

Written by Marissa Acierto
Monday, 07 May 2012 09:59 -

By Marissa Acierto | SCCPress.com

BONITA, CA - Many individuals piled up in the room on the evening of April 27, 2012 for the All Groups United (AGU) Candidates Forum Meet and Greet on Friday at 6 p.m. It was held at the Bonita-Sunnyside Branch, San Diego County Library on 4375
Bonita Road
and over 100 attendees including 15 candidates and 1 representative.

The following 2012 candidates who attended and spoke were San Diego Mayoral Honorable Bob Filner; Greg Moody, Representative of San Diego Mayoral Honorable Carl DeMaio; Honorable Greg Cox, Board of Supervisor, District 1;
Mateo Camarillo, San Diego City Council, District 9; Honorable Long Pham, Ph.D., 72nd State Assembly (Orange County); Honorable Mary England, 79th State Assembly; Honorable Rudy Ramirez, 79th State Assembly; Pat Washington, Ph.D., 79th State Assembly; Honorable Shirley Weber, Ph.D., 79th State Assembly; David Berry, San Diego Superior Court Judge, Seat #24.

The candidates that were invited but did not show up due to conflicting schedules were San Diego Mayoral Honorable Bonnie Dumanis; San Diego Mayoral Honorable Nathan Fletcher; Honorable Marti Emerald, San Diego City Council, District 9.

The emcee who moderated professionally and had raved reviews was TV Reporter Melissa Mecija from KGTV Channel 10. Melissa Mecija joined the 10News team in July 2010. She reports on the latest traffic conditions during 10News This Morning. In the afternoon she reports on local news stories that impact San Diegans. She came to San Diego from KCBS/KCAL in Los Angeles
, where she covered her hometown of
Orange
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as a video journalist and web reporter. Prior to that, Melissa served as a reporter and fill-in anchor/weather forecaster for KSBY in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties. She covered several major wildfires in Santa Barbara County and numerous high-profile trials. Melissa began her broadcasting career as a reporter/weekend anchor for KYMA in El Centro, California / Yuma, Arizona

. Some of her most memorable stories in the Desert Southwest include skydiving with the U.S. Army Golden Knights, covering visits by former President George W. Bush, exploring underground drug tunnels, and reporting on former President Gerald Ford's funeral services. Melissa graduated from UC Irvine with an honors degree in political science and a degree in psychology. She volunteers with Big Brothers Big Sisters and is an active member of the Asian-American Journalist Association.

Reverend Emmanuel "Manny" Cabildo delivered the invocation. Manny was a former president of the Filipino-American Veterans Association and the co-founder of the Concerned Filipino-American Club of San Diego County (C FAC). Manny was one of the main organizers for the successful AGU Candidate Forum for 2012.

The musical instrument performers on the violin were one of the best youth talents in San Diego County: Chenelle Barrett (San Diego Youth Symphony); Leeann Hu; Kim Phan (San Diego Youth Symphony).

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Oscar Sa. Garcia, the current president and co-founder of the Concerned Filipino American Club (CFAC) headed the pledge of allegiance. Under Oscar's leadership as former president of COPAO, the legacy he leaves for the Filipino's in San Diego County is that they raised funds and negotiated to purchase the COPAO building in National City . It now stands as an epi-hub center for the Filipino-American Communities.

Another rising performer is Fresas Flores-Balistreri, who has mastered the art of being a songbird in the 2012 era. A talented performer who is the Regional Associate of Carnegie Hall Royal Conservatory "The Achievement Program" and as a Music Teacher for the La Jolla Conservatory of Music and a UC Berkeley Alumni.

The highlight of the evening was the candidates for the 51st Congressional District. It was the first time ever that all the 6 candidates accepted attendance: John Brooks II; Michael Crimmins; Honorable Denise Moreno Ducheny; Xanthi Gionis; Bernard Portley; Honorable Juan Vargas.

The candidates were asked questions, they answered and their time monitored by a timekeeper, Antonio Garcia.

Channel 10News awaited and stayed for at least two hours for the forum to begin and end. Preston Phillips, TV Reporter for Channel 10 expressed their views of the 51st Congressional Candidates. The televised and linked is noted below from the Channel 10's website.

Vargas Speaks On Debate-Ducking Allegations, Abortion Bill - San Diego News Story - KGTV San Diego

<http://www.10news.com/news/30971906/detail.html>

Denise Moreno Ducheny was in Washington, D.C., and arrived at the San

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Diego
International
Airport
on the same day at
6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Ducheny luckily made it to the forum even though she was several minutes late. It was still commendable. Meanwhile, all the other candidates were awaiting their other opponent, Ducheny.

Juan Vargas commented in one of his answers that he was not dodging any forum, he just wanted to have all the candidates to be at the forum not with two selective candidates of choice such as himself and Ducheny. He expressed good thoughts about candidates Michael Crimmins and respects him because he is a Veteran. He proudly said, "I am here and thanked the organizers for inviting everyone."

Meanwhile, Portley who has not attended a forum came out of the woodworks and made a comment that he was new at this. However, one expressed it was commendable that he attended and represented his stand on community issues.

Crimmins, Brooks and Xanthi felt very comfortable with the forum setting. A prominent African American individual felt that Xanthi had a strong deliverance and was a potential candidate. Vargas coming into the forum was like a Presidential election was beginning instead of a Congressional.

Reverend Cornelio "Corning" Evangelista delivered the closing remarks. He gave a spiritual prayer to end it for all candidates to be better leaders and to pursue the quest to help the community. Corning is presently the Director for Operation Samahan, a health clinic that started to assist Filipino immigrants and citizens. It now serves many multi-ethnic underserved communities. Corning is also an author and celebrity hilot (hilot is ancient Filipino art for healing) for actor Mario Lopez, Congressman and professional boxer Manny Pacquiao and many others.

The All Groups United thanked: The DJ Service of Mark Mon from www.3

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wisemendjs.com

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Moderator and Emcee Melissa Mecija; Channel 10News Team; the performers; Joe Long and James Cole (program); Oscar Sa. Garcia; Julio de Guzman; Emmanuel "Manny" Cabildo; Anita "Nitz" Willett; Mr. Willett; Antonio Garcia; Eddie Enriquez; Regina Ong-Garcia; Lydia Loristo; Veronica Garcia; Donard Cayabyab; Peggy Cayabyab; Maxine Sherard; Bob Crider and many others contributors.

The AGU's main mission is to "Build Coalitions, empower communities, educating, strengthening our communities."

HOSTS ORGANIZATIONS: Asian Community Luncheon (Serving since 2010) Co-founder: Joe Long and Julio de Guzman | Asian Journal San Diego (Traditional and Online Print Media, Events, Radio) (Serving since 1987)

Publisher: Sim Silverio; Managing Editor: Genevieve "Gen" Silverio and Santi Silverio | Concerned Filipino American Club of San Diego County (CFAC) (Serving since 2010) Co-founder: Oscar Sa. Garcia, Emmanuel "Manny" Cabildo, Eddie Enriquez, M. Acierto | Filipino American Veterans Association (FAVA) (Serving since 1930s) Secretary Emmanuel "Manny" Cabildo | Filipino Press (Traditional and Online Print Media, Events) (Serving since 1986) Publisher and Marketing Manager: Susan de los Santos
. Founder: Ernie Flores | Pagasa-Tumainisha-Esperanza-Hope Inc. (PTE-HOPE, Inc.), Filipino/API -African American-Latino-Caucasian/European American and Others, Diversity/Multicultural, Cultural Understanding (Serving since 2006) Vice President Maxine Sherard, Ph.D., Assistant Treasurer, Gerald Espiritu Co-founder: Maxine Sherard, Lydia Loristo, Eddie Enriquez, M. Camarillo, M. Acierto | Pampagueno Association of San Diego County (Serving since 1970's) President Troy Vargas;

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Former President Anita "Nitz" Willett; Current Board member
Former President Casimiro "Roy" Bautista | Pangasinan Association of San Diego County
(Serving since 1967) President Julio de Guzman, Executive Vice President Romy Crena
|Presidents Lions Club (Serving since 2006) President (Incoming) Neva Von Lato |
SCCPress.com; The Southern California Community News; Southern California Community
Press (Serving since 2006) Founder: Marissa Acierto; Co-Founder: 2011, Regina Ong-Garcia
and E. Enriquez | Vietnamese American Voters Alliance (Serving since 2010). Founder: Joe
Long | Women Esprit de Corps, (Serving since 1996)
President Sherry Hunter, Co-founder: Debbie Cruz and M. Acierto. # # #

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