

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (jGLi) – “Mommy” Irene Emperado, an employee of Unimart on 5845 North Clark Street in the northside of Chicago, Illinois, was scratching her head when I placed an order over the phone for 22 pounds of *Galunggong* (mackerel) to be fried for the Christmas party of the Bikol U.S.A. of the Midwest last Sunday, Dec. 11.

But it was another director of our club, Dr. Dona L. Hernandez, who would be paying for the order. And yet there were two

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other members, Ben and Chit Ner, who were going to pick up the seafood.

I told Irene she should just keep still. We were not pulling a trick on her. It is just how teamwork and transparency work in a socio-civic organization. Everybody has to get involved no matter how trivial the part, including cleaning-up the place after the party, if you are the host of the party.

Nobody should be a prima donna in any organization if they want to make it strong. If there are burden sharing, everything becomes even lighter, especially the checkbook.

In fact, even if members were no-shows for the event, they even volunteer to contribute.

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Take for instance, my province mate, John Claridad, a Philippine lawyer of Bulan, Sorsogon. For the second time, John could not attend our party because our Christmas party coincided with the birthday party of his daughter. So, he told another, director, Miss Amor Saenz, from Sorsogon, Sorsogon that he will be contributing just the same for the expenses of members from Sorsogon of the club.

Even Nita Payos from Gubat, Sorsogon, was able to convince Salvacion "Sally" Expectation and Sally's sister, Lourdes Coloma, to chip in too, even if they were no shows.

COOPERATION AND CAMARADERIE

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This story of cooperation and camaraderie in an organization was in full display during the annual Christmas party of Bikol U.S.A.

of the

Midwest

headed by Ms. Evelyn R. Tolledo of Pandan, Catanduanes, as her whole family was involved in almost all facets during the party that was shared with Juzz Dance Club headed by Mr. Ed Cabanayan.

Evelyn's better half, Robert "Bob" Tolledo, a doctor of medicine (orthopedic surgeon) in the Philippines, who decided to run his own medical code billing company, Alert Solutions, LLC, in Chicago area, for a living, did not want to eclipse the role of his wife. But he bought \$500 worth hard drinks for the guests and parted with \$250 cash as gifts to children, during the gift-giving.

While Rocky Tolledo, one of the three children of Evelyn and Bob, was the photographer, Rocky's brother, Royce, donned Sta. Claus, complementing his Mom, who was dressed up as Mrs. Santa Claus also. Ronnel, the youngest, was busy giving

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away goodies to children, who were the envy of adults, for having lots of gifts, mostly cash.

But the officers of Bikol U.S.A. of the Midwest made sure that the kids, who were to get gifts had to take the hands of Lolo Norberto and Lola Irene Pagatpatan, parents-in-law of past president, Ayres Pagatpatan, and plant them on their foreheads. It is some trait that is running out of style, especially for overseas Filipino kids, who may not have *ninongs* (male sponsors) or *ninangs* (female sponsors) to turn to.

The John Ajena family seemed to take the cake when Jau and Jannae Ajena turned the party into a virtual “American Idol” contest while the Christopher Jones Family performed Michael Jackson footwork to the tune of Billy Jean.

But the adults led by Ed Cabanayan, disk jockey and master dance instructor, and Lilibeth Castagna, representing Masbate province, did not take it sitting down by giving “Dancing With The Stars” performers a run for their money with their fancy steps.

DANCING KEEPS THEM FROM FREEZING

If the party was a non-stop dancing, it had to because the social hall of St. Henry Church at 6335 North Hoyne in Chicago’s northside had no heater. If one were stationery, one could freeze.

The non-stop dancing was interrupted only when Evelyn Tolloredo told the crowd of over a hundred that the Bikol U.S.A. of

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the Midwest had donated \$1,000 for victims of Typhoon “Juaning” in Bato, Bula, Buhi and Nabua, Camarines Sur; \$300 for the completion of Divine Mercy Shrine and Carmelite Monastery of the Carmelite Nuns of the Holy Trinity (CNHT) in Kawakawa, Ligao City in Albay province; and another \$320 for a package of three kilos of rice with six pieces of Nissin Ramen and canned goods in each of the packages to about 150 indigent families last month in Bagamanoc and Pandan, Catanduanes, brought by club secretary Alice Llamas plus additional contribution of \$100 from Ray Galicia.

As PRO of the club, I was also tasked to announce some of its upcoming events for 2012. They are the Post-Valentine Party Fund Raising for Calamansi (*Citrofortunella microcarpa*) Tree Planting Project at \$35 per donation at Lone Tree Manor at 7730 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Niles, IL on Feb. 24; a trip to Our Lady of Snow in Belleville, IL from May 26-28; Hawaiian Luau Party on July 14 for \$10 donation; BNAA National Convention, Hyatt Regency, Dearborn, Michigan from July 20-22; Annual picnic on Aug 12 at Proesel Park at 7001 N. Kostner Ave., Lincolnwood, IL; Novena of Our Lady of Peñafrancia and Feast Day at St. Mathias Catholic Church at 2310 W. Ainsle St., Chicago, IL, Sept. 7-14; Golf Tournament Fund Raising at Big Oaks Golf Club & Country Club in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, Sept. 23; Halloween Party and Masquerade Ball, Oct. 17; and Bikol U.S.A of the Midwest Christmas Party and Election of

Officers, Dec. 16.

As PRO also of The Filipinos of St. Gregory headed by Dr. Dona L. Hernandez, I also announced the Simbang Gabi on Friday, Dec. 16, at 6 p.m. at St. Gregory The Great Parish Church at 5545 N. Paulina, Chicago.

Among the donors (mostly cash) to the Christmas party aside from Evelyn Tolledo, who also donated red and white wine, decorations and six bags of bread, were the Bikol USA of the Midwest, which spent \$500 for the food; the Stanley's Fruits which donated fruits; Alice Llamas, Toy Mancenido (cash), Dennis Alban (water/ice soda) and Ayres Pagatpatan (hotdogs) (past club presidents), Rosalle del Valle, Rick & Aida Joseph (chicken), Letty Costales, Gil Buena (vice president), Jess and Lilet Mante (*Arroz caldo*), Julie Buenafe, Julie Chavez, Naty Atienza and friends Sally Kagingin, Julia Estrada and Lisa Soriano (Sotanghon), Ben and Yoly Zoleta (balloons), Rico del Rosario (chicken curry), Lilibeth and Sam Castagna (gifts), the Tolledo children – Rocky (gift/photography), Royce and Ronnel; Mila Emocling (cash); Lura & Darlo Gonzales (cash); Pipo &

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Frances D. (*lechon kawali*), Romy Sarcilla (dessert), Cecile Manlapaz and Joel Basilio (*pancit*).

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