

# Balitaan

## Celebrating PCAFPD 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Newsletter 76

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### Perseverance and Pride

*By: Ricardo Espitia, PCAFPD Student Affairs*

PCAFPD is proud to spotlight graduating scholar Donna Mae Bonares Jalipa! Donna graduated in May from Colegio del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus in Iloilo City with a Bachelor of Science in Social Work. Donna is from Valderrama, Antique and is the middle child of five siblings. Her mother is a housekeeper and her father is a driver.

*“PCAFPD completely changed my life. Being a PCAFPD scholar allowed me the freedom to pursue my goals, reduce financial concerns for my family, and gave me the hope I needed to complete my college education.”*

Donna first heard about the PCAFPD scholarship after participating in a youth leadership program started by a Peace Corps Volunteer and his counterpart in her town, a program that she would eventually lead as President.

Donna’s journey to PCAFPD required perseverance. Donna was not selected the first time she applied for the scholarship. However, she was encouraged to apply again and worked day and night to put together the best application she could. The moment she heard she was accepted, her life changed, she saw the vision of herself as a college student, a social worker, and a change agent.

Donna says that being a PCAFPD scholar shielded her from painful memories of financial hardship she experienced in elementary and high school. The fact that PCAFPD supported not only her tuition but her living expenses, on the job training, and materials leveled the playing field and gave her the same access to opportunities as her more fortunate classmates. Her favorite memories from being a scholar are meeting fellow scholars from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, working with the Ituloy team, and the annual virtual celebrations hosted for scholars.



*“The PCAFPD community is amazing. I have heard moving tales from both former and current scholars which have inspired me. It was really valuable to have the PCAFPD community to lean on and connect with other college students with situations similar to mine, especially during the Pandemic. All of those pleasant memories from my time as a PCAFPD Scholar will live in my heart forever.”*

After graduating Donna will dedicate her time to preparing for her board exam while simultaneously volunteering as an advisor to the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) and support its youth-based activities. After passing the board exam, she plans to gain employment with a non-profit or government agency to work with underprivileged and underrepresented groups. Overall, for Donna having a college degree allows her to help her family, her community, and her country. As she reflects on her time as a scholar she has this to say.

*“My heart is overjoyed that I am now a graduating student. I genuinely appreciate all the wonderful advantages PCAFPD provides to its scholars. I hope that more kindhearted individuals will support the foundation because it is truly extraordinary and makes it possible for Filipino students to attend college despite their financial position. To PCAFPD, I really wanted to say thank you very much. Because of you, I have gained friends from across the country. I feel incredibly proud to be known as a PCAFPD Scholar.”*

## **Ituloy Team Spotlight: Rachel Briones**

*By: Ricardo Espitia, PCAFPD Student Affairs*

2023 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PCAFPD supporting scholars in the Philippines. At its inception, PCAFPD supported five students who received their college degrees in 1987. Now we are supporting over 100 scholars. We could not do this without the dedication and skills of our Manila-volunteer-based **Ituloy Team**, which was launched in 2017. The team is headed by PCAFPD Vice President for Philippines Operation Roland de Jesus, who succeeded his father Modesto de Jesus, one of the founders of PCAFPD and a former Peace Corps staff member. The rest of the team is composed of former PCAFPD scholars who have now graduated and volunteer their time to administer the day-to-day operations of the program in the Philippines. These bright young people serve as mentors to the scholars, administer the scholarship funds to the scholars, and keep the U.S. based PCAFPD Board abreast of the higher educational environment in the Philippines. Our program would not be as successful as it is

without their commitment. Here we highlight one of the Ituloy team members Rachel Briones.

Rachel was born in Laguna but raised and currently resides in Cavite. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Organizational



Communication at the University of the Philippines - Manila in 2014 with the support of the PCAFPD scholarship. Since she was a child, her dream was to be a writer and while in college she freelanced as a way to exercise the skills she was learning through her studies. Immediately after college she secured a job at a high-end furniture company and art gallery. She wore many hats from curating content for its numerous platforms and organizing gallery openings.

For the past six years, Rachel has been working for Pass it Forward as a website content writer and social media specialist. The platform facilitates community for non-profit sector organizations, volunteers, and the donor community. She finds her role fulfilling because her work enables change and helps others. Knowing that her efforts and projects are contributing to positive impacts makes her feel happy that she can use her education and skills for something good.

Rachel first got involved with the Ituloy Team in 2019 when attending a PCAFPD scholar alumni association (PSAA) meeting, of which she was a board member. She attended her first Ituloy Team meetings initially as a PSAA representative. She later transitioned to become an official member of the team when she began coordinating scholarship applications and scholar onboarding. Currently, she handles the scholarship application process. It includes checking applications for completeness, advising applicants on the requirements, and preparing the application package for PCAFPD Board review and scholar selection. She also coordinates the onboarding process for new scholars

by notifying the selected scholars of their awards, ensuring they have bank accounts set up, they have passed their entry requirements for school, and hosting an orientation. Additionally, she manages the PSAA Facebook page and group and initiated a Facebook campaign to reach applicants from underrepresented parts of the Philippines - an initiative that doubled our application numbers from one year to the next.

For Rachel, being part of the Ituloy team is a great opportunity to give back to the organization that supported her studies. She says that without PCAFPD she would not be where she is today and is honored to help other Filipino students get quality education and rise above their challenges. Our scholars say working with members of the Ituloy team like Rachel makes them feel part of a community and that Rachel inspires them to complete their studies. Rachel's favorite part of being on the Ituloy Team is calling the new scholars to inform them that they are selected and hearing how happy they are. The opportunity for her to share their joy with them is heartwarming and she looks forward to this every year.



This motivation makes Rachel, like all members of the Ituloy team, special. They share the humble ambition to pay it forward to other scholars and to be champions for their success. PCAFPD is grateful for members of the team like Rachel Briones for volunteering their time, skills, and efforts for the well-being of our scholars.

## Transition at the Top

*By: Paul Aleckson, Outgoing PCAFPD President*

Today, as we transition to a new President, the future of the PCAFPD looks bright. Nine of 15 Board members did their PC service in the past 15 years. They bring new energy, ideas, and skills to build upon the Foundation's decades of service to the Philippines.

Seven years ago, the PCAFPD was at a crossroads. In some tough Board meetings, debate centered on whether to continue or wind down the Foundation. The desire to continue, the impact of the work, or financial support were not in doubt. The stumbling block was having the human resources here and in the Philippines. For over 30 years, the dedication of RPCVs and the de Jesus family enabled the Foundation to support hundreds of students earning college degrees. By 2016, people at, or near, the point of Board retirement filled many key Board roles. We needed to add leadership from the ranks of more recent RPCVs, and we needed assurance of long-term viability to administer the program in the field.

After calculating we had the bare minimum of Board members willing to continue filling the key functions, I offered to assume the Presidency. Importantly, I also knew we had a budding Ituloy team running Philippines' operations and RPCVs had answered the call to potentially join the Board and ensure the Foundation continued its life changing work. When I took the reins in March 2017, seven other RPCVs joined the Board.

Today, thanks to the work of the reenergized Board, the Ituloy team, and enduring donor support, the PCAFPD supports just over 100 scholars. A new Human Development Grant program funds the skills development of non-college Filipinos. And additional scholar support includes providing a laptop, an internet allowance, and mental health seminars and support.

As I pass the Presidential baton, many people deserve thanks. First, thanks to all those who created and grew this impactful Foundation. Thanks to the scholars, whose perseverance and hard work motivates us, and the Ituloy team, whose commitment to the scholars

and the Foundation continues to inspire. Thank you to our generous donors for your consistent support. Thanks to my wife Jennie. Our family grew from two to four during my Presidency and she managed an extra load when PCAFPD work demanded my time. Finally, thanks to all the current board members and our newest President, Justin Tabor. The PCAFPD is in good hands.

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## ***Essays from Our Scholars***

### **A Ray of Hope Amid Stormy Weather**

*Estacio Bernadeth is pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture at Central Luzon State University*

The unpredictability of events happening in one's personal life and school works demonstrates the drive and endurance of us students, and working on how you view the things around you is extremely essential to us. This semester has taught me that despite the difficulties we've encountered, there is always a glimmer of hope to keep going and an abundance of reasons to be grateful in life.

Our university embraced blended learning implemented in September 2022, with face-to-face sessions for laboratory classes and online setup for lecture classes. I have three face-to-face classes, and this is the first time since the lockdown that I've engaged in conventional learning that involves studying in the classroom. The fear and excitement I had about returning to school as a student to learn in the classroom are insufficient to describe how I felt at the time. Still, I prefer face-to-face classes over online classes because one-on-one and interactive training from you and your classmates to the instructors is the greatest way for me to learn. However, the majority of my subjects are online classes; I have nine subjects, and to conclude, blended learning is more exhausting for me than full face to face or full online classes because even when you are in the classroom for your laboratory session, some instructors are posting exercises, modules, and video lectures that you need to catch up on. And it's quite draining because you have to travel and

commute to attend your face-to-face class, and then when you get home you still have to work on your online studies, which is an overwhelming task for us students in these times. And I'm grateful to the PCAFPD family for their assistance as well as the internet load they supplied us; it's extremely helpful to us.

I'm also delighted to share that I was appointed as vice governor of our college's top governing body, the College of Agriculture Student Government of Central Luzon State University. This organization taught me a lot and helped me grow as a person over my college experience. As the saying goes, when you are in the right circle, you grow, and after only a few months, I must say that my college journey has become more enjoyable by engaging with other agriculture students, other colleges in partnership, talking to the professors and dean, traveling and talking to our dear farmers.

Along with the new experiences and lessons I've learned this semester, it gives me more motivation to carry on, work harder, and concentrate on the things I would improve myself as a student and a responsible citizen to the community. Despite the unpredictability of the circumstances, there is always a glimmer of hope for moving forward in life.

### **College Life Hits Different**

*Birad Lea is pursuing a Bachelor degree in Education at Siquijor State College*

When I was in high school, I heard different gossips about college. According to them, college life hits different. This is the stage where we can experience such difficulties in life like financial matter, family and personal problem and academic breakdown. This is the time where we need to sacrifice ourselves, give our time to the most important thing and we need to exert more effort in order to reach our goal in life. After I heard that, I was thinking before how can I enter college if I still experiencing the impact of poverty? How can I help myself if I see my parents started losing hopes on how they raised their four children? I was also thinking before if I will continue

in college how and where I can get money to provide my needs? Do I need to become a working student to sustain my studies? Or I need to stop my studies for the meantime?

All of these thinking are just my options if I will continue my studies or not. That time, I decided to apply different scholarships including Peace Corps. Sad to say, I'm not accepted. Despite of what happened, I decided to enroll in college without knowing how I can sustain my studies. I worked hard and trying to prove to myself that I can do this despite of my situation. When PCAFPD gives me a second chance, I accept it immediately and comply the needed requirements. Meanwhile, I received good news and luckily, I'm now officially part of the said scholarship. This year, I'm now in third year level pursuing the degree of Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Filipino. This is my second time being a scholar of the said foundation. This is also the second time where PCAFPD saves me again.

Through the help of this scholarship, I survived the very challenging first semester. Wherein I witnessed how difficult being a college student during face-to-face classes. There are a lot of expenses to be prioritized like for printed materials, school supplies, school uniform, monthly load for research, groceries and for monthly payments in renting boarding house that cost P800.00. I can't imagine what will be my situation without the help of this scholarship. That's why I always thrive hard in school and continue doing great things as an exchange for what PCAFPD did to me. I am very thankful for what God gave me. I am forever grateful for being part of this wonderful family and I am proud to say that I AM A PCAFPD SCHOLAR".

### **Lifting Up My Community**

*Velez Jaquelyn is pursuing Bachelor of Secondary Education, Major In Social Studies at the Technical University of St. La Salle*

This semester was a very challenging yet inspiring experience of my life as a student. Because I felt that school is getting harder, its being more specific and

more difficult to handle. However, this semester also makes me realize something I never expected myself to learn and involve with. As you have known me, I am an Indigenous youth. I am an Ata, a tribe of Don Salvador Benedicto. Because of who I am, what my personality and tradition is, I'd become different in many eyes in school especially that I am studying in a university. I had fear, regrets, insecurities and low self-esteem because of who I am and what I look like. But this semester is a gift. I've become more of myself. I understand my value, the beauty in me that everyone never sees. I developed a lot not just as a student but as a person.

You may wonder why? And how? Well, this semester, I am already in my third year in college. I am learning how to act, think and decide as a professional. As part of it and as part growing, I am now working on my dreams. I've become consistent about it and I saw improvement. Everything I have said during my interview for this scholarship is starting to happen. Yes, this semester molded me a lot to become a leader not just in school but in my community.

I've become an advocate and inspire a lot of Ata indigenous children to proceed to college. I remember when I suggested an event in the college council of education to let Ata kids go to the university and have some tour. The reason for this is to let Ata indigenous children to achieve their dreams and not be afraid to work for it and to show how welcoming is the school for them and how the school appreciate them as who they are, where they can be confident to pursue a degree in the future. Ata kids, the indigenous kids, are being discriminated and bullied in schools, and that makes them decide not to study anymore. I want to inspire them and give them hope. Because I am one of that discriminated and bullied before. I want to make my Ata community think that we can be more than ourselves. We can achieve our dreams in life.

Moreover, this semester makes me face also my fears. I began to join extracurricular activities such as swimming. I became brave enough to make people

see what I've got. I am lifting myself up. I become also a leader in my barangay and motivate other youth to be part of the community as a contributor of change. I now know how to solve some community issues, how to improve my community through communication and skills. But the most important learning I have learned this semester, is the gratitude. That despite of all the challenges I have face in studying and in serving my community, I remain joyful and happy because I bring inspiration to others. Also, this vision I have will be my strength on pursuing what I know will be better for everyone especially those in need. I will continue to do this, motivate more people to proceed a degree because I believe that education will lift up ourselves and help our country to become better.

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## **PCAFPD Human Development Grant in Action**

*By: Justin Tabor, PCAFPD Grants Manager & Incoming President*

Learning without Borders is one of our 2022 PCAFPD Human Development Grant Winners. Spearheaded by Ms. Claris Quezon, the organization developed in response to the increased isolation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. For many years Ms. Quezon developed a trusting, working relationship with the Haduan Aeta Community located on the border of Tarlac and Pampanga. As PCAFPD saw with our college scholars, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital literacy—a skill set that is challenging to develop in a location as geographically isolated as the Haduan Aeta Community.

PCAFPD awarded \$650 to Learning without Borders in order to kickstart a digital literacy program. With their funds the organization acquired refurbished laptops and cell phones for the students to practice with. For many of these students, their classes with Ms. Quezon represents their first time to use such devices.

*“Through the grant, our capacity building has increased 200% than what we have achieved in the last 3 years of COVID lockdown. Our main objective was to integrate English language as the main communication medium but ensuring preservation of the Indigenous dialect. This was made possible by the hands-on training that the grant allowed us to do.” -Claris Quezon*

We are proud of the accomplishments they have delivered over the last year, and we wish Learning without Borders many continued successes.



## **PCAFPD Financial Health Update**

*By: Mike Ollinger, PCAFPD Treasurer*

Thank you for your generosity this past year. Despite the higher cost of living for all, the average donation remained over \$300 (revenues divided by the number of donors) per donor. The words expressed by the scholars in this Balitaan show their gratitude. This past year PCAFPD began providing each scholar a laptop and internet access when necessary. This was needed because we cannot expect scholars to perform well in school without the necessary tools. However, there was a large one-time expense of over \$100,000 for laptops and another \$10,000 for internet access. The net result was a reduction in reserves of about \$100,000. Next year, the one-time costs for laptops will not exist and our revenues will be more in balance with cost. Per student costs will be higher in the future, however, as we continue to purchase a laptop for each new student.

Overall, about 89 percent of revenues was 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 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 for their four years of study.

In the longer term, we are hopeful you will maintain confidence in the program and continue to be generous. The scholars need financial support from all of us and our contacts. Please remember that we support more than 100 scholars with revenues of only \$70,000 per year, which is truly a remarkable feat that could not happen without you.

### 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](mailto: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!

#### Thank you to our Legacy Circle Members:

Maureen Carroll, Sorsogon 1961-63  
 David and Patricia Flaccus, Bohol/Cebu 1965-68  
 Cathleen Garman, Camarines Sur 1978-81  
 Lee and Kay Jones, Isabela 1962-67  
 Dee Teodoro, Cotabato 1964-66  
 Rick Zemlin, Davao del Sur 1981-83

### 2022 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 2022. Salamat po!

The Ford Foundation	Dr. George Duncan	Nancy Horowitz	Maggie Purves
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Kenneth Bollerud	Stephen Growdon	Gerald and Madeline Malovany	Terry Sthymmel
Anthony Brancato	Joe Higdon and Ellen Sudow	Sarah McMeans	Charles Thomas
Maureen Carroll	Barbara Hiller	Eric Melby	Helle Weeke
Stephen Dienstfrey	Calvin and Nita Holt	Ronald Peters	Richard Wetmore

## Contributions from our generous supporters:

Many thanks to those listed below who made gifts to PCAFPD between October 2021 and May 2022. IHO and IMO are gifts In Honor Of or In Memory Of the person or group indicated.

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<sup>1</sup> IMO Tim Ahrens

<sup>2</sup> IHO Group 2

<sup>3</sup> IMO Pat Biddle Banogon

<sup>4</sup> IMO Rachel Singer and Ted Grossman

<sup>5</sup> IMO Larry Foley

<sup>6</sup> IMO David Bates, Group 16

<sup>7</sup> IHO Irwin Roberts

<sup>8</sup> IHO Group 81

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<sup>12</sup> IMO Dr. Ed Adriano

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<sup>14</sup> IMO Gina Cochran Rusch

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<sup>16</sup> IMO Rachel Singer, Group 10

<sup>17</sup> IMO George Howard

<sup>18</sup> IMO Paul Lampert

<sup>19</sup> IMO Group 19 departed members

<sup>20</sup> IMO To our Group 134 members who have gone before us

<sup>21</sup> IMO Larry Fuchs

<sup>22</sup> IMO Laurence Foley

<sup>23</sup> IHO Bill and Sandra Brown

<sup>24</sup> IMO Norma Bradin Gilman

<sup>25</sup> IMO Patsy Gallagher, Group 21

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<sup>31</sup> IMO Phil Olsen

<sup>32</sup> IHO Michael F. Walsh

<sup>33</sup> IMO Angela

Got news for the BALITAAN? Put a note in your donation envelope or send an e-mail to us at [pcafpd@gmail.com](mailto:pcafpd@gmail.com)

**CURRENT PCAFPD BOARD: President:** Justin Tabor (Negros Occidental 2008-11); **Vice President/ Philippines:** Roland de Jesus; **Secretary:** Caitlin Sherman (Nueva Ecija 2010-12); **Treasurer:** Mike Ollinger (Iloilo 1982-84); **Student Affairs/Ass't Treasurer:** Ricardo Jose Espitia (Antique 2014-16); **Donor Relations:** Gretchen Faro (Davao City 1977-79) & Qadria Naji (Negros Occidental 2017-19); **Grants Manager:** Justin Tabor (Negros Occidental 2008-11); **Newsletters:** Stefanie Simpson (Guimaras 2010-12); **Social Media:** Nick Spalt (Leyte 2017-19); **NPCA Liaison:** Josh Baehr (Ilocos Norte 2018-20) **Board Members at Large:** Paul Aleckson (Romblon 2003-05); Maureen Carroll (Sorsogon 1961-63); Cathy Garman (Camarines Sur 1978-81); Alex Romero (host country national); Rick Zemlin (Davao del Sur 1981-83); Nick Dotson (Ilocos Norte 2017-19) **Mail Pickup Volunteer:** Terri Lee Bergman (Cebu 1982-84)



**NPCA membership** is now complimentary for everyone in the Peace Corps community. If you have not been receiving NPCA communications, register for your free membership at: [www.peacecorpsconnect.org/membership](http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/membership).

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