

Genuine Bayanihan spirit in Australia

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MELBOURNE, *The Philippine Times/PAD*- True-blooded Aussies will surely have difficulty figuring out what bayanihan is all about. Pronouncing the word is definitely a tongue twister for them: buy-uh-nee-hun. And how in the world can a Filipino describe bayanihan to these Aussies so they can get a good grasp of the concept? What is bayanihan? **Bayanihan** comes from the root word “bayan” meaning nation, town or community. In the olden days, we Filipinos would happily volunteer to carry the whole house of another neighbour and literally move it to a new location. Around 15-20 people would carry the house by using long, sturdy bamboo poles. The whole process is done in the spirit of fun and communal unity creating genuine “camaraderie”. After the transfer, the host family would prepare a small feast to say thank you to everyone. Hence the mini-fiesta sets the happy and festive mood for the entire village.

This same Bayanihan spirit inspired a group of community volunteers and associations to form **Bayanihan Australia Community Network Inc (BACNI)**. Well- established groups such as the Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong Inc., Melbourne Integrated Sports Club Inc., Pilipino Elderly of the South East Region Inc. and Silayan Dance Academy have been serving the community for many years now and they decided that it’s time to join forces to work together toward a common goal: to benefit Filipinos living in Australia.

In April 2007, BACNI was born making the bayanihan effort bigger and stronger. Now, senior members get to learn to use a fax machine, read e-mails, use a mobile phone or watch hip-hop dancing. On the other hand, younger leaders learn to draft a Constitution, perform cultural dance, listen with respect, speak Filipino, play basketball and share the Aussie spirit with others. Both generations discover the art of learning and teaching.

“Bayanihan Australia Community Network Inc is about valuing existing Fil-Aust community groups who have served Filipino Australians well over the years and will continue to do so through youth mentoring, practical mutual support and partnerships with mainstream Australia. Sport, dance, social support, elderly - the Bayanihan members supporting one another for years will be stronger through the bond of community partnership,” said BACNI Chairperson Mila Cichello.

On 8 December 2007, BACNI was formally launched during its event **Pasko Sa Nayon**, the first Filipino Christmas concert held at the Melbourne Town Hall, in partnership with the City of Melbourne. The Hon Judith Graley MP, Member for Narre Warren South representing Premier John Brumby MP and Mr John Williams, State



Director of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship opened the sell-out event, attended by 300 people. The Philippine Ambassador Ernesto De Leon sent a message and Lord Mayor John So proudly announced in his message the City of Melbourne approving BACNI for the 3 Year City Village Project.

Plaques of Appreciation were presented to the following in recognition of their dedicated community service to Filipino families in Victoria: **Organisations-**



Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong Inc (since 1983), Melbourne integrated Sports Club Inc (since 1976), Pilipino Elderly Association of South East Region Inc (since 1992), and Silayan Dance Academy (since 1970); **Individuals-** Adelia Gamat, Chito Javier, Christine Noveloso, Melissa Gamat, Mila Cichello, Norminda Villanueva, Peter Cichello, Roseanne Misajon, Sabina Riego- King and Susan Jaraba .

The BACNI Coordinating Committee is composed of: Chairperson- Mila Cichello; Vice chairperson- Chito Javier; Secretary- Melissa Gamat; Treasurer- Susan Jaraba, and Public Officer- Christine Noveloso.

BACNI sincerely thank the City of Melbourne and Victorian Multicultural Commission for their support, and to the following sponsors: Mercury Development, CGF Insurance, City Hearing, Feet First Podiatry, Smart Dentistry, Eclipse Acoustics, Philippine Tours, Jamieson Valley Retreat, John Alexander Enterprises, Stonehouse, La Select French Patisserie, Kabalen Filipino Take-away and Grocery, Nenette & Ted Facun, Roy & Zon Carbungco, Pio Lavilla and A. Pros Light & Sound. Special thanks to Pinoy TV, SBS Radio, Philippine Times and 3ZZZ Radio.



BACNI thanks the following performers for their generosity: Leonie Wenden, the Filipino Choir of St. Francis, PEASER, Silayan Dance Academy, Bernard and son Dranreb Soler, Bary Buckle and Zeny Wild for FAFAG, Miguel and Lucho Cornejo, and Grace Iwasaki.

Further information about BACNI and its activities are available on its website: www.bayanihanaustralia.org