

Filipino Americans Donate to War on Graft - MabuhayRadio

Written by Tonette Orejas, as sent by the FUN Press Office

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CITY OF SAN FERNANDO, RP – Filipinos and Filipino-Americans in the United States have been donating dollars to support the drive against graft and corruption in the Philippines. A civil society group in Pampanga became their first beneficiary.

Started in December last year, the "\$1 Moral Crusade against Graft and Corruption" has already pooled \$9,000, according to Dr. Philip S. Chua, chair of the Filipino United Network (FUN) that began the online drive.

At least 1,000 Filipinos and Filipino-Americans gave \$1, \$25 or \$50 each. Among the donors were four Americans.

The names of the donors and details of the campaign are posted on www.filipinoUNITEDnetwork.com.

Turn Over

Dr. Chua arrived from the United States on Sunday and handed a check to the Kapampangan Marangal Inc. (Kami).

Kami, formed by election campaign volunteers of Gov. Eddie Panlilio, intends to use the FUN funds for organizing and training under its good citizenship program in Pampanga, said Averyll Laquindanum, its director.

Pampanga was chosen one of the recipients because the "moral leadership" of Panlilio, a Catholic priest on leave, provided a catalyst for new initiatives in anti-corruption efforts, Dr. Chua said.

"The Pampanga experiment can be a new dawn in our nation," Dr. Philip Chua said.

Governor Panlilio has changed the collection and regulatory systems in the quarry industry,

transforming it into a multimillion-peso revenue source. In almost seven months, revenues have reached P136.5 million.

The governor has also removed kickbacks in public projects by complying with national bidding law and policies.

New dawn

"The Pampanga experiment can be a new dawn in our nation," said Dr. Chua during Sunday's gathering of US-based Filipino leaders.

Part of the FUN donations will go to the housing and education programs of Gawad Kalinga, Chua said.

"Overseas Filipinos really love their country, but we are disappointed with our leaders because of pervasive graft and corruption. We want to see the transformation of our country as a nation and as a people," he said.

Several US-based organizations of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans have been gravitating toward Pampanga after the May 14, 2007 polls.

That was due in part to the Pampangan Crusaders USA (Pamagcusa), which has been helping civil society groups in Pampanga to establish networks abroad and offer help to what San Fernando Archbishop Paciano Aniceto called the "birthing of a new Pampanga." By that, Aniceto meant "uplifting the lives of poor Kapampangan."

"Our thrust is advancing good citizenship through volunteerism," Pamagcusa's Josie Castro said. "Our hearts belong to Pampanga and we want to contribute our bit in helping our people progress."

At Pamagcusa's invitation, Dr. Charlie Capati of Gawad Kalinga-US, Chiera Cruza of the Ayala Foundation-US, Elsa Bayani of Initiative 2010, and Dr. Primo Andres of the Filipino-American Leadership Council arrived here to connect with civil society leaders, Panlilio, and San Fernando Mayor Oscar Rodriguez.

Proud Filipinos

"To be able to say you're proud of being Filipino, you have to help back home and help bring about good changes in the lives of your fellow Filipinos," said Capati.

Elsa Bayani, a retired nurse, has promised to help in pushing issues involving children in conflict with the law.

Cruza said Panlilio and the Kapampangan's show of unity in the last elections had "inspired us."

"You have become the symbol of hope to many," she said. Her group offers a "way of giving back to the country."

Bayani, a retired nurse, has promised to help in pushing issues involving children in conflict with the law. "We are excited to help in Pampanga. We don't want children below 15 years old to be in jail," she said.

Andres, whose group was the prime mover in the protests against a racial slur aired in the sitcom "Desperate Housewives," looked at the Pampanga experience as a "shining example" in the Philippines.

Panlilio said good governance, as a program and goal, was not entirely new since several local officials had been trying to prove that it could be done in the last 20 years.

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"What is important is the participation of the people. They have to partake and contribute to peace and progress-building," he said. # # #

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