



16th NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

**HARNESSING THE
POWER OF COMMUNITY:
STARTING WITH US**

AUG. 14-15, 2026

FRIDAY & SATURDAY

AURORA, CO

HYATT REGENCY DENVER
ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

PRESENTING SPONSOR



COMMON POWER

HOSTED BY

NaFFAA Region V
Rocky Mountain States



**WE ARE A SEATTLE BASED ORGANIZATION
WITH A NATIONAL IMPACT**

Since 2018, Common Power (CoPo) works to foster, support, and amplify a democracy that is just and inclusive. We provide creative on-ramps to civic fieldwork, expand the people engaging in and benefiting from it, and sustain this effort by investing in the next generation of leaders. Today, this community has become a multigenerational and diverse group of volunteers that aim to work across differences to be an effective volunteer base for our Fieldwork program.

FOR MORE INFO, VISIT:

commonpower.org



cahep.org



Flavors of the Philippine Islands

mamasitas.com



asianroundtableofco.org



Mabuhay

TO ALL OUR DELEGATES, YOUTH LEADERS, COMMUNITY
PARTNERS AND GUESTS JOINING US FOR THE

16th National Empowerment Conference 2026

Region V Is honored to host this year's NEC In the beautiful city of Denver, a place where mountains Inspire us to reach higher and community strengthens us to go further together.

This conference Is a celebration of our heritage, leadership, and the boundless potential of our Filipino American community. Let's learn, connect, empower, and build a brighter future - Bayanihan style.

We are excited to welcome you to our home!



ROOTED IN **HERITAGE.**
RISING FOR THE **FUTURE.**



NaFFAA REGION V

NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA • MONTANA
WYOMING • KANSAS • COLORADO

Our Story



Since 1997, the National Federation of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA) has been the standard bearer for promoting the welfare and well-being of the four million Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States.

At the time of NaFFAA's inception, there were just over 2.5 million Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Founding members of the organization had the foresight to visualize and organize our growing power and voice into the next millennium.

Now with over 4.2 million Filipinos across the United States, and with Filipinos considered as the second-largest Asian American group, NaFFAA is the largest non-partisan, nonprofit organization, and national affiliation of Filipino American institutions, organizations, and individuals.

Its thirteen-member regions cover the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands.

Best wishes from the NaFFAA National Executive Board



Mariela Fletcher
National Chair

Ryan Namata
National President

Dr. Alexander Africa
National Vice President

Giselle Rushford
National Secretary

Joshua Ang Price
National Executive Director

Resty Lopez
National Treasurer

NaFFAA Welcomes *You!*

We envision Filipino American communities that are culturally, economically, and politically empowered and engaged. NaFFAA's vision is to serve as the voice of all Filipinos and Filipino Americans by uniting, engaging, and empowering diverse individuals and community organizations through four main pillars: Civic Engagement, National Advocacy, Leadership Development, and Advancing Filipino Culture.

The Four Pillars of NaFFAA

Promoting the welfare and well-being of over four million Filipinos and Filipino Americans throughout the United States.



SCAN ME

www.NaFFAA.org

[f](https://www.facebook.com/NaFFAA.National) [@NaFFAA.National](https://www.instagram.com/NaFFAA.National)

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Philippine Honorary Consulate: Colorado & Southern Wyoming

MESSAGE

Dear National Empowerment Conference Attendees:

It is with tremendous pride that I welcome you to the 2026 NEC conference in the home of NaFFAA Region V, and the great State of Colorado. Region V, the Rocky Mountain Region, which may not have the Fil-Am population found on the coasts; however, we make up for a lack of head count by having some of the hardest working and most inspiring community leaders.

NaFFAA Region V, even before the Region existed, had NaFFAA Charter members attending the 1997 formational meeting including myself, who served many terms as Regional Chair, as well as, Giselle Rushord, current NaFFAA National Secretary, and a larger contingent including myself, along with Giselle Rushford, Elnora & Nester Mercado, and Gloria Williams who attended the actual founding meeting in 1998. This commitment to NaFFAA continues to this day and has inspired a 2nd generation of leadership like NaFFAA National Vice President Dr. Alexander Africa, and NaFFAA Region V President, Jennifer Samuel. It is impossible for me to describe the satisfaction that I feel in knowing that the future of Fil-Ams in Colorado is in such capable hands.

The theme of this NEC: 'Harnessing the of Power of Community: Starting with Us' is so very meaningful to all of us in the Rocky Mountains where our communities preserve our heritage through educating our youth about our Filipino culture and traditions. Our faith leaders tend to our spiritual needs, professional organizations help to promote our careers, and chambers of commerce nurture, our entrepreneurial spirit by giving the Fil-Ams the confidence to succeed. I know all of us in attendance will carry this spirit back to share with all the Fil-Ams when we get home.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention our special guests, Honorable Arnel G. Talisayon, Philippine Consul General in San Francisco, who leads the effort to keeping all of us Fil-Ams engaged and supportive of our brethren back in the Philippines. I would also like to welcome the Secretary Dante "Klink" Ang II, of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas, whose department works so hard to ensure that our fantastic and hard working *Kababayans*, who leave their homes in pursuit of a better life are treated fairly and can fulfill their dreams.

I wish all of the attendees to have a most special time, sharing the unique bond that all Fil-Ams share of being committed to their community and demonstrating through our actions that success awaits all those who work hard and make the most of our unique heritage in all that they do.

Mabuhay!

Donna B. LaVigne
Honorary Consul





Mabuhay!

It is my great honor to welcome you to the 2026 NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference.

This year's theme, **"Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting With Us,"** reminds us that meaningful change begins within each of us and becomes more powerful when we work together.

Across the United States, Filipino Americans continue to break barriers in business, education, healthcare, public service, technology, the arts, and countless other fields. These achievements reflect the courage of those who came before us and the determination of a new generation ready to lead. As we celebrate this progress, however, we must remain mindful of Filipinos here and in the Philippines who continue to face hardship, uncertainty, discrimination, and limited access to opportunity.

Our success carries a responsibility to reach back, lift others, and ensure that no one in our community feels forgotten.

In these changing times, we must continue to follow our North Star—the values that have always guided our people: family, resilience, compassion, service, and bayanihan. Our North Star reminds us of who we are, where we come from, and what we owe to one another. But that guiding light can only lead us forward when we choose to act.

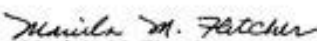
That action starts with us. It begins when we mentor a young Filipino American, support a family in need, create opportunities for emerging leaders, preserve our heritage, strengthen our organizations, and use our voices to help those who have yet to be heard. Leadership is not measured only by titles or recognition, but by the lives we touch, the doors we open, and the people we bring with us.

For nearly three decades, NaFFAA has united Filipino Americans across generations, regions, professions, and backgrounds. This conference continues that important work by creating a space to exchange ideas, build meaningful relationships, and transform our shared values into collective action.

To our leaders, speakers, sponsors, partners, volunteers, and delegates, thank you for believing in NaFFAA's mission and in the power of our community.

As we continue following our North Star, let us move forward together—breaking barriers, lifting our people, and lighting the way for future generations. The power of community begins with us. Let us use that power to bring hope and opportunity to Filipinos everywhere.

Maraming salamat po, and mabuhay tayong lahat!


Mariela M. Fletcher
NaFFAA National Chair



 **Address**
1025 Connecticut Ave. NW Washington, DC 20036
 **Phone**
(301) 337 7352
 **Email**
info@naffaa.org

NaFFAA.org

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Multimedia Design: Bituin Aquino • Consultant: Aileen De Jesus

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• New England: Frank Celoz • Northeast: Laura Garcia • Capital: Megan Pavillar • Great Lakes: Wilmar Swan
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• San Diego/Imperial: Nicandra Montenegro • Desert Mountain: Sally Balacha



To our NaFFAA family, friends, and future leaders, welcome!

It is a privilege to gather with you at the 2026 NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference. Our theme, **"Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting With Us,"** calls us to recognize that our community's future depends on what we choose to build together today.

This year, we are expecting a larger number of young Filipino Americans to join us. Their presence brings new energy, creativity, and hope to our organization. More importantly, it gives us an opportunity—and a responsibility—to ensure that the rising generation feels seen, welcomed, and prepared to lead.

Our young people should not simply inherit our legacy. They should understand it, strengthen it, and carry it forward in ways that respond to the world they are entering. We must mentor them, listen to their ideas, open doors for them, and give them meaningful opportunities to serve. We must also remember that the examples we set may teach them more than any speech or workshop ever could.

Mentorship is not about asking young leaders to follow our exact path. It is about helping them discover their own path while giving them the confidence, values, and support to move forward. If we invest in them today, they will build stronger organizations, create new opportunities, and lead our community to places we have yet to imagine.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to our Regional Presidents, State Presidents, Board of Trustees, and dedicated staff. Your leadership, sacrifice, and service keep NaFFAA strong and moving forward. You have stood behind this organization every step of the way, and this conference would not be possible without your commitment.

I also offer my sincere gratitude to the Rocky Mountain Region for being such gracious hosts. Thank you for welcoming our national community and creating a space where we can connect, learn, celebrate, and prepare for the future together.

As we participate in this conference, I encourage each established leader to connect with someone from the rising generation. Share your story, offer your guidance, and help open a door. I also encourage every young leader to step forward, ask questions, build relationships, and recognize that there is a place for you in NaFFAA.

The future of our community is not something we simply wait for. It is something we prepare for, invest in, and build together. Let us ensure that the next generation is ready to carry our legacy—and empowered to create one of their own.

With gratitude and great hope for the future,

Ryan Namata

NaFFAA National President



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• Pacific Northwest: **Vina Vanessa Vogt** • Northern California: **Gabriel Young** • Greater Los Angeles: **Erlinda Granada-Sabat**
• San Diego/Imperial: **Nicanora Montenegro** • Desert Mountain: **Sally Balencia**



Greetings, NaFFAA!

First and foremost, I give all glory, honor, and thanks to Almighty God for the opportunity to gather at the 16th NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference here in beautiful **Colorado**. It is a blessing to celebrate our shared culture, heritage, legacy, and spirit of the Filipino American community.

As Filipino Americans from across our nation come together, we are reminded that although we come from different regions, generations, professions, and backgrounds, we are united by something greater than geography, we are united by our shared history, values, and culture. Our heritage lives in our families, our traditions, our faith, our languages, and in the spirit of Bayanihan that calls us to care for and uplift one another. It is through these shared experiences that we find a true sense of belonging.

We are all here to unite, empower, advocate for, and elevate Filipino Americans while preserving our culture, heritage, and legacy. This conference reflects that mission by bringing together leaders, professionals, students, entrepreneurs, public servants, and families to learn from one another, build meaningful relationships, and strengthen our communities for generations to come.

As we participate in this conference, I encourage you to embrace every opportunity before you. Learn from our inspiring keynote speakers, engage with our moderators and panelists, connect with fellow delegates, and celebrate the remarkable talents of our performers. Every conversation, every workshop, and every new friendship have the power to inspire ideas, create partnerships, and strengthen Fil-Ams.

To our young leaders, and to everyone who feels called to serve, remember this: Leadership has no age limit. Leadership has no title. Leadership has no expiration date. If you have a heart to serve others, you already possess the qualities of a leader.

As we continue this journey together, I leave you with this reminder:

"If you only knew what you could accomplish, you would never place limits on your dreams. It is never too late to begin, and it is never too late to succeed. You define your own timeline for success."

My sincere appreciation goes to NaFFAA Region V President Jennifer Samuel, the NaFFAA Region V leadership, and the entire National Empowerment Conference Team, National Executive Board, for their vision, hospitality, and unwavering dedication in bringing this conference to Colorado. Thank you as well to our planning committees, keynote speakers, moderators, panelists, emcees, performers, sponsors, exhibitors, volunteers, and every individual working behind the scenes. Your commitment has made this conference a memorable celebration of our community.

As we celebrate this historic gathering, may we leave inspired to serve with humility, lead with integrity, preserve our heritage with pride, and continue strengthening the Fil-Americans for generations to come.

Mabuhay po tayong lahat at maraming maraming salamat po!

Dr. Alexander Africa
NaFFAA National Vice President
National Empowerment Conference Chair



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NaFFAA Region V Rocky Mountain

Mabuhay!

On behalf of NaFFAA Region V, I want to personally welcome you to Aurora, Colorado, for the 16th National Empowerment Conference.

It is truly an honor to host you in our beautiful Rocky Mountain region. Whether you are traveling from across the country or just a neighboring state, thank you for investing your time to be here. Your presence represents more than attendance, it reflects your commitment to strengthening our Filipino American community, celebrating our heritage, and inspiring the next generation of leaders.

I hope you take time not only to enjoy the conference. We have worked hard to create meaningful opportunities to learn, connect, and celebrate together, and I hope you leave with new friendships, fresh ideas, and memories that will last a lifetime.

Most importantly, I hope you feel at home. The relationships we build, the stories we share, and the spirit of Bayanihan we embrace are what make this conference truly special.

Thank you and welcome to Region V. We are grateful you are here, and we wish you a memorable, inspiring, and joyful National Empowerment Conference.

Salamat Po,

Jennifer Samuel
Region President
Rocky Mountain

National Federation of
Filipino American
Association





A TRIBUTE TO Lourdes Mitra Esclamado

FEBRUARY 6, 1931 – MAY 13, 2026

A Life of Faith, Love, Service, and Legacy

Lourdes Mitra Esclamado, affectionately known as Luly, age 95, of Rolesville, North Carolina, went to be with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on May 13, 2026.

Born on February 6, 1931 in Manila, Philippines to Ramon P. Mitra and Salud de Ocampo, Luly grew up with strong values of faith, education, and service. She graduated from St. Theresa's College in 1947 and earned her Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of Santo Tomas in 1951. She began her career as a Chemistry professor and taught at De Ocampo Memorial Medical Center and Far Eastern University in Manila.

In 1951, Luly met the love of her life, Alejandro A. Esclamado, and they were married on August 9, 1952. Together they built a beautiful life and raised three children in the Philippines.

In 1959, Alex and Luly courageously moved to the United States and opened the U.S. Edition of the Manila Chronicle. In 1961, The Philippine News was born in their basement—marking the beginning of their mission to unite and empower Filipino Americans through a strong, informed voice.

During the Marcos dictatorship (1972–1986), the Esclamado family stood firm in the face of intimidation and oppression. Their unwavering commitment to democracy and human rights led to the founding of the National Association of Filipino American Associations (NaFFAA)—a lasting legacy and the unified voice of Filipino Americans nationwide.

While her public impact was profound, Luly's heart always belonged first to her family. She and Alex raised seven children in the U.S., and her greatest joy was her legacy of fourteen grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren.

A faithful wife, devoted mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, committed community leader, entrepreneur, and woman of faith—Luly lived a life that honored her Lord and served all whom she loved and others in need.

*Her legacy lives on in every life she touched.
Her love continues. Her mission endures.*



NaFFAA Board of Trustees



Riezl Baker



Rod Mercado



Dr. Rommel Rivera



Rodel Rodis, Esq.



Maddie Vines



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NaFFAA Regional Presidents

Pacific Northwest —



**Vina Vanessa
Vogt**

Northern California —



Gabriel Young

Desert Mountain —



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Edward Brotonel

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Wilmar Suan

Northeast —



Laura Garcia

Capital —



Megan Pavillar

New England —



Frank Celozza

Southern —



Jay Capistrano

Greater Los Angeles —



**Erlinda
Granada-Sabah**

San Diego, Inland Empire, Imperial County —



Nicanora Montenegro



National Federation of Filipino American Associations **Empowerment Conferences Through the Years**

NaFFAA was born out of a meeting between West Coast and East Coast Fil-Am leaders in New York in 1997. The then Philippine News Publisher Alex A. Esclamado, TLC Beatrice CEO & President Loida Nicolas Lewis, nationally acclaimed Guitarist Michael Dadap, and San Francisco State College Board President Rodel Rodis were talking over dinner about how to unite the 3,000 Filipino American organizations all over the country.

The four decided it was time to convene a national conference and forge a common agenda for empowerment, and Mr. Alex Esclamado volunteered to lead the effort.

1st National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 22, 1997 - Washington, DC
Over 1000 Filipino Americans attended
“Panahon Na!”

2nd National Empowerment Conference
Oct. 16-18, 1998 - Washington, DC
“Building the Infrastructure for Empowerment”

3rd National Empowerment Conference
Oct. 15-17, 1999 - New York City, NY
“Filipino Americans Leading the Way to the Millennium”

4th National Empowerment Conference
Sep. 28 - Oct. 1, 2000 - Las Vegas, NV
“Making Our Power Count”

5th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 28 - Sep. 1, 2002 - San Jose, CA
“Forging a National Consciousness as a Filipino Community in America”

6th National Empowerment Conference
Sep. 10-12, 2004 - Chicago, IL
“Bridging the Filipino American Community”

7th National Empowerment Conference and
4th Global Filipino Networking Convention
Sep. 28 - Oct. 1, 2006 - Honolulu, HI
“100 Years of the Filipino Diaspora - Hawaii and Beyond”

8th National Empowerment Conference
Sep. 26-28, 2008 - Seattle, WA
“Forging the New Filipino American Agenda for the 21st Century”

9th National Empowerment Conference
Nov. 19-21, 2010 - in San Francisco, CA
“Building the Next Generation of Community Advocates”

(Continued)

(Continued)

10th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 4-7, 2012 - Detroit, MI
**“NaFFAA at 15: Celebrating the Next
Generation of Community Advocates”**

11th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 7-8, 2014 - San Diego, CA
**“We Break the Dawn, Master Planning
the Future”**



12th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 4-7, 2016 - King of Prussia, PA
**“Celebrating our History and Building a
Brighter Future”**

20th Anniversary
Oct. 21, 2017 - Washington, DC
**“NaFFAA 2.0: One Voice,
Four Thousand Strong”**

13th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 15-17, 2019 - City of Carson, CA
**“MAKE IT COUNT: Transforming
Mindsets for 2020 & Beyond”**

**14th National Empowerment Conference
and
25th Anniversary**
Aug. 4-7, 2022 - Las Vegas, NV
**“Navigating the Present, Shaping the
Future”**

15th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 16-17, 2024 - Detroit, Michigan
“Igniting the Power In Us”

16th National Empowerment Conference
Aug. 14-15 - in Aurora, CO
“Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting with Us”



National Federation of Filipino American Associations
Empowerment Conferences Through the Years



Host Committees

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR UNCONDITIONAL SUPPORT.
TAKE A BOW!

NEC Chair - Dr. Alexander Africa

Gala Chair - Jennifer Samuel

Sponsorship & Vendor Committee - Gloria Williams, Patty Cruzado & Dr. Maria Obis

Design & Decor Committee - Amore Floral & Events

Fashion Show Committee - Shiela DeForest, Dr. Maria Obis, Dhyun Amore, Sally Balecha (Desert Mountain Region), & Jennifer Samuel

Registration & Guest Relations - Regina, Donna, Marlene, Aurelia, Gloria

Guest Experience & Ushers - Dr. Francis Macalalag, Caleb Webster, EJ Gonzales

Wellness & Safety - Attorney Jay LaVigne

Media - David Le & Marcus Archuleta

Gala Assistants - Haley Rodriguez & Jacque Fernandez

Runway & Backstage - Bernadette Niblo & Sedrique Olison



ROOTED IN **HERITAGE.**
RISING FOR THE **FUTURE.**



NaFFAA REGION V

NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA • MONTANA
WYOMING • KANSAS • COLORADO

Conference Emcees



Brian Flores

CBS Journalist

Brian brings a strong voice in journalism and storytelling, using his platform to inform, connect, and uplift communities. As a respected media professional, his presence at NEC reflects our commitment to meaningful conversations and elevating Filipino American voices on a national stage.



Lorraine Eloriaga

Program Manager of Colorado Dragon Boat Festival

Born and raised in Denver, Lorraine has dedicated her life to celebrating Filipino culture and serving the community. From performing traditional Filipino dances at a young age to leading major cultural events, her journey reflects a deep commitment to heritage and unity.



Hannah Tolentino

ABS-CBN News Correspondent

Hannah began her journey in media at just 13 years old, growing a YouTube channel to over 1 million subscribers. She is now a model and commercial actor with Wilhelmina Rocky Mountains and has spent over a decade as a TV Host and News Correspondent with ABS-CBN.

PROGRAM AGENDA

HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY: STARTING WITH US



SCAN FOR
AGENDA

Pre-Conference | Thursday, August 13



4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Professional's Bootcamp: Resume Writing, Interviewing, Salary Negotiations
by **Ryan Namata**

5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Opening Reception (Cash Bar)
NaFFAA's Got Talent by **Lou Vargas**,
Emcee: **Dolly Specht**
Karaoke Night by **Joshua Ang Price**

*Sponsored by Agile Human Capital and
AV Entertainment*

Day 1 • Friday, August 14

- 8:00 AM - 8:50 AM Friday Breakfast in the Grand Ballroom
- 8:50 AM - 9:00 AM Welcome Address by **Mariela Fletcher**, National Chair
- 9:00 AM - 9:25 AM Opening Keynote: The Power of Community
Dante Ang II, Secretary of the Commission on Filipinos
- 9:30 AM - 10:25 AM Founders and Trailblazers Roundtable
Rodel Rodis, Loida Lewis, Gloria Caoile, Jon Melegrito,
Michael Dadap, Dr. Alexander Africa (Moderator)

FRIDAY 10:30 AM - 11:25 AM

Our Truth, Our Power:
Safeguarding the Filipino
Digital Diaspora
Leezel Tanglao,
Mark Calaguas, TAYO

Medical Mission Panel: Healing
Beyond the Mission
Donna Lavigne, PNCO.,
Ryan Namata (Moderator)

Pagkilala Bago Solusyon:
Understanding Before Solving :
Emerging Leadership Institute
(ELI) Introduction
Facilitator: **Gabriel Young**

PROGRAM AGENDA

FRIDAY 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Nonprofit Governance and Compliance
Lauren Schmidt, Special Counsel, Colorado Lawyers Committee

Intimate Conversations with Maestro Michael Dadap: On Storytelling, Folklore, and Music
Michael Dadap

Know History, Know Self. No History, No Self: An Ethnic Studies Lecture on the origins of Filipino American Identity
Facilitator: **Ava Ragasa**

12:30 PM - 1:25 PM Networking Lunch

Advocating for Mental Health by **Wilmar Suan**

Special Awards Presentation with **Brendan Flores**

The Mission of the Consulate by **ConGen Arnel Talisayon**

FRIDAY 1:30 PM - 2:25 PM

On Filipino Identify: "Filipino Enough"
Geri Inciso, Giselle Rushford, etc.

Building Bridges Across Oceans: Immigration Panel
Amie Belmonte, Donna Lavigne, Rodel Rodis, ConGen Arnel Talisayon

Kwentuhan: How to Explore & Understand Fil-Am Community Struggles Through Intergenerational Dialogue
Facilitator: **Gabriel Young/TBA**

FRIDAY 2:30 PM - 3:25PM

The Growing Community of Retired Filipinos and Portable Medicare
Eric Lachica

Where We Come From, How We Move
Jack Rushford

Bayanihan Under Pressure: A Filipino American Crisis Simulation

Facilitator: **Gabriel Young/TBA**

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM Merienda and Networking Break
A Message From Our Partner **FANHS**

3:45 PM - 4:10 PM Keynote: Building Community Power
Dr. Michelle Mras, International Keynote Speaker, Coach & Author

FRIDAY 4:15 PM - 5:10 PM

Protecting the Ballot: Voting Rights and the Power of the Filipino Vote in 2026
Joshua Ang Price, Angela Pedrigal (LEAD Filipino), Gloria Caoile

Bayanihan in Business: Pioneering the Future of Filipino Entrepreneurship
Riezl Baker, Glenn Mendoza, Charmel Dela Cruz, Agnes Higley

Resourcing Bayanihan: Turning Ideas into Funded Action
Facilitator:
Joshua Ang Price, NaFFAA Executive Director & Ryan Namata, NaFFAA National President

5:15 PM - 5:35 PM Closing Keynote
Sara Moore, Executive Director of Colorado Dragon Boat

5:40 PM - 6:30 PM Emerging Leadership Institute Day 1 Conclusion

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM Social Event at Adobo Restaurant



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PROGRAM AGENDA

HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY: STARTING WITH US



SCAN FOR
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Day 2 • Saturday, August 15

- 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM Saturday Breakfast
- 8:35 AM - 9:00 AM Opening Keynote: Cultural Scripts and Collective Care
Dr. Stacey Litam, Speaker, Health Advisor at Forbes, Author
- 9:00 AM - 9:55 AM Fireside Chat: Women in Community Leadership
Gloria Caoile (Moderator), **Mariela Fletcher**, **Tia Dalupan**,
Jacque de Joya, **Dr. Stacey Litam** (Region and State
Representatives)
Tribute to Luly Esclamado, one of NaFFAA's Founding Leaders
- 10:00 AM - 10:55 AM Movie Viewing and Panel for "A Long March" (20 minutes)
Tammy Botkin, **Mike Simbre**, **Jon Melegrito**, **Nonie Cruzado**,
Giselle Rushford (Moderator)

SATURDAY 11:00 AM - 11:55 AM

Best Practices Panel for Region Presidents	Healthcare Professionals Forum	From Problema to Plano: Building Community Solutions - ELI Day 2 Introduction
Dr. Alexander Africa , Laura Garcia , Rachelle Ocampo	Dr. Rommel Rivera (Moderator), Lester Andrew Uy ; Claire Swartwood , PharmD, BCPS, BCIDP; Carmeliza dela Paz , DDS; Alfredo Rivera , MD	Facilitator: Gabriel Young

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM Networking Lunch and Regional Awards

1:00 PM - 1:25 PM Keynote: The Importance of Representation
Ron Falconi, Mayor of Brunswick, OH

SATURDAY 1:30 PM - 2:25 PM

Run for Office Panel	Filipino Authors Panel	Lakbay Ng Kabataan (The Journey of the Youth): A NaFFAA Young Professional Career Panel
Larcy Douglas (Moderator), Mark Pulido , Ron Falconi , Steven Raga	Dr. Michelle Mras , Dr. Abby Hamilton , Sheilah Jane Troiano , etc.	Facilitator: TBA

PROGRAM AGENDA

SATURDAY 2:30 PM – 3:25 PM

Stop Asian Hate Session
Joshua Ang Price
(Moderator), **Gigi de Gala**,
George Kuwamura,
Sally Balecha

Mental Health First Aid Kit
Co-presented with **Krystle**
Canare and **TJ Simba-Medel**
Panelists: **Lester Uy (CYFAM)**,
Dr. Rommel Rivera

Completing the Lakbay: The
ELI Accelerator Solution
Showcase

Facilitator: **Gabriel Young**

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM Closing Keynote: Building Community Power Starting With the Family
Sheilah Jane Troiano, Writer, Entrepreneur and Wellness Advocate

4:30 PM - 5:00 PM Emerging Leadership Institute Conclusion (Day 2)

5:00 PM - 5:30 PM Final Keynote for ELI Closing

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM Bayanihan Awards Gala and Fashion Show



Photos from 15th National Empowerment
Conference + 2024 Civic Leadership Forum



SCAN FOR
AGENDA

Friday Keynote Speakers

For the full biographies, scan the QR code.



Dante Ang II

Secretary of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas

Dante “Klink” Ang II is a veteran journalist, media executive, educator, and public official. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. appointed him in October 2024 as the Chairperson of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), with a Cabinet rank of Secretary. Since taking office, Secretary Klink has focused on diaspora engagement to advance Philippine development.



Dr. Michelle Mras

International Keynote Speaker, Coach & Author

Dr. Michelle Mras is an internationally recognized keynote speaker, executive communication coach, bestselling author, podcaster, and transformational leadership advocate. Her work centers on helping individuals recognize their inherent strengths, overcome limiting beliefs, communicate authentically, and live with greater purpose and intention.



Sara Moore

Executive Director of Colorado Dragon Boat

Sara Moore serves as the Executive Director of Colorado Dragon Boat, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building bridges of awareness, knowledge, and understanding between diverse Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities and the broader public through cultural education, leadership development, and athletic competition.

Saturday Keynote Speakers

For the full biographies, scan the QR code.



Dr. Stacey Litam

Speaker, Health Advisor at Forbes, Author

Stacey Diane Arañez Litam PhD., LPCCs, NCC, CCMHC is an Associate Professor of counselor education at Cleveland State University, a racial equity strategist, licensed professional clinical counselor and supervisor, as well as a clinical sexologist with the American Board of Sexology.



Ron Falconi

Mayor of Brunswick, OH

Ron Falconi began his term as Mayor of Brunswick in 2014. He is the first Filipino-American mayor in the State of Ohio. In 2017, he was picked as one of ten Asian American Leaders from across the country to travel to Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to discuss politics, culture, business, and international relations.



Sheilah Jane Troiano

Writer, Entrepreneur and Wellness Advocate

Sheilah Jane Troiano's work centers on identity, resilience, and the Filipino American experience. Born and raised in Ifugao Province in the Philippines, she earned her Engineering degree from Saint Louis University in Baguio City. She is now based in Denver, Colorado, where she co-owns a wine and spirits import company and a wellness-focused CBD business.

Vendor Marketplace



Vendor Marketplace





NAVIGATING THE PRESENT,
SHAPING THE FUTURE

Bayanihan AWARDS GALA

A CELEBRATION OF LEADERSHIP,
CULTURE & COMMUNITY

EXCLUSIVELY THE
BAYANIHAN GALA

ON
AUGUST 15, 2026
7:00 PM – 10:00 PM

An evening of reflection, elegance,
and profound gratitude.
The Bayanihan Gala is the definitive
celebration of real-world excellence—
honoring those who lead, serve,
and empower our community.



HYATT REGENCY AURORA
DENVER CONFERENCE CENTER
AURORA, DENVER, COLORADO

View the Gala Page





Bayanihan Awards Gala and Fashion Show

Saturday Evening Program

Registration & Reception

Guests arrive • Photo Opportunities • Networking

Opening Ceremony

United States National Anthem

Philippine National Anthem

Invocation

Introduction of the Master of Ceremonies

Welcome Address

Jennifer Samuel

NaFFAA Region V President

Dinner Service

Keynote Address

Carabao Awards

Installation & Oath of Office

Filipino Fashion Show & Cultural Storytelling

Opening Presentation

Michael Dadap playing José Rizal – Dulce Las Horas



Gala Performance Group



Originally established as FACC Cultural, the dance performance group has been around for decades. After the FACC's 70th anniversary in 2024, the group had been rebranded as Padayon Cultural by President Vivian Egonio-Norman.

Padayon Cultural's dance program brings the rich diversity of Filipino culture to life through movement. From barrio folk dances to Spanish-influenced and Indigenous-inspired movements, each dance tells a story of heritage, community, and identity.

Dancers of all ages are welcome to explore Filipino rhythms, footwork, songs, and attire, gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural roots behind each movement. Performances not only entertain but also educate audiences about the Philippines' diverse communities. Through dance, Padayon nurtures a connection to Filipino heritage while inspiring a love of the arts in the next generation.



Dance Directors:
Danielle Stratton & Jason de Vera

Youth Directors:
Nicole Galvan, Namdev Palalay, & Danielle Stratton



Bayanihan Awards Gala and Fashion Show

Act I Founders & Trailblazers

A Journey Through Philippine Heritage
Carinosa by the FACC Performers & Rondalla

Act II Health Professionals, Frontliners, & Educators

Celebrating Regional Traditions
Pandango sa Ilaw by FACC Performers & Rondalla

Act III Emerging Leaders & Entrepreneurs

A Vision of Modern Filipiniana
Rap by Meta Sarmiento

Grand Finale

Featuring All Designers, Models & Performers
Hip Hop Tinikling by FACC Performers
& Special Guest Jack Rushford
Curtain Call
The Last Walk
Supporting NaFFAA's leadership, youth,
and community initiatives

Closing Remarks

Sponsor Recognition & Acknowledgments
Celebration & Dancing
Featuring Richi Ramos





Bayanihan Fashion Show

ACT I

MODEL	DESIGNER
Thelma Lassig NaFFAA Utah, President	Dasan Export
Virgit Vanek Ex Fundraising Director for NaFFAA V	Virgit Vanek
Donna LaVigne Honorary Consul for Colorado and Wyoming	Dhyun Amore Duque
Gloria Villaver Williams NaFFAA Region V Treasurer/ Board of Director	Filipino Designer
Resty Lopez President- Balayan Las Vegas Association; Auditor - DMR; Auditor - NaFFAA -Nevada	Chona Estacio
Giselle Rushford NaFFAA Trustee/Secretary	Kultura
Mariela Fletcher NaFFAA National Chair	Chat Khan
Gloria Caoile NaFFAA Desert Mountain Region Senior Advisor	Ramon Valera
Benjamin Ricardo Caoile	Traditional
Sally Balecha NaFFAA Desert Mountain Region President	Alfonso "Boy" Ginoo
Dolly Specht NaFFAA Oregon President	PamPinay





Bayanihan Fashion Show

ACT II

MODEL	DESIGNER
Genesis Africa First lady of Dr. Alexander Africa NaFFAA Vice President, Final Walk	Dhyun Amore Duque
Marlene Perez NAFFAA Member and former Secretary	Handcrafted in Manila, Philippines
Joyce Dutton Working mom and Caregiver to toddlers	Handcrafted in Manila, Philippines
Dr. Stacey Diane A. Litam Keynote speaker Associate Professor	The Mestizo
Arminda Aguilar NaFFAA Region V Auditor	Jojo Martinez
Dr. Michael StaJuana President	Edwin Uy
Carmeliza “Zha Zha” dela Paz Dentist (DDS), Vice President Philippine American Society of Colorado	Kirsten Regalado
Flor Liza Obana Teacher (retired) Cherry Creek School District #4	Ramil Estrope President of Philippine Designer Guild
Edith Pasion Vice President for Mission Uplift International	Frankie De Leon
Mark Perez Physical Therapist	Jor El Espina
Anna Perez Aesthetician	Jor El Espina





Bayanihan Fashion Show

ACT III

MODEL	DESIGNER
Amy Silver American Furniture Warehouse Visual Designer	Blue Angelic Creations
Kaela Malaki Founder of Lola Severina	Amihan Artisans
Jacqueline de Joya NaFFAA National Board of Trustees	Alfonso "Boy" Ginoo
Loida Norton Mrs. Woman of the World 2025	Dhyun Amore Duque
Dhyun Amore Duque Cheyenne Filipino-American Club President and CEO of Amore Floral and Events LLC, Final Walk	Dhyun Amore Duque
Joshua Acervo Ang Price National Executive Director, NaFFAA	John Carlo Llamoso
Shiela DeForest Founder of Amihan Artisans, Area Director of Gawad Kalinga USA Denver	Ritchie Teves x Amihan Artisans
Bella Knowles Founder, Baro Manila	Ditta Sandico
Nessa Whitney Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity, Corporate Engagement & Event Manager	Kalinga Cultural Bearer Jenny Bawer Young
Charmel Dela Cruz State President NaFFAA AZ Chapter	Jean Amour
Marie Villareal NaFFAA AZ Treasurer	Jean Amour





Bayanihan Fashion Show

ACT III

MODEL	DESIGNER
Agnes Lopez Business Owner and Entrepreneur, Commercial Photographer	Lin-ay by Binky Pitogo
Julie D Martinez NaFFAA Arizona Secretary	Julie D Martinez
Dr. Maria Obis NaFFAA 5 Vice President	Dhyun Amore Duque
Miles Guardiano PASCO President	Jor-El Espina
Patricia Cruzado Naffaa Colorado President	Dhyun Amore Duque
Hannah Tolentino TFC News Correspondent/ Content Creator/Host	Angela Taloza
Lilyann Freking High School Student	Bamba Limon
Vivian Norman President of Filipino American Community of Colorado	Amihan Artisans
Gabriel Young NaFFAA NorCal President, FAHNS Youth Advisory Council	Francis Libiran
Natividad Cura DeFrances Arizona NaFFAA Vice President	LoveJoy Couture LLC Arizona
Maddie Vines National NaFFAA Trustee	Filipiniana





A Message of *Gratitude*

As we gather to celebrate the **NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference Gala**, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to NaFFAA National, NaFFAA Region V—our gracious host—and everyone whose dedication made this extraordinary celebration possible.

Thank you for honoring the rich heritage, culture, traditions, and legacy of the Filipino American community while advancing NaFFAA's mission of advocacy, leadership, civic engagement, and empowerment.

Our sincere congratulations to the **National Empowerment Conference Planning Committee**, the **Gala and Fashion Show Committee**, our distinguished speakers, cultural performers, award recipients, volunteers, sponsors, and every individual whose passion and service made this event both elegant and memorable.

A special thank you to Dhyun Amore Duque for the artistry, creativity, and craftsmanship behind the beautiful Maria Clara gown, a timeless expression of Filipino heritage and cultural pride that adds grace and meaning to this unforgettable evening.

May this conference continue to inspire future generations to lead with integrity, serve with compassion, and celebrate the enduring spirit of Bayanihan.

**Congratulations on a successful
National Empowerment Conference and Gala.**

*Mabuhay ang NaFFAA.
Mabuhay ang Filipino American Community.
Mabuhay ang Pilipinas.*

Genesis Africa

Mabuhay, distinguished guests, honored dignitaries, community leaders, sponsors, friends, and members of our Filipino-American community.

As I take my final walk this evening, I do so with profound gratitude, immense humility, and a heart filled with thanksgiving.

Above all, I give thanks to Almighty God, whose grace, wisdom, and unfailing guidance have made this remarkable evening possible.

Tonight has been more than a fashion presentation—it has been a celebration of our Filipino identity, our heritage, and the timeless artistry that continues to unite generations of Filipinos around the world.

It has been both an honor and a privilege to design and create the six Filipiniana masterpieces presented this evening. Each creation reflects not only the elegance of our traditional attire but also the resilience, dignity, and enduring spirit of the Filipino people. To my six extraordinary models, thank you for wearing every design with grace, confidence, and poise. You transformed each piece into a living expression of our culture, and for that, I am sincerely grateful.

I extend my deepest appreciation to our distinguished guests whose presence has elevated this celebration: **Patricia Cruzado**, President of NAFFAA Colorado; Honorary Consul **Donna LaVigne**; **Loida Norton** of Women of the World 2026; **Dr. Maria Obis**, NAFFAA Region V Vice President; and **Genesis Africa**, Reyna Emperatriz Wyoming 2026. Your dedication to leadership, cultural preservation, and community service continues to inspire us all.

To my beloved husband, **Kurt Smith**, thank you for your unwavering love, steadfast encouragement, and constant support. Your belief in my vision has given me the strength to pursue my passion and serve our community with purpose.

Serving as the **Founding President of the Cheyenne Filipino-American Club since 2024**, and now for three consecutive years as its President, has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. Together, we have built not only an organization, but a family united by our shared commitment to preserving, promoting, and celebrating the richness of Filipino culture here in Wyoming.

As the owner of **Amore Floral and Events**, every design I create is a reflection of my love for our heritage. My hope is that through art, fashion, and culture, we continue to inspire future generations to embrace their identity with pride and confidence.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to **NaFFAA National** for the resounding success of this year's **16th National Empowerment Conference**. It was truly an exceptional gathering that united Filipino-American leaders, professionals, advocates, and community organizations from across the nation. It was an honor to participate, to meet remarkable individuals, to establish meaningful connections, and to exchange ideas that will strengthen and empower our communities for years to come. Thank you to the National Board and every organizer whose dedication made this inspiring conference possible. Your leadership continues to uplift and unite Filipino-Americans across the United States.

Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to our sponsors, donors, volunteers, board members, supporters, and every guest who shared this memorable evening with us. Your generosity, trust, and commitment are the foundation upon which events like this become possible. Because of you, our mission to preserve our heritage and strengthen our community continues to flourish.

As we conclude this beautiful celebration, may we remember that our culture is not merely something we inherit—it is a legacy we are entrusted to preserve, celebrate, and pass on with pride to future generations.

Thank you for allowing me to share my passion, my creativity, and my heart with all of you this evening.

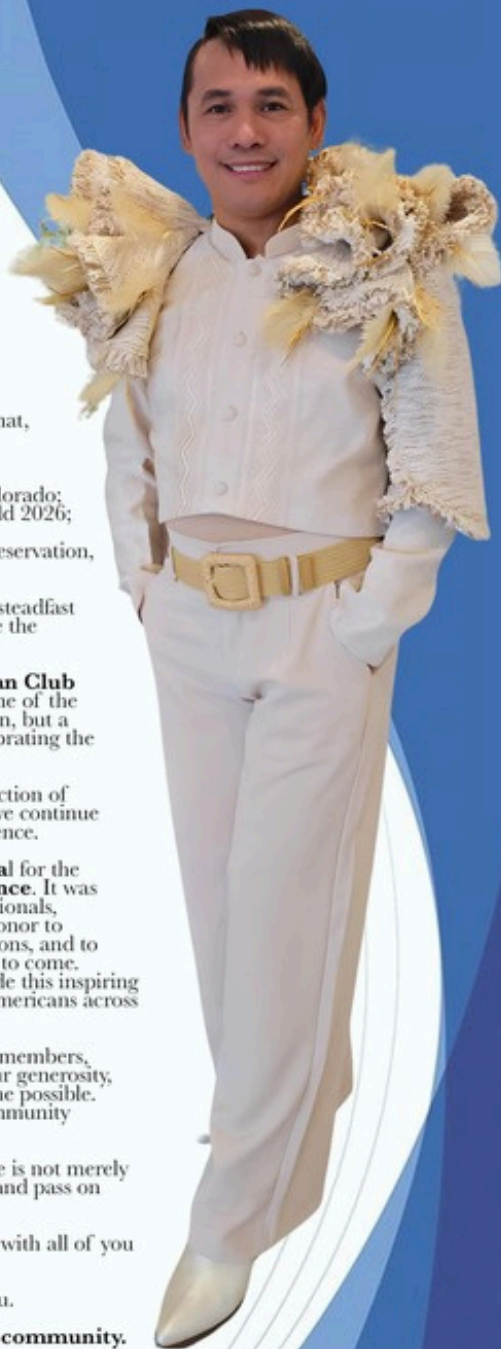
Maraming salamat po. May God continue to bless each and every one of you.

Mabuhay ang kulturang Pilipino. Mabuhay ang Filipino-American community. Mabuhay tayong lahat.

Sincerely,


Dhyun Amore M. Duque

Cheyenne Filipino-American Club, President





Congratulations!

16th NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference

Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting With Us

The NaFFAA Northeast Region proudly celebrates the 16th NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference and all whose vision, dedication, and service continue to strengthen our Filipino American community.

As we gather to exchange ideas, forge meaningful partnerships, and inspire one another, may this conference renew our shared commitment to servant leadership, collaboration, and purposeful action. Together, let us continue to champion initiatives that uplift our communities, cultivate future leaders, and create opportunities for generations to come.

True empowerment is not measured by the positions we hold, but by the lives we inspire, the communities we strengthen, and the leaders we help create.

May this conference remind us that our greatest strength lies not only in our individual accomplishments, but in our collective resolve to lead with integrity, serve with compassion, and work together for the greater good. For when we empower one another, we do more than build organizations—we build a legacy.

*Together, we honor our heritage.
Together, we embrace our purpose.
Together, we empower the future.*

Because every great movement starts with us.

NaFFAA Northeast Region

Serving the Filipino American Community with Pride, Purpose, and Unity.



The team from the nation's capital extends its warmest congratulations to Region V, the proud Rocky Mountain Region, for co-hosting the 16th Annual National Empowerment Conference. The Filipino American leaders gathering in Colorado will do the difficult but deeply rewarding work of advocating for our community – and we could not be more proud to stand alongside them. May all who attend forge lasting connections and leave inspired to advance the cause of Filipinos everywhere. Warm regards from Megan Pavillar, NaFFAA Capital President, James Escalante, Vice President and Angelo Reyes, Virginia and West Virginia State President. Mabuhay!

NAFFAA

CAPITAL REGION

Washington, DC
Maryland
Virginia
West Virginia





16th NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

AUGUST 14-15, 2026

(FRIDAY AND SATURDAY)

Hyatt Regency Aurora-Denver

Conference Center

13200 E 14th Pl, Aurora, Colorado 80011

JOIN NOW! Register at naffaa.org/NEC2026

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★ Proudly Recognizing Our Chapters and Partners ★

CELEBRATING UNITY • HONORING SERVICE • EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the NaFFAA Great Lakes Region and its Chapters whose dedication, leadership, and commitment continue to uplift our communities and strengthen our nation.



Great Lakes Region

Indiana • Kentucky • Michigan • Ohio



Great Lakes Region
UNITY • SERVICE • HERITAGE • PROGRESS



Great Lakes Region
UNITY • SERVICE • HERITAGE • PROGRESS



Great Lakes Region
UNITY • SERVICE • HERITAGE • PROGRESS



Great Lakes Region
UNITY • SERVICE • HERITAGE • PROGRESS

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE 16TH NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE!

Your vision, collaboration, and unwavering commitment to our shared mission continue to inspire progress, promote heritage, and build a brighter future for Filipino Americans nationwide.

Maraming Salamat!

TO OUR SPONSORS, PARTNERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND ATTENDEES
TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONGER!



UNITY



SERVICE



HERITAGE



PROGRESS



THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF THIS HISTORIC JOURNEY:
MABUHAY ANG FILIPINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY!

Congratulations!

TO THE

16th NaFFAA **NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE**

**HARNESSING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY:
STARTING WITH US**

The Officers and Members of the
NaFFAA Midwest Region proudly extend our
heartfelt congratulations to the National Leadership,
conference organizers, delegates, partners,
and all who have made this conference possible.

May this conference ignite new ideas,
strengthen lasting partnerships, and inspire
all of us to continue working together
for the advancement of our
Filipino American community.

**Together, we remain one NaFFAA—
stronger in purpose, united in service,
and committed to empowering
generations to come.**

Mabuhay ang NaFFAA!

Mabuhay ang Filipino American Community!



NaFFAA Midwest Region

Illinois • Iowa • Minnesota
Missouri • Nebraska • Wisconsin



COLORADO • WYOMING • KANSAS • MONTANA
NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA

TOGETHER WE RISE. *Together We Thrive.*

Empowering Filipino Americans.
Strengthening Communities.
Building a Legacy.

A Message from our President

It is an honor to serve as President of NaFFAA Region V. Together, we celebrate our heritage, uplift our communities, and create lasting change for future generations.

Through unity, service, and collaboration, we are building stronger families, advocating for equity, and inspiring our youth to lead with pride.

Mabuhay ang ating komunidad!

Jennifer Samuel
President, NaFFAA Region V



In celebration of the
Filipino-American History Month



Likha ng Lahi

MODA AT KULTURA

10:30AM - OCTOBER 19, 2023
HISTORY COLORADO CENTER
1200 BROADWAY, DENVER

History Colorado



SALIDA CREATIVITY LAB PRESENTS

FILIPINO MODERN

9TH ANNUAL ASIA FEST CELEBRATION



ART, CULTURE, MUSIC,
FOOD, FASHION, FILM

OCT 18 2023
SALIDA STEAMPLANT



1st OFAM Anniversary

kapitbisig Festival

July 19, 2025
1:00pm to 5:00pm

2 NEW Summit Event Center
411 Sable Blvd, Aurora, CO
80011

Join the celebration!
Enjoy an afternoon of lively music,
delicious Filipino cuisine, heartfelt
recognition, captivating performances,
energetic dance, and meaningful
connections with the community!



NaFFAA Region V STOP ASIAN HATE

Supporting Filipino-American
& AANHPI Communities
Including Gawad Kalinga USA &
FilAm Alerts Initiatives



OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2024-2025



CELEBRATING HERITAGE

Honored Filipino
American History
Month with cultural
showcases, fashion,
art, music, and
community festivals.



ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

Leading the Stop
Asian Hate movement
and empowering
AANHPI communities
through education
and action.



COMMUNITY SERVICE

Partnered with Gawad
Kalinga USA and
responded to disasters
to support families
in need.



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Inspiring the next
generation through
leadership, culture,
and educational
opportunities.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Strengthening ties with
consular partners,
local leaders, and
organizations across
the Rocky Mountain
Region.



FILIPINO PRIDE IN COLORADO

Proudly illuminated
the Colorado State
Capital in Red, Blue,
and Yellow in honor
of Philippine
Independence Day.

GET INVOLVED

- Join NaFFAA Region V
- Participate at the level that works for you
- Support Filipino-American & AANHPI communities

Contact / Sign Up

Visit: naffaaregionv.org
Email: info@naffaaregionv.org
Phone: 720-675-7661
Address: 5174 Alkon St., Denver, CO 80238



Proud of our past. Committed to our future.

Together, we uplift. Together, we advocate. Together, we make a difference.





CONGRATULATIONS
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FILIPINO
AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS (NAFFAA)
SOUTHWEST REGION
EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES,
SHAPING OUR FUTURE!



NAFFAA - Southwest Region
National Empowerment
Conference
2026

*The **Southwest Region** extends heartfelt congratulations to NAFFAA National Leadership and the National Empowerment Conference Committee for a successful and inspiring gathering! We celebrate your commitment to advancing Filipino American voices, unity, and empowerment across the nation.*

Mabuhay!
From: NAFFAA Southwest Region

Congratulations!

TO THE OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS OF

NaFFAA

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
FILIPINO AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS

ON THE 16TH

NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

August 14–15, 2026 • Aurora, Colorado

As NaFFAA gathers to lead, learn, and inspire, we celebrate your unwavering commitment to our shared mission and the incredible impact you create in our communities.

NaFFAA Pacific Northwest Region (PNW)

is proud to stand with you—working collaboratively across four states in advancing NaFFAA's vision of **empowering Filipino Americans and ensuring that every community has the opportunity to thrive.**



Mabuhay NaFFAA!



NaFFAA PACIFIC NORTHWEST REGION (PNW)

WASHINGTON • IDAHO • OREGON • ALASKA

ONE COMMUNITY. FOUR STATES. UNLIMITED IMPACT.
TOGETHER, WE BUILD A STRONGER FUTURE.





CONGRATULATIONS

And Success

NaFFAA Northern CA wishes congratulations on the
16th National Empowerment Conference!



www.linktree.com/naffaannorcal



@naffaa.norcal

**NaFFAA
REGION 9**



**1 VOICE
4 MILLION
STRONG**

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILIPINO AMERICAN ASSOCIATIONS
GREATER LOS ANGELES REGION**

www.NaFFAA.org

- Los Angeles County
- Ventura County
- San Luis Obispo County
- Orange County
- Santa Barbara County
- Kern County

*NaFFAA Greater Los Angeles congratulates
NaFFAA National on hosting the
16th NaFFAA National Empowerment Conference (NEC),
co-hosted by the NaFFAA Rocky Mountain Region.*

MABUHAY!!!



Congratulations

TO THE ORGANIZERS OF THE
**16TH NATIONAL
EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE (NEC)**

SAN DIEGO

CALIFORNIA



NaFFAA

DESERT MOUNTAIN REGION



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Harnessing the Power of Community: STARTING WITH US



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NaFFAA UTAH

UNITED. EMPOWERED. MAKING AN IMPACT.

NaFFAA Utah is dedicated to promoting unity, preserving our Filipino heritage, and creating opportunities that empower our community through leadership, service, and advocacy.



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Marco Mercado
Fil-Am Vet Director



Regina Mercado
Special Event Director



Rowena Mata
Event Director



Raquel A Seward/
Lenilita Brancroft
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Salt Lake County



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Weber County



Grace Bryne
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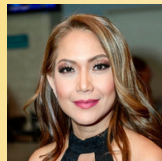
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Vice President



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Mary Jane Limen
Correspondence Secretary



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Jess Sizoon
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Arnel Regino
Membership Director (East)



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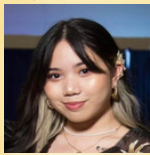
Malou Padilla
Community Outreach Director



Cecille Waller
Special Programs Director



Joshua Dela Cruz
Digital Tech Director



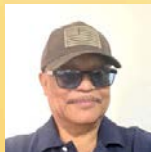
Jemimah Dela Cruz
Arts & Culture Director



Sol Tinio
Youth Engagement Director



Roy Lave
Business Development Director



Edgar Perez
Civic Engagement Director



Sara San Diego
Volunteer Coordinator



Nanette Aranas
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Atty. Ma. Lorena Gonzalez
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Region III New England

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts,
New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

Congratulations TO NaFFAA ON IT'S 16th NEC + 2026 CIVIC LEADERSHIP FORUM

NaFFAA headed the Philippine Consulate Outreach in Massachusetts for a number of years collaborating with various organizations. 11/25

Your unwavering commitment to empower, educate, and engage our communities continues to inspire and create lasting impact.

Mabuhay ang NaFFAA!

OFFICERS:

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Gilda Stiefel	Treasurer
Dee St Denis	Secretary
Tony Cercena	Chair RI
Jen Coliflores	Chair MA
Cherry Smyth	Chair CT
Lidy Chan	Chair Cultural and Advocacy
Philjay Solar	Youth Leader

NaFFAA dancers had and continue to showcase our culture through dance performances all over not only in New England but also in New York and New Jersey.





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Congratulations to the
**National Federation of
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on another successful
National Empowerment Conference.

For generations, Mama Sita's has believed that every Filipino meal tells a story—of family, tradition, culture, and home. We are honored to help bring those stories to your table as Filipino American leaders from across the nation gather to celebrate our shared heritage and build an even brighter future together.

We are especially proud to partner with **Executive Chef Paulie Caulan** and the culinary team at the **Hyatt Regency Aurora-Denver Conference Center** to season and inspire the Filipino dishes enjoyed throughout this year's conference and the National Gala.

Together, we're serving more than great food—we're sharing generations of authentic Filipino flavors that connect communities across every table.

Maraming salamat, NaFFAA, for your leadership and your unwavering commitment to uplifting Filipino Americans nationwide.

We look forward to many more years of celebrating our culture—one delicious meal at a time. ♥



PAUL "PAULIE" CAULAN
EXECUTIVE CHEF



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Congratulations

TO THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FILIPINO AMERICAN
ASSOCIATIONS (NAFFAA) ON THEIR 16TH NATIONAL
EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE



THANK YOU FOR STANDING BEHIND THE PILLARS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, NATIONAL
ADVOCACY, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND ADVANCING FILIPINO CULTURE

BEST WISHES ON YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS

FROM THE DE JOYA FAMILY
ARTHUR, JACQUELINE,
DR. JARED AND JASON



***Asian Roundtable of Colorado
is a proud partner of the
16th National Federation of Filipino American Associations
National Empowerment Conference***

Building Bridges. Strengthening Communities. Taking Collaborative Action.

Asian Roundtable of Colorado (ARC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that unites and supports Colorado's diverse Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities, building meaningful statewide partnerships that strengthen and connect Colorado for everyone.

Through teamwork, leadership, and community efforts, ARC addresses key issues, encourages civic participation, and fosters mutual understanding.

Email us if you're curious about Asian Roundtable of Colorado and would like to join or collaborate, either for yourself or your organization
info@asianroundtableofco.org

Visit our website asianroundtableofco.org



Learn about our current initiative actionagainsthate.org



Congratulations

NaFFAA NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE 2026



Congratulations to our NaFFAA leaders, members, partners, and friends on the celebration of empowerment, unity, and purpose!

This year's theme:

Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting with Us

This theme reminds us that real change begins at home—within ourselves, our families, and our local communities. When we listen, support, and stand together, we unlock the strength to uplift others, create opportunities, and build a brighter future for all. Small actions, shared values, and collective commitment can spark lasting impact across generations.

As we gather in Denver, let us be inspired by our shared heritage, strengthened by our collective commitment, and energized to create impact in every community we call home.



**OUR STORY. OUR STRENGTH.
OUR FUTURE.**

Mabuhay NaFFAA!



Mariela Fletcher

MARIELA FLETCHER
National Chair 2024–2026
NaFFAA



Congratulations on another successful National Empowerment Conference!

This conference is far more than a gathering but is a celebration of our heritage, our achievements, and our shared commitment to empowering Filipino Americans across the United States. It brings together leaders, entrepreneurs, professionals, educators, students, veterans, and community advocates who are united by one purpose: to strengthen our community while inspiring the next generation to lead with excellence, integrity, and service.

It is truly an honor to support the National Empowerment Conference and to serve as a National Trustee for NaFFAA. I am proud to stand alongside so many remarkable leaders who selflessly dedicate their time and talents to advancing our mission and creating opportunities for Filipino Americans throughout our nation.

Thank you to every volunteer, sponsor, speaker, and organizer whose hard work made this conference possible. Your passion, vision, and commitment embody the Filipino spirit of Bayanihan, working together for the greater good.

May NaFFAA continue to grow in influence and impact, inspiring future generations of Filipino Americans to lead with courage, serve with compassion, and make meaningful contributions to our communities.

Sincerely,
Riezl Baker
NaFFAA Trustee



A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT AND CONGRATULATIONS



*To the National Federation of Filipino
American Associations (NaFFAA)*

It is with profound admiration and heart-felt best wishes that I extend my sincerest congratulations to NaFFAA on the occasion of its National Empowerment Conference. May this gathering be a resounding success, deepening our shared sense of *Kapwa*, strengthening our *Bayanihan* spirit, and continuing the vital work of empowering our communities across the nation.

Marissa Tirona
MARISSA TIRONA



Empowered Leaders Deserve an *Inspiring Escape*



Celebrating leadership, collaboration,
and community at **NAFFAA NEC 2026**.

As a Filipina nurse, entrepreneur, and PNACO President (2022–2024), I value the leadership, mentorship, and community that NAFFAA inspires.

My husband Paul and I are proud to support NAFFAA and the Emerging Leadership Institute as they help the next generation grow with confidence, purpose, and connection.

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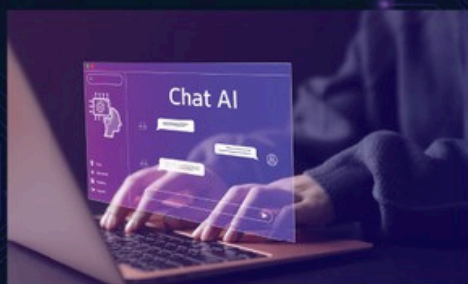


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Tayo provides vital, trustworthy, and culturally relevant information to help Filipinos navigate the information ecosystem. As a project of the Filipino Young Leaders Program (FYLPRO), Tayo is an innovative data hub that empowers Filipinox/a/o communities by collecting data, fostering partnerships, publishing culturally relevant insights, and developing leaders to create an equitable and sustainable future.

SURVEY ON FILIPINO AMERICANS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Our Purpose

CARE is a research registry designed to connect AANHPI communities to opportunities to participate in health research. Some of the research focuses on cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, aging, and caregiving-related topics.

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To be eligible for CARE, you must:

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- 18 years old or older
- Able to **read** or **speak** one of the following languages: English, Chinese (Mandarin, Cantonese), Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Tagalog or Vietnamese
- Reside in the United States (US) or U.S. Associated Pacific Islands (USAPI)
- Have an interest in participating in potential research

ENROLL HERE



PASCO



Who We Are

The Philippine American Society of Colorado is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating, preserving, promoting and sharing the Philippine culture and heritage through educational and cultural opportunities that would enrich and enhance the lives of its members and Coloradans.

Our Programs

Our cultural programs promote learning, community, and nurture our Filipino people.

- Kick off your shoes with our **Cultural Dance Troupe** for all ages
- Take **Tagalog classes** to preserve our language
- Join one of Colorado's legacy dragon boat teams: the **PASCO Fighting Dragons**
- Celebrate the holidays in our annual **Parol Lantern Workshop**



Contact Us





Congratulations! Continue to do your work and God bless -

Margarita
Salcedo-Hart

CONGRATULATIONS, NaFFAA!

2026 NATIONAL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

Harnessing the Power of Community: Starting with Us

As a former National Chair, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing NaFFAA continue to grow, evolve, and empower Filipino Americans across the country.

NaFFAA has never been powered by a single person. Its strength has always been harnessed from the passion of our people: leaders who cast a bold vision, volunteers who give selflessly, partners who believe in our mission, and supporters who continue to show up year after year. Together, they transform ideas into action and aspirations into lasting impact.

Community is not something NaFFAA serves from the outside. It is the engine that drives us forward.

That is the true power of community. Not power that is given to us, but power that we harness together. Because power, after all, is never given. It is harnessed, beginning with each of us.

As we gather for the 2026 National Empowerment Conference, may we harness the power of our community and carry that spirit well beyond this gathering.

Let's continue making history and writing our story.

Mabuhay NaFFAA!

Brendan Flores

Former National Chair, NaFFAA



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Region V National Empowerment Conference
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Congratulations to NaFFAA's NEC!!!



From The Macalalag Family: In Memory of
Dr Francisco Macalalag Jr

Congratulations

and more power to the
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(NaFFAA),**

most especially to our friend,

**Chairwoman
Mariela Fletcher**



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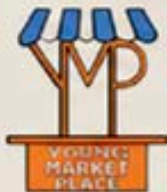
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BS in Chemical Engineering
Champion for Inclusive Communities through Exports Leadership



Tolentino, Tristan James Y.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for AI Innovation and Technopreneurship for Societal Impact



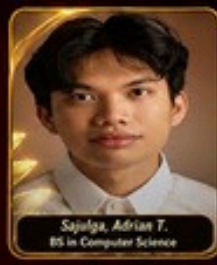
Solon, Malt John Vianney C.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for AI Development and Scalable Startup Solutions for National Progress



Selgas, Muffia
BS in Information Technology
Champion for Expanding Access to Education and Innovation for the Filipino People



Segundo, Julia Laine G.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for Transformative Systems and Empowered Voices



Sajalga, Adrian T.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for Transforming Personal Ambition into Health Innovation



Obando, Guadalupe Nika Marie L.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for Scalable Community Engagement and Volunteerism through Youth Leadership



Manulat, Thomas Danjo M.
BS in Computer Science
Champion for Human-Centered AI Innovation for Community Development



Casero, Kurt Bhen M.
BS in Mining Engineering
Champion for Evidence-Based Responsible Mining and Community Empowerment

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John Cyrell N. Maniat
Alester M. Cuyos
John Timothy R. Cabugaus
Petz Jacob T. Lim
Irvin C. Almodiel
Ralph Jonathan R. Calzada

RINSLYN G. MINYAMIN
TOP PERFORMING IN ENGINEERING CALCULUS 1

DEO MARI JAKEEM B. DAYONOT
TOP PERFORMING IN ENGINEERING CALCULUS 2

RINSLYN G. MINYAMIN
TOP PERFORMING IN CHEMISTRY FOR ENGINEERS

FRHOLAND J. LADARAN
TOP PERFORMING IN PHYSICS FOR ENGINEERS

CHRIS LAWRENZ L. CAÑADA
TOP PERFORMING IN DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS

Alliah Mae Dignion
BSEM-4

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2026 BEST STUDENT IN GEOLOGY
LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE AWARD
2026 BEST STUDENT IN MINING

2026 English Communication & Leadership Training Best Speakers

Karl Vynz Atazan (BSBIO-4)
Ryan Jay Ubas (BSA-3)

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Mabuhay ang CrossWind Church!

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Agile Human Capital is proud to offer its wholehearted support for the incredible work NaFFAA does on behalf of the Filipino American community, as it hosts the 16th National Empowerment Conference in Denver, Colorado. Agile is powered by a simple belief: people are an organization's greatest asset. As a human resources and operations consultancy serving government agencies, small businesses, international firms, and individuals, we know firsthand what it means to invest in people and NaFFAA's mission is exactly that investment, at a community scale. We are honored to be a part of this important work.

- Ryan Namata, Principal, Agile Human Capital
ryan.namata@agilehumancapital.info

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***WITH SINCERE APPRECIATION,
NAFFAA NATIONAL***



NaFFAA Founders



Alex Esclamado

Lawyer and Veteran Journalist

The late Alex Esclamado co-founded NaFFAA in 1997 to shed light on abuse against Filipinos in the work place, address immigration concerns, and fight for Filipino American empowerment. A lawyer and veteran journalist, Alex first came to the United States in 1959 as chief correspondent for the U.S. edition of the now defunct Manila Chronicle.



Atty. Loida Nicolas Lewis

Attorney and Philanthropist

Loida Nicolas Lewis, a philanthropist and a leader within the Filipino-American community, is one of the founders of NaFFAA. She helped establish the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF), and is a co-founder of the US Pinoys for Good Governance (USP4GG), which was organized after Benigno Simeon Aquino III was elected President of the Philippines in May 2010.



Atty. Rodel Rodis

Attorney and National NaFFAA Trustee

Under his initiative and leadership, NaFFAA hosted the First Global Filipino Networking Convention held at the Moscone Center in San Francisco in August of 2002, which attracted 4,000 delegates, and which has continued in biennial global Filipino summit conferences since then. Rodel was the first Filipino to be elected to public office in SF when he was elected to the SF Community College Board in 1992 and reelected in 1996, 2000 and 2004, serving three terms as president of the San Francisco College Board.



Michael Dadap

Guitarist, Composer, Conductor

As a NaFFAA co-founder, Dadap forged a vital platform uniting culture, advocacy, and leadership for Filipino Americans. NaFFAA celebrates his visionary guidance and unwavering dedication to traditional music as a tool for empowerment. From the organization's inception through landmark anniversaries, his performances, workshops, and calls to action have urged communities to safeguard heritage while pursuing excellence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to:

ALL OUR SPONSORS, VENDORS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS
The STATE OF COLORADO, and CITY OF AURORA

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

While we tried our best to include every sponsor, ad, and relevant information in this Souvenir Program, we are human and still prone to mistakes. We apologize for any errors that we may have missed during proof-reading and editing.

Please feel free to contact us at info@naffaa.org for any corrections that need to be made or issued, which will be published on our webpage, naffaa.org/nec2026.

**HARNESSING THE
POWER OF COMMUNITY:
STARTING WITH US**



***We Are Thankful for You,
NAFFAA Members and Delegates!***

**16th NATIONAL
EMPOWERMENT
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