HAWAII’S #1 FILIPINO NEWSPAPER

MARCH 14, 2009

HAWAII FILIPINO CHRONICLE

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WHENEVER, MARCH 14, 2009

FILIPINO SINGERS
ENJOYING WORLDWIDE
SUCCESS

Mikey Bustos
Arnel Pineda
Charice Pempengco

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS
FILIPINO COMMUNITY LEADER TED MINA PASSES AWAY

LEGAL NOTES
H-1B RESTRICTION UNDER STIMULUS BILL

MAINLAND NEWS
FIL-AM MARTIAL ARTS FIGHTER TO MAKE PAY-PER-VIEW DEBUT

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**EDITORIAL**

**One More Thing Filipinos Do Well**

Filipinos have long excelled in sports such as boxing and billiards. With the recent successes of several Filipino vocalists, singing can be officially added to that short list.

One of the first Filipino singing sensations in recent memory was Lea Salonga, who several years ago, landed the lead role in the hit musical “Miss Saigon.” More recently, Manila-born Pinoy rocker Arnel Pineda made headlines in the music world when he signed on as lead singer of the popular rock band Journey.

No doubt the rising popularity of talent shows like American Idol and its spinoffs enabled many to showcase their talents. Even local girls Jasmine Trias and Camille Velasco owe their big breaks to American Idol, as does child singing sensation Charice Pempengco who was discovered last year in a talent show in Korea called “Star King.”

While the Philippines may lag behind the U.S. in technology and other areas, we are light years ahead of perhaps any nation on earth when it comes to talent shows. Many Filipinos began singing in front of audiences at an early age, particularly at family parties, school reunions and town fiestas where singing and singing contests were often the main attraction.

A nation obsessed with singing, the Philippines will continue to take great pride in the next singing star who is discovered. And that’s a good thing.

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**Abercrombie Announcement Heats Up 2010 Elections**


Abercrombie is the first major Democrat to enter a major race for next year’s election. His early announcement may achieve its intended effect of clearing the field of opponents and forcing on-the-fence candidates to decide earlier than they had expected to—candidates like Mayor Mufi Hannemann and State Senate president Colleen Hanabusa who are also both eying the governor’s seat.

At the moment, it’s a race between the liberal Abercrombie and the conservative Duke Aiona who announced his bid for Washington Place over a year ago. Abercrombie, who turns 72 next year, is an early favorite against the likes of Hannemann, Hanabusa, former State House majority floor leader Kirk Caldwell and others, particularly in Kalihi Valley. The Filipino community mourns his passing. A brief article on Mina’s life is on page 8.

In closing, please take time to read these and other articles of interest in this issue, including our regular columns like Family Corner, Legal Notes and Legislative Connection. As always, thank you for supporting the Hawaii Filipino Chronicle! Until next time...

Aloha and Mahalo!
Here’s to Your Health

By Senator Will Espero

A
ccess to medical care is a long-standing problem in the country. Thankfully, the Obama Administration has set its sail to tackle the deficiencies in the current health care system. The Hawaii Legislature is considering several bills to help improve access as well. These are a few.

Telemedicine - SB 1676

With consumers now comfortable with the internet, HMSA recently debuted its "telephone doctor" program. SB 1676, introduced as a Senate Majority package bill, supports making medical care available through the telephone and internet. The bill clarifies that telemedicine is within the scope of a doctor’s practice and supports the expansion of new technology for this purpose. Telehealth is expected to result in increased access to care by residents of rural and underserved areas, increased receipt of timely care, a decrease in inappropriate emergency room use, and lower health care costs.

Temporary Licensing of Dentists – SB 933

Another measure to improve access to care for underserved populations is SB 933, which permits the issuance of a community service license to practice dentistry to those dentists who are employed by the Department of Health, a federally qualified health center, a Native Hawaiian health systems center, or a post-secondary dental auxiliary training program. The dentists must be licensed in another state, passed their board examinations within the last five years, and practiced at least half-time over the three years prior.

Remote Dispensing Pharmacy – SB 585

It’s not just access to physician and dental services that's difficult in rural areas, it's also being able to get the prescriptions needed. This is particularly the case for residents of the neighbor islands and its remote areas where there are no pharmacies. SB 585 sets out the requirements for remote dispensing pharmacies to ensure the safety and integrity of the dispensing of medications, and includes patient eligibility for obtaining medication and geographic restrictions for opening sites.

Diabetes Centers – SB 1178

The earthquake blackout of Christmas 2008 were an inconvenience to many, but to those dependent on medical support equipment, it was a matter of life and death. SB 1178 requires the Department of Health (DOH) to review emergency plans and develop guidelines of all dialysis centers in Hawaii to ensure the safety of dialysis patients in the event of a public emergency. The bill also requires the DOH to post on its website a list of all dialysis centers that have backup emergency generators with the capacity to sustain dialysis treatments and maintain their water treatment centers. An estimated 620 new cases of end-stage renal disease are diagnosed in Hawaii each year.

Along the lines of health

Athletic Trainers – SB 1129

Getting fit? Personal trainers abound, but how is the public to know that the individual has the proper education to be able to advise clients given their particular health conditions in relation to a proposed fitness regimen? SB 1129 adds a new state law, requiring registration of athletic trainers. Certification requires the trainer to be properly qualified to prevent athletic injuries; recognize, evaluate, and assess athletic injuries and conditions; provide immediate care of athletic injuries, including common emergency medical situations; and rehabilitate and recondition athletic injuries, among others.

And Others of Interest

Bamboo – SB 1645

My colleague Senator Kalani English has long championed the adoption of traditional Hawaiian architecture, showing how the materials and design provide protection and ventilation while blending in with the native surroundings. SB 1645, part of the Hawaiian legislators’ package, aims to have bamboo become an accepted construction material under the state building code.

Hawaii Made Products – SB 1223

If it says "made in Hawaii," how much of it actually was "made in Hawaii"? The advertising tool has long been an issue of controversy. Local manufacturers and producers of goods here want to ensure truth in-advertising and stop misrepresentation. SB 1223 would prohibit items from being advertised as "made in Hawaii" unless the product derives at least 51% of its wholesale value from manufacture, assembly, fabrication, or production within Hawaii. The bill also envisions a working group to identify issues relating to the Hawaii-made products law and to propose workable solutions and enforcement measures.

Liquor Liability – SB 300

SB 300 requires liquor licenses to carry liability insurance as an acquisition of continuing and renewing a license.

All of these bills have crossed over to the House.

SENATOR ESPERO is Chair of the Senate Committee on Public Safety and Military Affairs. He is also a member of the Committees on Commerce and Consumer Protection, Health; and Transportation, International and Intergovernmental Affairs. He can be reached by phone at 586-6490, fax at 586-4351, or email at senespero@capitol.hawaii.gov.
FILIPINO SINGERS WORLDWIDE HIT BIG TIME

By Caroline Julian and Rowena Ballesteros

Though fate, determination or luck. But for fast-rising Canadian recording artist Mikey Bustos, it’s simply a dream come true.

Born and raised in Toronto, Bustos is finally living his dream. He recently released his first album, “Memoirs of a Superhero.” And has performed as the opening act to Christina Aguilera and The Pussycat Dolls.

“I knew in my bones that singing was my passion,” says Bustos, whose parents are from the Philippines. His father is from Pampanga and his mother from Cagayan Valley. At age 5, he would don a white tuxedo with a pink cummerbund and perform at weddings and family parties.

“It was more of a ‘funny-cute thing’ than art. But in my 5 year-old heart I was singing like a star,” he says.

Bustos’ first taste of fame and showbiz came courtesy of Canadian Idol, the equivalent to Idol.

“My dad was a star,” he says. “Being cute thing’ than art. But in my 5 year-old heart I was singing like a star,” he says.

At age 5, he would don a white tuxedo with a pink cummerbund and perform at weddings and family parties. “It was more of a ‘funny-cute thing’ than art. But in my 5 year-old heart I was singing like a star,” he says.

The whirlwind continued after Canadian Idol. He and the top 11 finalists from Canadian Idol 2003 signed with the record label BMG Canada and together released a compilation album which hit gold status.

“It made me the first Filipino on a gold-selling album in Canadian music history,” he says.

Bustos next worked on his first full-length solo album which he describes as “a pop album about the power of the mind to shaping an extraordinary life.” The album recently hit store shelves in Canada.

Unknown No More

Bustos is one of a growing number of Filipino singers worldwide whose vocal talents are being discovered. Another one of them is Manila-born Arnel Pineda, lead vocalist for the popular rock band Journey.

Pineda began singing at age 5. He enjoyed a successful musical career in Asia that spanned 25 years. His big break came courtesy of YouTube, a website where users can upload, view and share video clips. In late 2007, Journey guitarist Neal Schon stumbled upon a clip of Pineda and asked him to audition.

Pineda debuted with his new band at a live performance in Chile in February 2008. The band’s energetic performance, along with Pineda’s unbelievably strong vocals, kept 15,000 screaming fans on their feet during the “Festival Vina Del Mar” concert.

Journey received the La Gaviota De Plata (“the Gull of Silver”) Maximum Award—the top award from festival organizers. Pineda himself won two awards in a competition amongst vocalists on the second day of the festival.

Elvie Gabriel, a huge Journey fan, describes Pineda’s style and voice as “very soothing.”

“I’ve followed Journey since the early Eighties and have been a fan since then,” she says. “But when Arnel Pineda joined the band, I completely fell in love with them all over again.” She and other Journey fans will get a chance to see Pineda in concert on March 25, 26 and 28 at the Blaisdell Concert Hall and the Big Island. (Upon hearing news of Journey’s concert, Gabriel was stoked.

“It’s about time that they came to Hawaii,” she says. “I always flew to the mainland for their concerts.”

When not on tour, Pineda returns to Quezon City in the Philippines to be with his wife and children. He has a cousin named Ramone Pineda who resides in Hawaii.

Teen Sensation

Another up-and-coming singer is Charice Pempengco, better known as “Charice.”

She began competing at age 4 in various singing contests in the Philippines. By the time she was 7, she was a veteran of some 80 different competitions.

In 2005, she joined ABS-CBN’s “Little Big Stars,” a show similar to American Idol, in which she finished third overall.

Like Arnel Pineda, Charice’s singing career received a mega boost from YouTube. Not long after a fan posted one of her performances online, she received a call from talk show host Ellen DeGeneres to perform on her show. Oprah Winfrey extended a similar invitation.

Requests for performances and public appearances in the U.S. and the Philippines kept coming. She sang a duet with Celine Dion at Madison Square Garden, participated in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day parade and made a special appearance on Good Morning America. Just recently, Charice performed for the president’s sister, Maya Soetoro-Ng at the White House.

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COVER STORY

online blogger Gerry Cacanindin. “You are a total loser if you have no talent to show,” says Cacanindin.

In addition are the yearly town fiestas. While celebrated differently from town to town, nearly all fiestas have a singing contest. Winners go on to represent the town in a province-wide contest where they hope to be discovered by talent scouts who will then help them launch careers as recording artists and entertainers.

The Singing Filipinos

“It’s a fact that we Filipinos love to sing,” says Waipahu resident Ofelia Lagat. “Singing is one of our favorite pastimes.” She notes that singers like Regine Velasquez and Sharon Cuneta are among the Philippines’ top stars.

Lead singer Arnel Pineda (center) with his band Journey

When feeling the urge to sing, many turn to the popular ‘Magic Sing’ microphone which can be found in most Filipino homes. The device is used during birthdays, holidays and just about every occasion, providing hours of fun and enjoyment. Some use the mic to practice and improve their voices.

“We enjoy having singing contests and seeing who gets the highest score,” Lagat says. “It’s fun and really livens up any occasion.”

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Pearl Presidential Inaugural Gala at the Mandarin Hotel in Washington, D.C.

At a benefit concert in May 2008 in Las Vegas, she received a standing ovation from an audience of over 10,000 at the Mandalay Bay Hotel.

An excerpt from a Las Vegas newspaper stated that the evening “truly belonged to doe-eyed 16-year-old Filipino belter Charice, whose voice is like a jetliner taking off from her sternum.”

Charice is currently in Los Angeles, where she is working on her international debut album with 15-time Grammy award winner David Foster who is taking on the task of being her producer. The album is slated for release this summer.

More Singing Sensations

Not many outside of the United Kingdom have heard of Madonna Decena, who last year reached the semi-finals of the judges’ auditions for “Britain’s Got Talent,” a television show produced by American Idol judge Simon Cowell.

The 33-year-old from Quezon City wowed the judges and audience with her powerful performance and heart-felt story. Trembling and a little unsure of herself, Madonna walked onto the stage and told everyone her reason for competing. She migrated to Britain six months earlier in hopes of creating a better life for herself and two young daughters. She was forced to leave them behind with their grandparents until she earned enough money to send for them.

Her rendition of Whitney Houston’s “I Will Always Love You” brought a collective lump to the auditorium’s throat and a standing ovation. Her performance even impressed the usually stoic Cowell.

“I absolutely loved it,” he said.

Decena’s accomplishment is significant to Filipinos. Being 100 percent Filipina, she epitomizes the millions of overseas Filipino workers who endure separation from their families in hopes of a better future.

An Early Start

Singing comes naturally for many Filipinos. Most began singing at an early age, usually at family parties where much of the entertainment is focused on singing.

Those who don’t sing or dance at these family gatherings risk being ostracized, says online blogger Gerry Cacanindin.

“You are a total loser if you have no talent to show,” says Cacanindin.

In addition are the yearly town fiestas. While celebrated differently from town to town, nearly all fiestas have a singing contest. Winners go on to represent the town in a province-wide contest where they hope to be discovered by talent scouts who will then help them launch careers as recording artists and entertainers.

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Madonna Decena


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Stimulus Package Is Helping Honolulu and Filipino Veterans

By Mayor Mufi Hannemann

The federal stimulus package is already paying off in ways that will keep people in Honolulu working and create more jobs in the future, while also helping to address a historic injustice against Filipino veterans.

The package will provide nearly $41 million for city transportation projects, including 60-foot articulated hybrid buses, improvements to the Middle Street Intermodal Transit Facility, construction of a new transit facility in Wahiawa and improvements to a facility in Pearl City, and reinforcement of streets beside various bus stops. We also expect to receive about $3 million for anti-crime projects, and additional money for other initiatives as details are worked out in Washington.

In total, Hawaii should receive about $700 million from the package, called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The package also includes $198 million to help compensate Filipino veterans who fought under the U.S. flag during World War II. These veterans have waited far too long for the recognition they deserve, and I applaud Senator Dan Inouye for including the veterans in this important legislation.

I have always supported efforts to provide benefits that so many Filipino veterans earned with their blood, sweat and tears during one of the most tragic periods of our world’s history. These veterans fought alongside their American allies and made the same incredible sacrifices yet were unjustly denied the compensation they were due.

The legislation provides for lump-sum payments of $15,000 for Filipino veterans who have become U.S. citizens and $9,000 for non-U.S. citizens. Some believe that is too little, too late, and I don’t blame them. But efforts to compensate the veterans fairly have been stalled for more than 60 years, while so many passed away. An estimated 18,000 are still alive and eligible, and the compensation that is now available will be a great help to many of them in their twilight years. Their bravery and sacrifices will never be forgotten.

I’m very grateful for the support and encouragement I’ve received from Oahu’s Filipino community over the years, and for the interest so many of you have expressed in our city and its future. We are all facing challenges because of the sour economy, but we will solve these problems by working together and remaining focused on our goals.

The three new members of my Cabinet who are of Filipino ancestry are helping make sure the city’s finances are managed prudently and effectively, without sacrificing the services that so many people depend on to keep our city safe and beautiful. These three—Jeoffrey Cudiamat, Deputy Director of the Department of Facilities Maintenance; Manny Lanuevo, Deputy Director of the Department of Environmental Services; and Sandra Sagisi, Deputy Director of the Department of Customer Services—are doing a commendable job, along with continuing Cabinet members Baybee Hufana-Ablan, Joyce Mina Oliveira and all the other members of our team.

In recognition of the economic situation, every one of my appointed Cabinet members joined me in taking voluntary pay cuts of five percent. This includes about 50 people, and we all feel that it is very important to lead by example. These sacrifices are just one of our team’s contributions to the “stone soup,” we must make together to help sustain our community during these tough times. If everyone contributes a little something to the soup, we can enjoy a nourishing meal together and set aside the stone we began with.

On a final note, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the family of former state Representative Ted Mina, my longtime friend and supporter. We will all miss him dearly.
Hawaii Regional Robotics Competition

By Gov. Linda Lingle

n March 26-28, 2009, high school teams from Hawai‘i, the mainland U.S., the Philippines and Mexico will compete in the second annual FIRST in Hawai‘i Regional Robotics Competition at the Stan Sheriff Center at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa.

We are very excited to have a team of juniors from Philippine Science High School in Quezon City on the roster this year. The 32-member team has received tremendous financial and mentoring support from neighboring universities, the government and the private sector.

In a humorous nod toward their country of origin, the students have nicknamed their robot “Larry Labuyo” after a wild breed of chicken native to the Philippines. Having them travel to Hawai‘i for this competition is a wonderful opportunity for our students to connect with their international counterparts, compare robot-building strategies and build long-lasting friendships.

Twenty-four FIRST teams from O‘ahu and neighbor island high schools will be competing in this year’s Hawai‘i regional using the robots they have built over a six-week period. I hope you will join me at Stan Sheriff stadium to cheer on these students and their remarkable achievements. Known as the “varsity sport of the mind,” robotics has the same competitive fervor that makes basketball and football matches so much fun to watch, but instead of a basket or touchdown, it rewards students for exercising teamwork and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills. Find details on the upcoming FIRST competition—which is free and open to the public—at robotics.hawaii.gov.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is one of six robotics programs in which students in Hawai‘i at the elementary, middle and high school levels are participating. The number of teams in these programs at our public, private and charter schools has snowballed from 95 last year to 300 today. Much of this growth can be attributed to strong community support. The more students and teachers see their counterparts at other schools succeed in robotics competitions, the more they want to become involved.

Increasing robotics education and other hands-on learning opportunities that inspire teamwork and problem-solving is key to achieving the goals of my Administration’s Hawai‘i Innovation Initiative. By ensuring that our workforce has the skills and knowledge to succeed in a competitive global market, we can build a sustainable economy based on innovation and less on land development.

There are several ways in which local residents and businesses can participate in robotics education, including as mentors, sponsors, or enthusiastic fans who see these students the recognition they deserve.

This legislative session, my Administration has submitted a STEM tax credit bill that provides additional incentives for individuals and businesses to support programs like FIRST in our public schools. You can learn more about this bill and the other bills in my Administration’s legislative package at hawaii.gov/initiatives. In addition, please feel free to send my office your ideas and concerns at governor.lngle@hawaii.gov.

HAWAII-FILIPINO NEWS

Veterans on Oahu Offered Entrepreneurial Assistance

The SBA Hawaii District Office will conduct a free “Community Express Day” consultation to discuss financing for veteran and military small business owners on Wednesday, March 18, 2009, at Pearl Harbor Fleet & Family Center. Private, 30 minute consultations will be offered by the experienced staff of the Hawaii Small Business Development Center, SBA, and a small business lender.

SBA’s Community Express Loan Program provides loans from $5,000 up to $25,000 to qualified small businesses with good credit, a basic business plan, and a business banking account. Veterans may qualify for a larger loan amount with additional requirements. Loan proceeds can be used for most business purposes including working capital. Advance registration is highly recommended. Please call (808) 541-2990 ext 203 or register online at www.sba.gov/hu.

Leeward Community College International Festival Explores Global

PEARL CITY, HAWAI‘I—Leeward Community College presents the 16th Annual International Education Festival on March 9 – 14, 2009 on the Pearl City campus. The Festival, based on the theme of “Global Sustainability,” is expanding to a six-day schedule and features a free drawing for a round trip ticket to the Philippines.

The Festival includes five days of lectures, demonstrations and presentations on “Global Sustainability” and a culminating day of international cultural activities, food children’s games and entertainment.

The week’s activities culminate with International Festival Day on Saturday, March 15, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. in the College’s Eucalyptus and Tuthill Courtyards. The day features a variety of international foods, music, and dance, along with cultural demonstrations, displays and interactive children’s games.

The International Festival is free and open to the public. The event is a joint effort of Leeward Community College and the Pacific and Asian Affairs Council, with support from Hawaiian Airlines, PacificTel and Wireless, and UNITE HERE Local 5. For more information, call Raymund Liangson, 455-0614 or Judy Kapenberg, 455-0284.

Exams For Philippine Foreign Service Officers Announced

The Board of Foreign Service Examinations of the Philippines will conduct Part I of the Foreign Service Officer (FSO) exams on May 10, 2009.

The exam will be administered at Philippine embassies in Washington, DC, Vienna and Dubai. Parts II and III of the five-part exam will be held at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila from July 18-24, 2009.

Filipino citizens who are interested in taking the FSO exam must submit an application to the Philippine embassy in Washington, DC by March 20, 2009.

A Foreign Service Officer formulates and implements foreign policies of the Philippines; promotes Philippine culture, trade, tourism and other Philippine interests abroad; assists in protecting rights of Filipinos abroad; national forums; and assists in maintaining diplomatic relations with other countries.

More information on the FSO exam is available online at: www.dfa.gov.ph.
Ted Mina, a long-time leader in the Filipino community, passed away recently at age 74. The son of immigrant plantation workers, Mina was a tireless community volunteer who pushed for the well-being of not only Filipinos, but also everyone in the community, particularly those in Kalihi Valley where he lived with his wife.

Mina served as a two-term member in the State House Representatives beginning in 1976, where he represented Kalihi. After leaving office, he continued his involvement in politics with the Democratic Party as district chairman for the party's Kalihi Valley precinct. He also worked as an aide for former Rep. Ben Cabreros in 2002 and later campaigned for Mufi Hannemann's mayoral campaign in 2004.

"He will be remembered for his integrity and for being a good community leader," says Kalihi resident Ted Saribay who has known Mina since 1978. "He was a very loving and caring person who inspired me to be more persistent. I consider him my mentor."

He is survived by his wife Geri, daughters Joyce Oliveira and Desiree Calistro and son Timothy Casabar. A burial service is scheduled for March 27, 2009 at the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa on School Street, with the burial to follow at Hawaiian Memorial Park in Kaneohe.

Top Filipino Comedians Return for Fil-Am Comedy Jam V

The nation's funniest Filipino comedians will be performing in Hawaii on April 10-11, 2009 for the Fifth Annual Fil-Am Comedy Jam, which is presented by Two Flip Productions. Comedians Rex Navarette, Joey Guila and Kaleo Pilanca will be performing at Maui's Iao Theatre on Friday, April 10. The evening will be hosted by local boy Lanai from radio station 98.5 FM.

On Saturday, April 11, Navarette, Guila and Canada's Ron Jasol—along with Lanai—will perform at the Dole Ballrooms in Iwilei. Navarette, Guila and Jasol are considered among the most successful Filipino comics and have performed in some of the nation's top clubs. Navarette is the premier Fil-Am comedian who has performed in such shows as the Winnipeg Comedy Festival, International Comedy Fest 2k8 and the LOL Comedy Festival in Hollywood, California.

Both shows start at 8 pm and are for adults 18 and above. Tickets are $20 pre-sale online at: www.islandtix.com. More ticket information is available by calling 216-5718 or 306-3460.

By Carlota Ader

Filipino Community Leader Passes Away

Ted Mina

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By Carlota Ader
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Honolulu Festival to Include Philippines Booth

The 15th Annual Honolulu Festival, scheduled for March 13-15, 2009, will feature a touch from the Philippines this year.

As part of the festivities, the Philippine Consulate General of Honolulu will have a booth which will be on display at the Hawaii Convention Center, from March 14-15, 2009 from 10 am to 5 pm. The Filipino community is invited to drop by and visit the display.

The Philippine booth is entitled “CALABRAZON” which is the acronym for the five provinces south of Manila—Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon. The booth will be decorated with Pahiyas and other Philippine crafts.

“Pahiyas” is derived from the local Filipino word “Payas,” which means to decorate. The Pahiyas Festival is a colorful feast in honor of San Isidro Labrador, the patron saints of farmers, as a thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest. The province of Quezon hosts this festival on the 15th of May.

Products and services from the CALABRAZON region will be on display and for sale, including jusi and pina embroideries, buntal hats and weaving demonstrations, native delicacies and Pahiyas decors.

The Honolulu Festival is Hawaii’s premier event that promotes cultural understanding, economic cooperation and ethnic harmony between the people of Hawaii and the Asia-Pacific region. The three-day celebration will feature live musical and cultural performances, as well as impressive art exhibits from groups in Asia and the Pacific.

Events will be conveniently located at the Hawaii Convention Center, Ala Moana Shopping Center, Waikiki Shopping Plaza and Waikiki Beach Walk, concluding with a Grand Parade along Kalakaua Avenue through the heart of Waikiki on the final evening.

BIBAK Hawaii Inducts Officers

Nearly 100 people gathered for the induction ceremony for BIBAK Hawaii’s 2009-2010 officers and youth officers, held recently at the Hale Moku Community Center near Pearl Harbor.

Inducting officer Paul Raymund Cortes from the Philippine Consulate General also delivered the inspirational message of the evening.

The ambiance was festive with Valentine’s decorations, catered food by Lani’s Restaurant and pan-Cordillera contemporary and traditional attire worn by old and young alike.

The officers for 2009-2010 are Hugo Prill Sr., president; Rusty Meana, vice president; Grace Prill, recording secretary; Bernadette Manuel, assistant recording secretary; Juana Eslava, Angel Galas, Lito Mina, Linda Pasew-en and Elizabeth Galas.

The evening’s highlight was a dance and skit numbers by the youth and women, which were possible with the guidance of Lita Cagdan. There were also various cultural offerings including an Ugaygam chant by Angel Galas, BIBAK Hymn led by Vicky Bacayan, Saliddumay led by Simeona Geston, as well as gong playing and dancing by Hugo Prill Sr., Keevin Sacoy, Kenneth Bacayan, Roland Baon, Wayland Quintero, Virgil J. Mayor Apostol, Albert Parada, Albert Parada, Samuel Sonson, Jeffrey Sanchez, Daniel Carlung, Esther Palacsa, Desiree Seguritan, Abigail Bacayan-Kopf and others.

BIBAK Hawaii was founded in 1979 by U.S. Navy and local families in Hawaii. The objectives of the club are mutual support among members and perpetuation of the Igorot culture and traditions. BIBAK Hawaii members will be participating in the Honolulu Festival Parade on March 15, 2009 along Kalakaua Avenue. Past and current members are encouraged to participate and sign-up via email at: bibakhawaii@gmail.com.
PHILIPPINE NEWS

GMA Signs Baselines Bill into Law, Triggers China Protest

By Paolo Romero / Thurs. March 12, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - President Arroyo has signed the law defining Philippine territory, sparking protests from China over control of strategic South China Sea islands, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said yesterday.

“We are sending the message to the whole world that we are affirming our national sovereignty... our national interest as an independent country,” Ermita said.

China, which also claims sovereignty over Scarborough Shoal, “strongly opposed” the signing of Republic Act 9522 known as the Philippine Baseline Act, which defines Philippine territorial waters and maintains the country’s claim over the disputed Spratly Islands (Kalayaan Island Group or KIG) in the South China Sea and Scarborough Shoal.

Vietnam, which also has long-running claims in the Spratlys, also opposed the move.

In a statement, the Chinese embassy in Manila said the inclusion of the Huangyan Island and some islands and reefs of Nansha islands in the Baseline Act as Philippine territory is “illegal, invalid” and totally unacceptable to the Chinese government.

“The Chinese embassy hereby expresses strong opposition and solemn protest and reiterates that Huangyan Island and Nansha Islands have always been part of Chinese territory and that the People’s Republic of China has indisputable sovereignty over these islands and their adjacent waters,” the embassy said.

Ermita said Mrs. Arroyo signed the bill on Tuesday without fanfare as the law was just a “technical and clinical adjustment” on the country’s baselines to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that was adopted by the world body in 1982 and ratified by the Philippines in 1992.

The UN has asked the Philippines and other countries that signed the UNCLOS to submit the dimensions of their continental shelf by May 13. The convention, which came into force in 1994, defines the maritime limits of signatories.

Henry Bensurto, secretary-general of the Commission on Maritime and Oceanic Affairs, said the Philippines passed the law not to reiterate its claims over the Spratlys and Scarborough Shoal but to define the baseline used to determine its extended continental shelf.

He and Ermita downplayed the Chinese embassy’s protest, saying the protests were expected and can be handled by the mechanisms in the Code of Conduct entered into by members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China to peacefully resolve disputes.

“We should negotiate through peaceful means our claims because there are six claimants... but there’s agreement in the Code of Conduct on how to settle claims so we don’t resort to any force to settle the dispute,” Ermita said.

“We’re mindful that we claim these islands... we’re also mindful of the definition of national interest that we’re not isolated and we interact with other nations. We have factored in that we are part of a community. We took into account the various agreements, including the Code of Conduct that was pushed by the Philippines,” Bensurto said.

“We’re hopeful other countries will understand that when we passed this law for the purpose of complying with UNCLOS, we were mindful of the ASEAN Declaration on the Code of Conduct.”

Under the new law, 24 nautical miles from the baselines was the country’s territorial area, 200 miles from them would be the exclusive economic zone and 350 nautical miles out would be the exclusive continental shelf.

Caught by surprise

Sources said Chinese diplomats were unaware that the bill was already signed into law when they accompanied Ambassador Liu Jianchao, former spokesperson of China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Malacanang yesterday for the presentation of his credentials.

After Congress passed the legislation last month, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Wang Guangya summoned a Philippine embassy official in Beijing and said Manila’s claims over the two regions “were illegal and invalid,” China’s official Xinhua news agency said.

It cited Wang as saying the Philippines should take into consideration bilateral relations as well as peace and stability in the South China Sea.

Vietnam also urged the Philippines to refrain from taking action that might complicate the dispute.

The Spratlys, believed to be rich in oil, gas and fish, consist of about 100 barren islets, reefs and atolls dotting the world’s busiest shipping lanes in the South China Sea.

Vietnam, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei each claim all or part of the low-lying islands. – With AP (www.philstar.com)
Got a 5-Year-Old?

By Grace F. Fong, Ed.D.

Children born in 2004 are turning 5 years-old this year. Parents or legal guardians of these children can begin registering them now for kindergarten or junior kindergarten at Hawai‘i’s public schools. Children born on or before August 1 can be registered for kindergarten. Those born between August 2 and December 31 can be registered for junior kindergarten, which provides younger students with learning experiences and environments that match their developmental needs and abilities. Once registered, children can start school on the first day of the school year, Thursday, July 30, 2009, even if they haven’t reached their fifth birthday yet.

If parents are not sure which school their child should attend, they can call an elementary school in their area. Office staff can help parents determine if their street address falls in the school’s geographic area. Once parents know which school their child should attend, they will need to take several documents to the school to register their child. These include:

- Health records (Form 14)—children must have a physical examination, written documentation of required immunizations, and tuberculosis clearance to enter school on the first day.
- Birth certificate—an original or certified copy is required to verify the child’s age.
- Legal documents—if there were changes to the child’s name, custody arrangement, or guardianship, the legal documents that verify the changes are needed.
- Proof of current local address—a document such as an electric, telephone, or cable bill, or a housing or rental agreement that shows the address of the child’s home.
- (Optional) Immunization records.

Having all of the necessary documents at the time of registration is essential. Since children need a physical exam and must be up-to-date on all necessary immunizations before registering, early planning helps parents avoid the last minute rush at the doctor’s office or any delays in starting school. For more information about registering children for kindergarten, call your nearest elementary school, or check the Department of Education website at http://doe.k12.hi.us/parents.

Why register early?

Families are encouraged to register their children early—February through June—rather than waiting until just before school starts. According to Mary Ann Nemoto, Project Administrator of the UH Center on the Family’s Learning to Grow Project, early registration provides families with access to important resources they can use to begin their child’s formal education on a positive note, and it helps the schools as well.

When families register their child early, schools are able to inform them about transition/orientation programs for children who will be entering kindergarten or junior kindergarten. These programs provide an opportunity for children and their families to get acquainted with their new school and help them ease into the school experience by addressing any apprehensions children or parents may have about “going to kindergarten.” They provide parents with a chance to meet with teachers and other school staff to discuss expectations, school routines, and ways parents can support their children’s learning. Many schools also provide families with home learning packets that give suggestions for summer activities to help prepare children academically and behaviorally for the kindergarten classroom.

Families can use kindergarten registration as a starting point to begin preparing their child for the new experience of attending kindergarten/junior kindergarten so that the start of school can be a smooth, enjoyable experience for everyone. Here are some suggestions:

- Talk with your child about going to school, reassuring her that it is okay to go to school; talk about her feelings about going to school.
- Practice separating—spending time apart—especially if she has little or no experience being apart from you; reassure her that you will return.
- Practice school-day routines, e.g., going to bed early, getting up at a specific time, and having breakfast.
- Encourage your child to do things independently, e.g., toiletting, putting away toys, or pouring her own cereal into a bowl.

Schools Benefit Too

Just as a child needs preparation to be ready for school, schools need to prepare for their students. When parents register their children well before the start of the school year, schools are able to anticipate an accurate count of incoming students. They can then hire a sufficient number of qualified kindergarten teachers, reducing the likelihood of having over-crowded classrooms.

At the start of the school year, teachers usually spend a lot of time with their kindergarteners developing routines, clarifying expectations in the classroom, and building relationships with and among students. They also spend time assessing the unique developmental and educational needs of the children in their class so that they can provide appropriate instruction. When a child misses this critical orientation period because he has entered kindergarten/junior kindergarten after the school year has started, everyone in the class is affected as the teacher takes time to integrate the new student into the class. Registering early helps schools to create the most effective learning environment for all children and to have the right number of teachers from the first day of school.

If you have a 5-year-old, take the time now to register your child for kindergarten. Or, if you know someone who has a 5-year-old, remind them to register their child.
H-1B Restriction Under Stimulus Bill

By Reuben S. Seguritan

February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, otherwise known as the “Economic Stimulus Bill.”

While the bill seeks to stimulate the struggling U.S. economy by providing bail out money by providing bail out short-term loans through the Federal Reserve.

Under the bill, any covered company will not be allowed to petition foreign workers under the H-1B program unless they comply with certain labor condition application attestations. These attestations are:

First, that prior to filing the H-1B petition, the company must have taken good faith efforts to recruit U.S. workers for the position, offering a wage of at least as high as that required by law and further, that the position has been offered to any U.S. worker who is equally or better qualified for the job.

Second, that the company has not laid off and will not lay off any U.S. worker in a position equivalent to the H-1B position within the period beginning 90 days prior to filing and up to 90 days after filing.

This section of the bill, introduced by Senators Sander (D-Vermont) and Grassley (R-Iowa), has drawn critical comments among employers, recruiters, professional workers, immigration lawyers and interest groups because of the adverse effects it will have on the hiring of highly skilled H-1B workers considered vital in strengthening the U.S. economy.

Charles Kuck, president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association said that while “the stimulus bill looks helpful,” it is “counterproductive when it restricts the financial industry’s access to top-flight talent who can help create jobs for U.S. workers.”

Given the upcoming start of the filing for H-1B petitions on April 1, 2009 for FY 2010, this new development is a cause of concern for petitioning employers and the prospective H-1B beneficiary-workers.

Yearly, Congress allots 65,000 H-1B visas for skilled workers and professionals in specialty occupations to be able to work temporarily in the U.S. For the past several years, despite the U.S. economic debacle, the H-1B allocation has been oversubscribed and used up indicating a continuing clamor to hire skilled foreign workers for companies to remain competitive.

While the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of Labor (DOL) have yet to issue their implementing regulations and guidance on this new law, it appears that those who already have an H-1B status but seek an extension of their H-1B are not covered by this restriction since they are not new hires.

Also, those who were already previously hired by the employer under a different immigration status such as F-1, TN or L-1B but are only applying for a change of status may be considered exempt. On the other hand, those seeking change of employers under H-1B may be covered by the restriction.

This H-1B restriction will expire on February 16, 2011.

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Durano: RP Tourism Defies Global Crisis

By Paolo Romero / Thurs., March 12, 2009

MANILA, Philippines - Philippine tourism is defying the global crisis as jobs mount in various industry sectors, especially for a wide range of highly skilled professionals and other personnel.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano said the industry’s manpower needs could easily run to tens of thousands based on the number of newly completed tourism projects, those to be operational within 2009 to 2010, and those in the pipeline.

Durano said 1,700 rooms are scheduled to open in Manila this year. “And these do not include the 2,000 others that will open in many areas of the archipelago during the year, all part of the P550-billion expansion projects of various investors involving some 7,000 new hotel and resort rooms,” he said.

This development could be gleaned from the growing number of tourism businesses and related enterprises joining the Trabaho sa Turismo (TST) Fair 2009 on March 13-14 at the SM City Cebu, “indicating the sustained viability and competitiveness of our tourism industry even during crisis and the continued rise in the number of jobs required to serve our domestic and foreign tourists,” he added.

Durano said the 4th TST indicates the Department of Tourism’s “successful efforts in finding and developing new and emerging inbound markets, attracting foreign investors in various areas of tourism, encouraging domestic investments in tourism facilities, promoting joint ventures, and sustaining government-funded infrastructure projects that boost tourism, all generating employment and livelihood for our people and serving as economic growth engine in both good and bad times.”

Durano cited the consistent 10.6 percent average increase in foreign visitor arrivals since 2004 when he assumed his post as tourism secretary.

He said the Filipino people, particularly the unemployed and those considering a career shift, could help the tourism industry by joining the TST fair in Cebu, or its Manila leg on May 22-23 at the SMX Convention Center, Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City, and pre-registering online atwww.jobsdb.com.ph.

JobsDB.com members can use their existing log-in ID and password to pre-register for the event. Other applicants may create an online resumé or attach a work document file of their resumé. (www.philstar.com)

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15-inch Butanding Rescued in Sorsogon

MANILA, Philippines - A 15-inch whale shark, locally known as butanding, has been found in Sorsogon.

Conservation group World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines (WWF-Philippines) reported yesterday that the rescue of what could be the smallest whale shark in the country, and perhaps in the world, might lead to answers to the mystery of where the sea creatures breed.

According to the WWF, the baby whale shark was caught last Friday in a barangay of Pilar town, adjacent to Donsol in Sorsogon and was allegedly about to be sold.

A team consisting of the tourism officer, agricultural officer, BIO, and Aca quickly plan to rescue the small whale shark, which WWF-Philippines christened the “Million Dollar Baby” for its significance and rarity.

They found the whale shark with a rope around its tail tied to a stick stuck into the sand. (www.philstar.com)
Fil-Am MMA Fighter to Make PPV Debut

Entering the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) without a loss, Filipino-American Mark Muñoz will make his first live pay-per-view fight on March 7, 2009 at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio.

Muñoz, a wrestler/Jui Jitsu fighter with a 5-0 record, will face 7-2 Ohio native Matt Hamill in the ring. At age 31, Muñoz stands 6 feet tall and weighs 205 lbs.

In his last fight with World Extreme Cage Fighting, Muñoz defeated Ricardo Barros via TKO in 2 minutes and 26 seconds. Muñoz has been recognized by NW Asian Weekly as 1 of the top 12 Asian-Pacific Islander athletes to watch in 2009. His nickname is "the Philippine Wrecking Machine."

Mixed martial arts (MMA) has gained in popularity over the past decade. Fight nights attract 100 million viewers worldwide, exceeding viewership of the Superbowl. In this full contact combat sport, fighters are allowed to use multiple styles of fighting including Muay Thai, Brazilian Jui Jitsu, Japanese Shoot Wrestling, Freestyle or Greco-Roman Wrestling, Sambo and Judo.

MMA fighters wield a combination of striking, grappling and submission holds to beat their opponent. (U.S. Asian Wire)

Chiz Bats for Entry of More Filipino Health Professionals, Non-skilled Workers in Australia

Senator Francis "Chiz" Escudero has asked Australian government officials to allow the entry of more Filipino health professionals as well as non-skilled workers who may have been displaced in other countries.

"We talked about the possibility of a government-to-government arrangement on labor migration at various levels," he said in a statement before returning to Manila on Wednesday. The senator was in Australia from March 8 to 11 on the invitation of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd whom he said agreed that Australia and the Philippines should play "more active roles in the region."

During their meeting, the senator said he discussed labor, trade and migration issues with Rudd as well as the current state of relations between Australia and the Philippines.

The Australian embassy in Manila revealed that in the last two years there has been a substantial increase in the number of skilled Filipino workers migrating to Australia for the first time.

"There is a strong demand for doctors, nurses, midwives and pharmacists in Australia. It could very well take the slack in other countries," Escudero said.

During his four-day stay, the senator also took up trade issues with Australian Minister of Trade MP Simon Crean.

Two-way trade between both countries from 2007-08 reached $2 billion, with the Philippines exporting electrical machinery, telecoms equipment and fruits and importing dairy products and minerals. Only last week, the Australian government allowed the entry of Philippine bananas subject to certain conditions.

At present, there are about 130,000 Filipinos living and/or working in Australia, and based on the latest figures the Philippines is the fifth biggest source of migrants.

In another meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith, the two exchanged views on how Australia can further improve relations with the Philippines and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

"We have agreed that there is a lot of room for heightening and increasing the levels of cooperation in pursuit of our common and shared interests," Escudero added.

Pinay Selected to Host New Dutch TV Show

The Netherlands—Philippine-born law school graduate Cecilia Aquino has been chosen to co-host the newly-launched West International channel of TV West, a local Dutch television station.

West International is a weekly, half hour long English language television program aimed at expats and internationally-oriented people who are living and working in The Hague and surrounding areas. The show offers viewers plenty of information on how to make the most out of life in the Netherlands. Holland has a very big international community, especially in The Hague, which has about 40,000 expats.

After receiving her law degree in the U.S., Aquino moved to Holland in 2007 to work for a well-known international organization headquartered in The Hague, known as the legal capital of the world.

Aquino said she was asked to audition for the role while at a pub last summer. She agreed, hoping to sharpen her interview skills.

“I didn’t think they would ever call me back,” she says. “Two months later, they called me and said, ‘You’re fantastic.’ I couldn’t believe I was picked from among the many other international applicants.”

Due to the increasing viewership of the television industry, TV West executives say Aquino is a rising star.

“We were looking for the best people for the show and it happened to be someone from the Philippines and sexy,” says Gerard Milo, CEO of Omniwest TV. “I think she’s won-derful and does a great job. She’s very natural.”

West International is broadcasted via cable and digital television all over the Netherlands.
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**Significant Dates in 2009 When the Filipino Consultative General in Honolulu Will Hold Commemorative Events or Activities. For more Information call Emily at 595-6316 ext 242**

**February to August — Overseas Absentee Voting Registration for Filipino citizens who wish to vote in the presidential elections in May 2010. Registrants may come to the Consulate in person with their Philippine passports to accomplish the application form.**

**April 6th** 4pm, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, Punchbowl “Araw ng Kagitingan” (Day of Valor)

**June 12** 8:30am, at the consulate grounds — “Araw ng Kalayaan” (Independence Day) and another activity at 6:30 pm.

**July 10-14th** — Ambassadors and Consul Generals Tour to the Philippines, a special package tour for the public.

**Community Calendar**

**Adopt-a-Highway Project / Saturday** March 14 and June 13, 2009 9:30 am - 1:30 pm • Likelike Highway & Kaliihi Street • Contact Lina Longboy at 375 0828

**Ilokano Language and Literature Program and the Timuyo Student Organization’s Ilocano Drama and Song / Saturday** April 11, 2009 9:30am - 1:30pm • UHM Art Auditorium • Free admission. Call Dr. Aurelio Agcaoili at 956-8405 or Julius Soria at 956-2226

**1st Annual Filipino Film Festival** April 10-18, 2009 • Doris Duke Theatre • For more information, contact 532-8700 or go online at www.honoluluacademy.org

**Pampana Circle of Hawaii Easter Potluck / Sunday** April 12, 2009 • Doris Duke Theatre • 11 am to 4 pm • A-Frame Cabana Marina, Pearl Harbor • For information please call 683-3131

**Oahu Filipino Community Council (OFCC) Golf Tournament / Saturday** April 15, 2009 • Kapolei Golf Course • Contact Lina Longboy at 375 0828 for more information

**Divine Word College of LaOag Alumni Association of Hawaii (DWCCAAN), 1st Int’l Grand Reunion** May 2, 2009 • Hilton Hawaiian Village WaiKiki, Honolulu, Hawaii • For more information call Jesse Pascual at 225-3388 or Fe Velasco at 2227436; Amado Yoro 899-9814

**Timuyo and Ilokano BA Scholarship Banquet / Friday** May 8, 2009 • Hale Koa Hotel, WaiKiki Ballroom • For tickets and more information, call Dr. Aurelio Agcaoili at 956-8405 or Julius Soria at 956-2226

**Filipino Fiesta, Parade and Santacruzan / Saturday** May 9, 2009 • All day starting at 8 am • For Inquiries, call FilCom Center at 880-0451

**Golden Jubilee Miss Oahu Filipino Pageant / Saturday** June 13, 2009 • Pacific Beach Hotel • Contact Lina Longboy at 375 0828

**OFCC Golden President’s Ball / Friday** June 26, 2009 • Hilton Hawaiian Village Hotel, Tapa Ballroom • Contact Lina Longboy at 375 0828

**Oahu Filipino Community Council (OFCC) Annual Convention / Saturday** June 27, 2009 • Hilton Hawaiian Village • Contact Lina Longboy at 375 0828 for more details

**Filipino Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii Installation Banquet / Saturday** July 11, 2009 • 6 pm • Hilton Hawaiian Village • Call Rose Mendoza at 371-3902 or Bennett Evangelista at 398-5988

**Bataan Cautula 79th Anniversary Celebration / Saturday** July 25, 2009 • For more information, send email at juncolme@yahoo.com

**Visayan Centennial Events**

**“Bisak”Live Band Concert / Saturday** March 28, 2009 • Ani at Binhi Filipino Community Center, Kahului, Maui

**Visayan Centennial Fiesta May 2009** • Lanai

**Visayan Centennial Tour May 15 - June 3, 2009** (Iloilo, Cebu and Davao) Philippines

**Visayan Centennial Awards Gala / Sunday** July 19, 2009 • 6 pm • Hale Koa Hotel, WaiKiki

**Covo Statewide Convention and Centennial Gala** August 2009 • Kona Big Island

**For more information, send email at juncolme@yahoo.com**

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