

Balitaan

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JFK Peace Corps Award to Philippines Staff, Ambet Yangco

By: Paul Aleckson, PCAFPD President

Ambet Yangco, PC/Philippines Program Team Lead and Program Manager for the Youth Development program, accepted the John F. Kennedy Service award on May 19 in Washington DC. Nominated in secret by his fellow staff members, Ambet was shocked by news of the win two months ago. He started his acceptance speech saying, “If this is a dream, please dear God, don’t wake me up just yet.”

While the news shocked him this spring, such an award was not part of his wildest dreams 35 years ago. His family lived on the streets of Olongapo City selling whatever they could for money and scavenging food from trash bins. As one of the two oldest children in the family, he continued to live on the streets selling in order to send money to his family when they moved back to the province from which they were originally from. Eventually, he landed in an orphanage that helped him get through high school and into college where he pursued a social work degree.

Ambet spent five years as a social worker before working part time for the Peace Corps. He began as a technical trainer for the Business Advising for Youth Development program for groups 257, 259, 261 and 263. After finishing group 263’s training, he joined the Manila staff full time.

Ambet has been a wonderful supporter of the PCAFPD, advocating for RPCVs to get involved with time or donations and encouraging one of our current scholars to apply and pursue a degree in social work.

The JFK Service Award is given every five years to honor those who made outstanding contributions to the Peace Corps mission and three goals both at home and abroad. In a testament to the quality of people PC/Philippines attracts, Ambet wasn’t the only award winner this year with ties to PC/Philippines. Genevieve Evenhouse was one of the other four winners. Early in her distinguished career, she worked as a Language Instructor for Group 247. Congratulations to Ambet and all the winners this year!



Ambet holding his award with his wife Lorena, and two sons Euan and Eomer. He credits the support and inspiration of his wife and kids for helping make him so successful in Peace Corps.

Essays from Our Scholars

Beyond Grateful

John Joseph Zarate is pursuing a Master's in Education Science at Pangasinan State University – Lingayen Pangasinan Campus

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity given by Peace Corps Alumni Foundation for Philippine Development. Ever since I was an undergraduate, I have been relying on scholarships to finish my studies. With the meager salary of being a teacher, it is quite challenging on my part to pursue my postgraduate degree because I also have to support my family while studying. Nowadays, in order to land a decent job in teaching, I have to attain at least a master's degree. Honestly, I felt hopeless at first because I didn't know where to go and where to ask for help. With God's intervention, I was able to apply for the PCAFPD scholarship through one of my mentors in college.

Ever since I was a child, I have faced several obstacles and challenges to the point where I was about to give up. However, I am so blessed to be surrounded by good and kind-hearted people whose desire to help is boundless. And so, even though I am not blessed with monetary blessings, I would like to give back to my community by sharing the knowledge and skills I have acquired. As an educator and a researcher, I would like to devote myself to searching for ways and creating programs that will uplift the life of the people in my community. Furthermore, someday, it is my dream to establish an organization for pre-service and in-service teachers which aims to train and equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills. I would also like to make use of this platform to serve our fellowmen and upgrade the education in our country.

And so, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to PCAFPD for being instrumental in helping me attain my goals in life. May God continue to bless each and everyone in the organization and may you continue to touch and transform more lives!

Changing the Way I think about it

Zurrie Penaso is pursuing a Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English at Bukidnon State University

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it.” Let me first drop this quote here to give an idea of my journey and perception in 2022. Every year, my family's bonding moment is Christmas, while New Year is the zealous and loudest day of the entire year, a celebration and contest of passion and enthusiasm. This year was a fun year for my family and relatives, I hope this would be a year filled with kindness generosity and hope, because I'm over with all the disappointments of plans that I have been experiencing and expecting. One of those is the implementation of extended online learning due to the increase in cases of Covid19. It has pained me for far too long now. That's why I am now embracing and just smiling with this online learning. Learning how to love this new kind of education, and due to my changing attitude about this scenario, I was now able to see its impeccable beauty and charm. In my opinion, it is now the essence of freedom. I can do how and when I want to learn my lesson and just be in charge of my own schedule. I am now enjoying this lifestyle of mine and a New Year's Resolution is the best way to express my ideas in life. My New Year resolution is to correct the mistakes and make changes in my habit: such as being a more organized person because truth be told, I am quite the messy kind of gal. After that, I want to change by taking care of my health and do some easy and basic exercises. Next is to go easy with binge-reading because my eyesight is getting worse and it pains me to admit that I am now part of the glasses club. And last, since I am 21 years old, I am thinking of being more outgoing rather than always staying in the house and consistently in my comfort zone. Maybe with a change of environment I could find out more about myself and other people's story and learn from them. Currently, these four statements that I created are my goals for this year and, I am hoping in

accomplishing them before the year ends and, be the best version of myself.

Online classes, especially my school, have made significant progress in teaching us and catering to our needs and suggestions. I am now making a schedule as to when classes start and how I will send those assignments, the group works, and quizzes without any problems. I will remember this journey because at least if I failed, I still tried rather than never trying at all. I would like to greet all the wonderful sponsors and the hardworking staff, with a belated Merry Christmas, a belated happy new year, and a belated happy Valentine's Day. Thank you for another year of supporting us, being there, and always taking care of us through thick and thin. You're the best family to be with and I hope that each day will be a great day for all of you as you have been making our day better.

A Lesson in Preservation

Alpha Maribbay is pursuing B.S. in Food Technology at the Technical University of the Philippines

Throughout my journey, I learned a lot of things not just in the course that I am taking but also in life. Being a class president is a great privilege and challenge for me, for this drove me to know my classmates more and help them with their struggles which allows me to guide and motivate them. Although I found it difficult, for I only borrow my father's phone which already has full storage and is used by my sister too, it did not become a hindrance to do the responsibility that most of my professors trusted me. Yet, this situation enables me to understand my classmates, who are also currently facing that kind of difficulty. However, the only difference is that I have a PCAFPD along my journey. I am very thankful and blessed to become part of this family, for they support and help me press on and pursue my dream.

On the other hand, as a student, this semester gives me a lot of hurdles, but despite that, I am proud to say that in our 1st semester, I and my classmates overcome the challenges, and it is my pleasure to

become a part of their life and help them. Also, this semester gives a lot of enjoyment, as well as experiences that build me to be patient, resourceful, and mindful about the crisis of food.

Laboratory activities in every subject make my semester challenging and remarkable. Even though some Food Microbiology experiments are virtual, I still enjoyed them. Moreover, I enjoyed the Food Processing and Entrepreneur Laboratory for we can make our innovative food products and sell them to our community. These laboratory courses are necessary for our program for it gives us a chance to execute our ideas, and a great experience to understand people and food preservation. Nowadays, many raw materials have been spoiled and thrown away, thus the lesson about food preservation and food processing is necessary, for I believe I will be part to solve the food crisis in the world.

Truly the first semester was a roller coaster ride for me, but I still managed to bring out the best in me to achieve my goals and dreams. I am always thankful to God, for He is always with me in every trial and success.

My 1st Semester (during the pandemic)

Jona Hollon is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at Eulogio Amang Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology

I'd like to share with you my experience as a third-year college student during the pandemic. We saw many changes since having the virus in our country or around the world, including the need to wear a face mask and face shield to ensure that everything was safe, and now the new normal is to study online.

We did a lot at the conclusion of the first semester of becoming a third-year college, even before the end of the semester. Many new students joined to our section, so we met more people and it was more enjoyable, even if it was also sad. Before the end of the semester, we did a lot of things like reporting on different subjects, defending in research, doing case analysis, and doing accounting computations. After that, we will prepare for the midterm and final exams.

I need to study so that I can respond to our professor's tests. I'm capable of handling it all, and I'm not going to give up or lose hope because I believe in myself. So I can pass and graduate even if it's difficult because sometimes the internet doesn't work, especially if it's not WiFi but just loads on the cellphone. There is a big obstacle to losing the internet because when reporting the load is sometimes lost or consumed immediately. Once on an exam I was late for passing because the signal was weakening, but I didn't give in to all those obstacles. I assumed there were numerous options for correctly reporting and passing the exam or activity and if you just locate a place where you can catch up, you'll be OK. Because a poor signal will never be an impediment to someone who can find a way to study hard and pursue a life goal. That is why there is now news that Metro Manila has been dropped to level 1, allowing you to go in malls and interact with other schools again, but only limiting the number of pupils who can enter because they follow a social distancing procedure and wear a face mask.

Now that I've completed the first semester of my third year, even though my grades dropped a little because I wasn't very active or doing well during those times, I can still recover in the second semester. I won't lose hope; low grades will never be an obstacle for me. I've learned a lot and I'm confident in myself that I'll be able to pass and graduate for myself and my family. I'm not going to give up, because I have a dream that I hope to realize one day.

Life as a Roller Coaster

Christin Vedad Vitudio is pursuing a Bachelor of Technical Vocational of Teacher Education-Food Service Management at University of Antique

One of the lessons that I grew up with was to always stay true to yourself and never let what somebody else says distract you from your goals. In today's world, there is a desire for comfort, and a fear of failure. Being a student, we should do everything on time as it never waits for anyone. As a student who experienced being bullied and quickly judged by others, I always keep in my mind that I don't gain anything from stressing myself of what they say is untrue as long as I know in myself that I'm not stepping on anyone and that I'm doing the right thing.

As this year 2021 ends, I learned a lot from my college life, that life will always be a roller coaster ride during this pandemic. Throughout my college life, it is bound that there are periods of challenges that we must face, but the real challenge is how we grow and learn from overcoming them. As a student, I have been filled with countless tiring ups and downs. It felt like I was in an endless roller coaster of obstacles. I live in a remote area of our town and the internet connection was very slow and very hard to connect. So, every time I have an exam and reports I have to go to my aunt's house in the other barangay to get exams and to report my lessons. Life is beautiful but not always easy. It has problems too, and the challenge lies in facing them with courage, letting the beauty of life act like a painkiller, making the pain bearable during trying times by providing hope.

Everyone has faced their challenges in their own way so I am, and not everything in life will be easy because I can tell you right now that no one's life is perfect. Everyone has their flaws, but they're perfect in their own way possible. Just keep moving forward and never give up no matter what may happen because in the world we live in; we can only help ourselves.

The First Half

Nika Quintos is pursuing a Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Mathematics at Pangasinan State University

The past semester has gone by faster than I thought it would be. The first half of my senior year as a BSED Math major is finally done. It envelops me with both joy and sadness. Joy, knowing the diploma I've been yearning for is yet to come. And sadness, realizing that these great people, institutions, and adventures of the past years will eventually lead to their last chapter.

These past semesters, life has given me a hard time focusing on my studies. Two important people in my life have reached their end and will never be seen again. I never thought that losing a father could be this hard. The entire house is enveloped in blues and silence. I took the online classes while experiencing the most heartbreaking moment of my life. A few

months later, my aunt, who had served as my second mother, also passed by. It is devastating.

For a few months, I regained my strength. The pain never went away it is still here. I just learned how to live with it. It is an eye opener, to cherish our parents and the people we cared so much. Because we will never know how much time everyone has left. I kept myself busy studying and being active in our school. I joined conferences, webinars, and contest, wherein we garnered the third place in nationals.

Approaching the last chapter of college. Our school presented us with a lot of review materials to be bought and questions needed to be answered as part of the preparation for the awaited examinations. It is indeed a huge relief knowing the PCAFPD family helps me get through a lot with these abundant expenses with books. A burden and stress of finding money to pay the materials needed are now out of my worries.

In conclusion, there are two things I learned the most in the past semester. First, to cherish your family and everyone whom you cared about. Learn to cherish every moment and every chance you have to show them how much you care and love them. Second, if you put your mind into something, know that you can do it. Believe in yourself. Believing means you're halfway towards your dreams.

PCAFPD Human Development Grant in Action

By: Justin Tabor, PCAFPD Grants Manager

As the 2021-2022 academic year comes to an end, we are excited to highlight the efforts of another of our inaugural PCAFPD Human Development Grant awardee, The Forestry Students Professional Development Award (FSPDA). FSPDA encourages Filipino forestry students to enhance their studies and research by providing opportunities for students to showcase their studies and interact professionally

with the wider science community. FSPDA was granted \$660 to expand its program to provide PHP 10,000.00 grants (maximum) to 6 forestry students (3 students per semester) for the Academic Year (AY) 2021-2022. PCAFPD provided 44% of the total funds to support this year's round of grants for FSPDA's awardees.



PCAFPD and FSPDA share many goals, and like many of our PCAFPD scholars the Forestry scholars cite challenges associated with online learning. In addition to helping with these additional costs, FSPDA scholars used their funds to support their research. As part of their requirements, FSPDA awardees provide testimonials, which you can view here: <https://fspdaasia.wordpress.com/details/grant-recipients/>

How can you support our grantees?

We are so proud of our first two grantees and all they have accomplished this year. As this grant cycle comes to a close, we asked each of the grantees how our PCAFPD network can continue to lift up their work. If you're able, please consider their requests:

- **FSPDA-** Please help spread the word amongst your Filipino networks that these funds are available to interested scholars. For further inquiries regarding FSPDA please contact (fspda.asia@gmail.com and jyata@up.edu.ph)

- **Glory Reborn** (highlighted in the last issue)- We are looking for contacts, guest speakers, or mentors on the topics of gentle birth and/or Lamaze for online classes. Please reach out directly to RPCV Emma Sarcol (emma@gloryreborn.com) if you're able to provide support.

PCAFPD Financial Health Update

By: Mike Ollinger, PCAFPD Treasurer

Thank you for your generosity this past year. Your sacrifices are much appreciated by our scholars. Thanks to a huge donation of \$50,000 from the estate of Group I PCV Eleanor Whitlatch, we had revenues of about \$120,000. Even without that donation, the average donation was over \$300. The money is being put to good use. Changes in education technology and the isolation caused by covid-19 has made it necessary to fund student internet usage costs and this upcoming year to provide each scholar a laptop. Moreover, we have begun to take on many more scholars. Currently, there are over 100 scholars that we support, up from only 50 two years ago. Finally, we extended two grants for education-related projects.

Overall, about 89 percent of revenues were spent on scholar costs and the two small grants, 7.3 percent of revenues was spent on fundraising/newsletters, and the remainder was spent on administrative costs in the U.S. and the Philippines. The administrative costs include higher communication costs this year due to

several on-line events sponsored by PCAFPD for the benefit of all RPCVs. As always, we maintain enough money in reserve to fund all scholars through to graduation.

In the longer term, we are hopeful you will maintain confidence in the program and continue to be generous. The scholars need your support. In recent years, there has been a reduction in our donor base, so please make your fellow RPCVs aware of the mission of PCAFPD and the truly outside impact of your donation. Perhaps, they will become a donor. We are also hopeful the Philippine government will continue to pay state college tuition costs, as that enables us to support far more scholars than would otherwise be possible.

Join the Bayanihan Legacy Circle

Have you designated PCAFPD as a beneficiary of an IRA or stipulated a bequest to PCAFPD in a will or trust? If so, we'd like to know.

In conjunction with the upcoming 40th Anniversary of PCAFPD, we have established the *Bayanihan Legacy Circle* to recognize those of you who plan to support the work of PCAFPD beyond your lifetime.

Members of the Legacy Circle will be eligible for special benefits and will be listed on our website and in publications as appropriate.

Send an email to us at pcafpd@gmail.com or snail mail us at P.O. Box 100114, Arlington Virginia 22210 to let us know of your plans or to seek more information. Maraming Salamat!

2021 Lakan/Lakambini Honor Roll

Lakan (m) and Lakambini (f) are used in the Philippines to refer to those who have achieved the highest rank in an endeavor. We are using the terms here to express our profound gratitude to our major contributors. Those listed below gave \$500 or more in the calendar year 2021. Salamat po!

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