

Filipino Australian volunteers shine at VMC Awards Night

Mila Cichello, Melbourne

(contact email: chairperson@bayanihanaustralia.org), 27 November 2009

The Victorian Multicultural Commission VMC presented Awards for Meritorious Service to community volunteers for outstanding contribution to their local communities at Victoria's Government House on 26 November 2009.

For the awardees particularly volunteers from rural areas, the evening was a public recognition for many years of quiet work providing support services to migrant men, women, elderly and multicultural families.

Barry Buckle, an Australian awardee who has been a committed volunteer for the multicultural Filipino Australian Friendship Association of Geelong Inc with his wife Irene for over 15 years, declared, "This is a happy moment for me and our members: the Filipinos, Australians, Dutch, Italian and other nationalities who use the Clubhouse. We all pitch in and do the work, regardless of where we were born because in small communities, we are all in the same boat".

Shirley Hart, receiving the Organisation award from Premier John Brumby for the **Filipino/Australian Association of Ballarat** said, "It is good to see rural clubs get recognised by government. This is the first time that we got an award". The association was formed in 1992 and provides services to the community in Central Highlands, Grampians and Hepburn Shire through cultural awareness at schools, churches and community centres and fundraising for various missions.

Lerma Valencic received the Organisation award on behalf of **Alay Kapwa (We Care) Association Inc**, established in 1991 as a Filipino –Australian non profit organisation to provide support to members and share Filipino culture with Australians in rural Gippsland.

Happily mingling with other recipients were **Thelma Davies**, awarded for her volunteer work with Gippsland's Filipino and multicultural community, and **Melba Marginson** for her advocacy work with immigrant and refugee women.

Gabby Ocampo and fellow volunteer **Maria Selga** were proud award recipients for their pioneering work with Centre for Philippine Concerns Australia (CPCA) and Radyo Kabayan 3CR radio.

Demetria Reyes (Nanay Metring) was recognised for her outstanding volunteer work with Filipino seniors in the Young Generation Filipino Senior Citizens Club based in Doveton.

"I am proud to be helping Filipinos who want to play basketball", said **Albert Abarquez**, an awardee for his sports contribution to young people in southern region of Melbourne.

Eusebio Riego (Tatay Sam) and **Nanay Laura Riego** each received an award for providing basketball training to multicultural youth in the western suburbs of Melbourne since 1976. "I remember when we first opened the doors of Melbourne Integrated Sports Club to Sudanese refugees a long time ago- I would teach them basketball but Nanay did the feeding and tough discipline", he reminisced with a laugh.

The wider community congratulates the recipient's for improving the life of Filipinos and ethnic communities living in Australia!