with more than 50 candidates running for the different offices provided insight into their platforms. The event was organized by Fil-Am in Power "Fil-Am in power" in Las Vegas likely refers to the Filipino American Political Organization With Equal Representation (POWER). It is a prominent, non-partisan grassroots advocacy group in Southern Nevada dedicated to cultivating political clout, education, and civic representation for the region's rapidly growing Filipino-American population and the National Federation of Filipino American



Associations NaFFAA-NV (NaFFAA Nevada) the largest non-profit organization representing Filipinos and Filipino Americans in the United States. It serves the local community which include Community Empowerment: The organization promotes civic engagement, voter education, and immigrant rights while advocating against discrimination and racial stereotyping. The event was made possible by the different sponsors. The program was opened Atty Caesar Almase one of pioneer officer of Fil-Am In Power where Philippine Honorary Consul in Southern Nevada Amie Belmonte as master of ceremonies while Fil-Am In Power President Leo Belmonte and NaFFAA -NV Ptesident Dr. Michael Stajuana moderated the forum. The event was successfully executed thanks to the generous support of sponsors, electronic advertisement contributors, and the catering team from Kamayan Corner, led by Resty Lopez and Cynthia Deriquito.



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DR. ROZITA VILLANUEVA LEE: A LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT



Dr. Rozita Villanueva Lee stands as one of Nevada's most influential and respected Filipino-American leaders, whose decades of unwavering dedication have enriched lives, empowered communities, and elevated the Filipino-American experience throughout the state. A visionary trailblazer in cultural preservation and civic engagement, she is the Founder of the Filipino Town Cultural District Las Vegas—a historic milestone that established a permanent and vibrant symbol of Filipino heritage, pride, and contributions in Southern Nevada.

As Founder and President of the Filipino American Museum, Dr. Lee has devoted herself to preserving, celebrating, and advancing the rich history, culture, and achievements of Filipino Americans. Through her leadership, she has inspired generations to embrace community service, cultural awareness, civic participation, and unity.

In recognition of her exemplary character and extraordinary commitment to humanity, Dr. Lee was honored with the distinguished title of Miss Fabulous Queen for Excellence in Civility, a testament to her embodiment of respect, compassion, dignity, and inclusive leadership. For more than four decades, Dr. Lee has been a tireless advocate for education, cultural preservation, public service, and community empowerment. Contributing more than 8,000 hours of community service, she has been recognized with two Presidential Lifetime.

Achievement Awards and has received Letters of Recognition from the White House, honoring her exceptional dedication to serving others and strengthening communities.

Dr. Lee has also expressed that spreading the Royal Law through her civility work is of utmost importance to her. She often reflects on James 2:8–9, which emphasizes treating others with dignity, fairness, and love, principles that have guided her lifelong commitment to fostering respect, understanding, and unity among diverse communities.

Her visionary leadership, steadfast dedication, and generous spirit have earned her widespread admiration and respect across Nevada and beyond. Through her remarkable achievements and enduring commitment to uplifting others, Dr. Rozita Villanueva Lee continues to inspire future generations and exemplifies the highest ideals of servant leadership, cultural stewardship, civility, and community excellence.



A FABULOUS CROWN. THE PIONEER. THE AUTHORITY. AN IMPACFUL MOVEMENT.

The evolution of the Miss Fabulous Organization reflects more than the growth of a pageant system—it marks the rise of a powerful force in entertainment, leadership, and community empowerment. What began as a celebration of beauty, confidence, and individuality has evolved into a dynamic production company dedicated to developing the next generation of artists, influencers, and leaders.

Beyond crowns and titles, Miss Fabulous creates opportunities for mentorship, creative expression, and professional growth. Through live productions, talent showcases, and leadership initiatives, participants become ambassadors, performers, entrepreneurs, and changemakers.

Driven by mentorship and purpose, the organization empowers individuals with confidence, discipline, professionalism, and social responsibility—preparing them to lead both on and off the stage. Today, Miss Fabulous stands as more than a pageant organization; it is a movement shaping the future of entertainment, leadership, and cultural impact.

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ON THE SPOTLIGHT

ELLEN STOKES

Entrepreneur • Philanthropist • Inventor • Author • Pageant • Founder/Producer

Ellen Montehermoso Stokes is an accomplished entrepreneur, philanthropist, award-winning inventor, author, and founder of Miss Fabulous Pageants, Miss Fabulous Productions, and Project Fabulous, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowerment and community impact.



Born in the Philippines, Ellen immigrated to the United States in 1976. In 1977, she married the late U.S. Marine Corps Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CWO3) Danny L. Stokes. Following his passing after 20 years of marriage, Ellen embraced the challenges of widowhood and single parenthood with resilience and determination. She is the proud mother of Kristian and Kristine Stokes and devoted grandmother to Ethan, Brayden, and Bodie.

A visionary innovator, Ellen gained international recognition as the inventor of the patented Unisex Therapy Table. Her healthcare innovation earned her the prestigious Woman Inventor of the Year Award at the International Invention & New Product Exposition (INPEX) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 2013. Competing among hundreds of inventors from around the world, her invention was recognized for its practical application and contribution to patient care.

Driven by her passion for personal development and community service, Ellen became deeply involved in the pageant industry as a contestant, judge, organizer, and producer. Through years of experience in local, national, and international competitions, she developed a distinctive pageant model that combines competition, leadership development, community service, and charitable engagement.

In 2017, Ellen founded Miss Fabulous Las Vegas, inspired by the iconic spirit of the famous Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas sign. Her vision was to create a platform that celebrates the diverse and remarkable individuals of Las Vegas while supporting local businesses, tourism, and charitable causes. Together with her family, Ellen has invested countless hours and resources into creating opportunities that help contestants build confidence, develop leadership skills, and achieve personal success.

Under her leadership, Miss Fabulous has evolved into more than a pageant organization—it has become a movement dedicated to empowerment, self-discovery, and community engagement.

MISSION STATEMENT

“FIND YOUR FABULOUS — INSIDE AND OUT.”

Miss Fabulous is a unique empowerment platform dedicated to promoting self-love, courage, confidence, resilience, and personal growth among women and men from all walks of life, regardless of life's challenges.

In 2019, Ellen expanded her mission by establishing Project Fabulous, a nonprofit organization focused on mental wellness, mentorship, community service, education, and leadership development. Through innovative programs and community partnerships, Project Fabulous helps individuals discover their strengths, overcome obstacles, and reach their full potential.

Ellen is also the author of *Finding My Fabulous*, an inspiring memoir that chronicles her journey from childhood through marriage, motherhood, loss, and self-discovery. Through her personal story, she encourages others to embrace their own journey with courage and authenticity while finding their own version of fabulous.

Today, Ellen continues to inspire others through entrepreneurship, philanthropy, pageantry, mentorship, and community leadership, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of countless individuals. Her passion continues with pride. She loves nothing else but to instill happiness to others.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Empowering individuals to discover their confidence, embrace their purpose, and Find Their Fabulous — Inside and Out.”

