

MAGAZINE FOR THE WELLINGTON FILIPINO COMMUNITY

KABAYAN

Summer 2013 (Dec 2013-Feb 2014) | Issue No. 4

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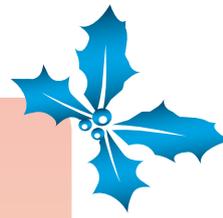
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Looking back, looking forward

What a year it's been.

With many recent events in the Philippines focusing on controversies and natural disasters, we can be forgiven for thinking it has been one of the worst years ever, surely one for the books.

Around the Filipino community, people have been talking about Napoles and her web of deception and corruption. The earthquake in Bohol was a big blow to our country. But bigger still was the havoc wreaked by typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda in the Philippines).

But out of these events we learned a few things. We are now more conscious of where the taxpayers' money goes. We are holding officials more accountable for their actions or inactions. For sure, we cannot control the forces of nature but we can control how we react to these. We experienced the global community's support with their immediate and ongoing response to the relief efforts after typhoon Haiyan.

Through all these challenges, we saw the Filipinos' true strength of character, resilience and compassion.

2014 is a new chapter in our country's history. With the same zeal and determination we showed the world this year, let us make things better and make things right.

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From left: Meia Lopez, Yno Ubaldo, Renzo Luiz (RL) Ubaldo and Matilde (Didith) Tayawa-Figuracion.

Congratulations to **Renzo Luis Ubaldo** for his winning entry in our Florante at Laura crossword puzzle competition. Thanks to KABAYAN magazine for donating the \$50 prize.

Dream big, start small.

Let's build our Filipino Community Hall in Wellington! Support the FilCom Centre Project.

To help, go to the Bulwagan Foundation Trust website

www.bulwagan.org.nz and check out the different fundraising programs (Adopt a Brick, Alkansya and pledges).



The Philippine Village
A concept today ...
... a reality tomorrow.



Auctioned items on display include signed Smart Gilas basketballs and t-shirts and various vouchers and products from the event sponsors.

FILIPINO COMMUNITY CENTRE PROJECT RELAUNCH

By: Flora Muriel Nogoy

The Bulwagan Foundation Charitable Trust relaunched the project on 14 September. Ms Nogoy explained the project's aims and goals and provided a detailed budgetary scenario for the funding required to establish the FCC. She stated that of the 120 "alkansiya" or native Filipino piggy-banks made of polished coconut shells donated by the Philippine Embassy, 80 alkansiya have found homes in the community and will be gathered and opened in due time. BFT thanked those who so generously donated goods, cash and services such as Ambassador Virginia H. Benavidez who donated NZ\$1,000 and the Philippine Embassy Officers and Staff who donated NZ\$1,000 collectively, as well as Mr. Ed Ocampo who initially donated goods

from Plumbing World worth NZ\$5,000 and then doubled it to NZ\$10,000. BFT Trustees also pledged the sum of \$3,000 between them as did the NZ Philippine Society which pledged \$1,000

An auction during the evening raised \$2,395.00 and a further \$1,725.00 was raised in ticket sales. Bayley's Real Estate Lower Hutt adopted 2 bricks at \$200 as did Sheryl Devadhar (one brick at \$100) and Robert and Suzie Holt (one brick at \$100). Jenny Chan Grace of Auckland donated \$500, raising a total of \$21,020 in donations, pledges and goods. Cash generated at the launch was \$6,620.

PINOY SHOOTS

By: Meia Lopez with Inag Alamani

Every year, the Christian Revival Centre holds a mini olympics sports day. It involves various sports and parlour games where one of the highlights of the day is a game called "Eliminate the Amalekites."

Inag Alamani initiated and organised this game. "Eliminate the Amalekites" was a basketball free throw shootout with a spiritual connotation wherein one team has to completely wipe out the opposition by a process of elimination through making free throws.

Last September, with the support of Barangay Karori Filipinos, the game was featured in St Teresa's School Spring Fair. Inag registered the game as an invention and to gained intellectual property rights for its new name Pinoy Shoots.

Pinoy indicates its state of origin (created by Filipinos). Shoots has a double meaning in New Zealand referring to both a basketball act and kids/children/offsprings. It is designed to be a game for all kids.

Anyone who wants to know or use the royalty-free game as a school or fund raising activity can email Inag at pinoyshoots@gmail.com. You can find its background, rules and upcoming Pinoy Shoots events on Facebook. Check it out: <https://www.facebook.com/pinoy.shoots>.



Inag (right) with Third Secretary and Vice Consul Glenn Joseph Q. Obach at the opening ceremony of Pinoy Shoots.



Marinette Alamani giving it a go.



Dancing the Tinikling requires a lot of concentration.



Anna Te at the cooking station making their own halo-halo. Yummy!

FILCEP FED DAY A SUCCESS

By: Anna Nicola Goldie Te

On Sunday, 13 October, the Philippine Embassy hosted the first Filipino Language and Culture Enrichment Program (FILCEP) Fun and Educational day at "Ang Bahay". Led by Her Excellency Virginia H. Benavidez, Consul Arlene Macaisa and the FILCEP teachers, kids from 5 to 18 years old (including myself) enjoyed a fun-filled day learning about our culture. We attended workshops such as arts and crafts (*Parol* making), Filipino dances (tinikling) and the Facebooth where we dressed up in Filipino costumes and had our photos taken. We made and ate some of our culture's favourite food like palitaw and halo-halo, which were perfect for the hot weather. We also listened to a favourite Filipino story - **The Monkey and the Tortoise**, by Dr Jose Rizal. Everyone, even the

parents, enjoyed the Filipino games including the *pupok pabalik* and the *pabitin*.

The day was filled with smiles and laughter, and with lots of delicious food prepared by the Philippine Embassy cooks. The Filifest dancers, Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) kids and other selected Filipino performers entertained us in the afternoon program, which showcased true Filipino talent.

It was a great success, and from the looks on people's faces, you could tell they all had an enjoyable time. This made the last day of the school holidays truly memorable.



Hamming it up for the camera.

LAUGHING OUT LOUD SA WELLINGTON

By: Shellah Kavinta

Laughing out loud sa Wellington - COMEDY meets MUSIC was held on Saturday, 16 November at the Sacred Heart College auditorium in Lower Hutt. It was a Filipino music-comedy show featuring three awesome and seasoned comedians, impersonators and singers from the Philippines: Jeffrey Tan (aka Justin), Russel Lim (aka Russelicious) and Edward Vallespin (aka Peanut).

The evening kicked off with performances from Rowena Echano, Paulo Canlas and the Afterglow Arcade. This was followed by sketches and gags

that had the audience nearly rolling on the floor laughing.

One of the highlights of the show was an international beauty pageant sketch where Peanut impersonated contestants during the parade of nations.

It was the cheapest BOTOX in town that night! The three artists captured the Pinoy optimism, energy and good humour.

Justin, Peanut and Russel brought the house down with their crazy antics.

BRGY STA TERESA CELEBRATES FIESTA

By: Cristina Torres

The Karori Filipino community successfully celebrated the feast of its patron saint, St. Teresa, on 5 October. It was a time to meet and connect with Filipinos living in the western suburbs.

It was a beautiful day, and the festivities went on with over 150 attendees from Makara, Northland, Wilton, Kelburn, Karori, and other barangays. The fiesta started with a procession led by Father Seph (Parish Priest, St. Teresa's Church, Karori) around St. Teresa's Parish. This was followed by a Holy Mass concelebrated by Fr Dennis (newly ordained Filipino priest from Lower Hutt) and Fr Seph.

The crowd was treated with mouth-watering Filipino delicacies and a fine musical performance of Ukelele from Munting Tinig (represented by Lexie, Karryle, Kayla, and Miriam). Traditional Filipino games such as 'pukpok palayok at pabitin' were played to the delight of the children. Other games like the 'human scavenger hunt' were introduced to get to know people from our

barangay. The event ended with 'PINOY bingo' where the winning pattern became increasingly difficult and the pot money became bigger and bigger (thanks to a generous sponsor) up to the final round (popularly called 'black-out' in the Philippines). Raffle prizes were also given out to lucky winners – thanks to our loyal sponsors.

Special guests at the event included Arlene Gonzales-Macaisa (First Secretary and Consul) and other Philippine embassy officials. It was truly a remarkable afternoon, a time to rejoice, unite with our kababayans and friends, and reconnect with our Filipino heritage.

For the success of the celebration, we thank the Lord Almighty.

PISTANG PINOY SA ROTORUA

By: Susana So

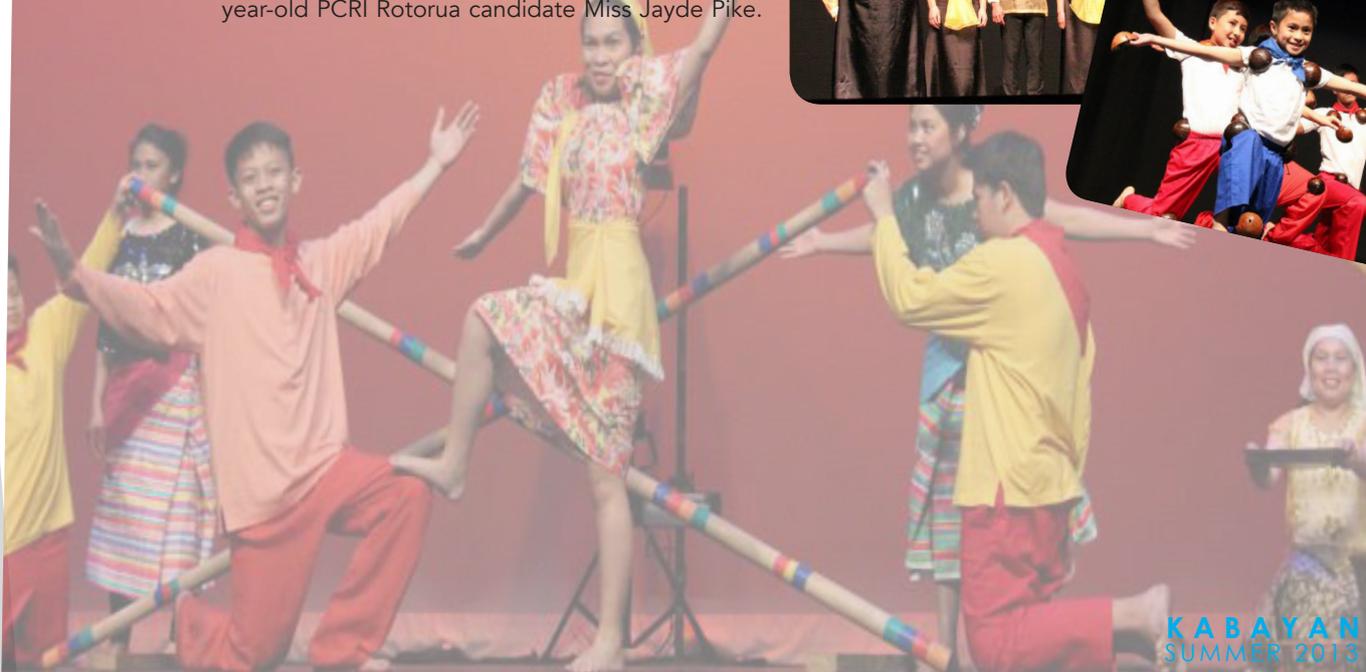
The Federation of Filipino Associations, Societies and Clubs in New Zealand Inc. (FFASCNZI) presented Pistang Pilipino 2013 sa Rotorua on the 26th and 27th of October. The Philippine Club of Rotorua Inc hosted the event, which was proudly sponsored by Western Union.

The two-day Filipino Labour Weekend festival featured eight sport tournaments, a Filipino Regional Ethnic Dance (FRED) Competition, the Miss Philippines-New Zealand 2013 Beauty Pageant. Visitors were treated to a 2-day feast at the Filipino market, a Photo Exhibition and a Thanksgiving Concert. The FFASCNZI held its Annual General Meeting and the Philippine Embassy provided its Mobile Consular Services team led by Ambassador Virginia H. Benavidez.

The Miss Philippines-New Zealand 2013 winner is 18 year-old PCRI Rotorua candidate Miss Jayde Pike.

Visit facebook.com/PistangPilipino2013Rotorua for details of winners in various tournaments and competitions at the event.

Fifteen FFASCNZI affiliated Filipino clubs participated. Approximately 3,500 people attended and enjoyed the festival.



KAPITI COASTERS GET ACTIVE

By: Mayie Pagalilauan

Sports has always been an avenue for people to mingle and connect. For us Filipinos who are away from our homeland, sports activities offer a bit of respite from work and it also allows kababayans to get more connected.

Up here in the Kapiti Coast, various sporting activities such as basketball, badminton and bowling allow Filipinos to get together and bond as a community. The badminton group has been established early this year to cater to the need for a physically active event that both adults and children can participate in during weekends. These different sports activities are organised by the Kapiti Coasters Filipino Sports and Social Club.

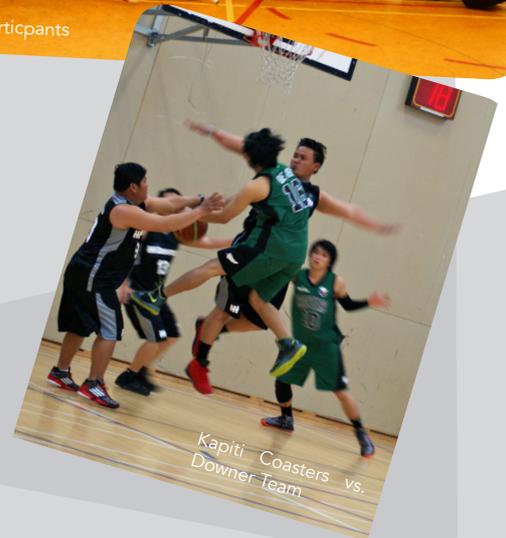
Apart from joining the Filipino games held in Rotorua this year, another highlight for the sport groups at the coast is the friendly invitational games hosted by the basketball and badminton groups last October. Players from Wellington, Hutt Valley, Levin, and Palmerston North joined the Kapiti Coasters for a day of fun.

For the Kapiti Coasters, the various sports activities have been promoting a fun way for Filipinos to improve their mental, physical, and social well-being. As one parent who plays badminton with

her seven-year old child quips, "This is good. Hindi lang pang-sports kundi pang-pamilya pa."



Badminton Tournament Participants



Kapiti Coasters vs. Downer Team

WELLINGTON SENDS ATHLETES TO PISTANG PINOY SA ROTORUA

By: Ruth Majito-Pacia and Noel Bautista

Proving the eternal truism that participation is as essential as victory in all of sports, our town's perennial standard bearers Wellington Filipino Sports Association or WFSA sent teams and competitors in nearly all team and individual events at the recently concluded Labour Weekend Pistang Pinoy sa Rotorua.

The Wellington Filipino community was well represented in basketball, badminton and golf, particularly in basketball where WFSA fielded teams in the Open (three teams), Legends, Under 19, Under 15 and Under 13 teams. The Legends Team did Wellingtonians proud by emerging Champion, while WFSA Team 1 finished a strong first runner up in the Open side.

Wellington also had 4 teams in Volleyball. WFSA filled up a team roster each in the Men's and Women's events and two team rosters in the Mixed category. Golf had six players, with Fr Raymond Soriano finishing first runner up in the Individual Stableford and WFSA also finishing first runner up in the Team Stableford.

Wellington was proud to send a wealth of warriors in Badminton, where Angela Tuason finished gold in the Under 20 Youth Girls Singles. She teamed up with Alyssa Ponte to also finish gold in the Youth Girls Doubles. In the Women's Open Doubles it

was Sheila Astronomia and Kristina Ponte's turn to shine, finishing champions, while Mark Laranang was No. 1 in the Masters Singles event.

To our champions and everybody who participated, mabuhay kayong lahat!



Wellington Legends emerge as Champions in the highly charged basketball arena in Rotorua.



Helping friends in need, Legend.

An open letter to our friends

To our dear New Zealand friends,

Typhoons, earthquakes and floods - we get them all. In fact, more than our fair share of them too. We know how to brace ourselves for them. But typhoon Haiyan's (Yolanda in the Philippines) off-the-chart strength was just too much to bear.

Overnight the beautiful idyllic coastal towns and cities in the Visayas provinces including Leyte, Samar, Cebu, Bohol, Aklan, Negros and Palawan were reduced to a wasteland. Houses simply disappeared, trees were left only with their trunks and sadder still, lifeless bodies laid everywhere.

The trauma, sadness and pain are written on the survivors' faces. Even at 8,300 kilometres away, we feel their pain.

While this is a story of a catastrophe, it is also a story of global unity and compassion. International support is helping turn chaos into order, imminent death into life and despair into hope.

Have you heard of the Filipino term Bayanihan? It comes from the word bayan, meaning town or city but we use it to mean our country as well. Bayanihan means communal unity, spirit and cooperation. It means supporting each other and helping out where you can.

The long enduring image of Bayanihan is that of people lifting a nipa hut, a traditional Filipino house made of bamboo which stands on stilts. In the olden days, when you moved house, you literally moved the house. The whole community including neighbours and friends helped carry the house to its new location. Help was given freely and although it was hard work, the mood was cheerful.

Living in New Zealand has proven to us that the spirit of Bayanihan is alive and well in the Filipino community. If you need to move to a new house, you can ask friends to come and help you move - just your things this time, not including the house. When someone dies in the community, the whole community mourns with the family.

Typhoon Haiyan has brought the Filipino community together again. Fundraising efforts from the Philippine Embassy, the Federation of Filipino Associations, Societies and Clubs in New Zealand Incorporated (FFASCNZI), local Filipino organisations, group of friends and individuals have been enormous.

But you know what? The Bayanihan spirit is prevalent in New Zealand too. It is humbling and heart-warming to see the overwhelming financial, medical and spiritual support that New Zealanders have extended to Filipinos. While many watched the whole catastrophe play out on television in shock, others were already planning to help - from school mufti days, bake sales and garage sales to companies matching funds raised by its employees dollar for dollar and Campbell Live initiating instant donations to UNICEF by texting Hope to 3181.

Thank you very much for helping friends (and strangers) in need. Legend.

Kabayan Team

BANGON PILIPINAS



CAUGHT IN Haiyan's Path

Matilde talked with three members of the Filipino community about their families' ordeal when typhoon Haiyan slammed into the Visayas region in the early morning of November 8.

By: Matilde Tayawa-Figuracion

Jasmine Alcazar Donaldson, Newlands, Wellington

Jasmine's maternal relations are from Barangay San Joaquin, Palo, Leyte. Although she was not brought up in her mom's birthplace, she was horrified to hear her uncle's (her mom's brother) and his family's ordeal during Typhoon Haiyan. Jasmine's uncle and a cousin are the only survivors in their family with five members (her grandmother, two great-aunts and children) confirmed dead and another five, still missing.

Where to next?

Her Uncle is now in Manila and is not keen to go back to San Joaquin any time soon. Her 16-year old cousin who lost his mom and three siblings is very traumatised and distraught. Her appeal is to provide immediate psychiatric treatment to those with traumatic experiences.

This is her story:

There was a warning about 'sea surge' but nobody knew what it meant. Since they are used to typhoons, they thought that their concrete house could withstand the typhoon. So the whole family – my uncle, my Lola (grandmother), my Lola's two sisters, my cousins and two other families took refuge in my uncle's home. The strong wind battered the roof then came three big waves. When the first wave rushed in, my uncle was holding my Lola's hands but during the second wave, everyone was swept away and sucked out through the roofless house. My uncle lost grip of Lola's hand. Fortunately for my uncle, he was able to hold on to the mango tree but the others were not as lucky. Of those who took refuge in his house, my uncle was the only survivor. The other survivor was my 16 year old cousin who was in Tacloban City at that time. Their house was totally destroyed and they had no food for three days. They had to dig out for food from the dirt and rubble. My uncle walked to Tacloban for three hours but returned to San Joaquin when he found out that Tacloban was also devastated. He was so traumatised that my relatives from Manila found him distraught and sitting motionless in one of the gasoline stations.

Jean Raga, Johnsonville, Wellington

Jean is from Tacloban City, once a vibrant city of more than 200,000 people, it now lies in ruins. Her mother, brother and his three children, two of her first cousins and their respective families have all experienced the wrath of Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda in the Philippines).

Where to next?

Two weeks from the onslaught of Typhoon Haiyan, Tacloban City is starting to rebuild. However, there are a number who left Tacloban and are now in Cebu or in Manila. In fact, her cousins are not keen to return to Tacloban City. She has a number of friends who want to return but they don't have a place to return to.

Her appeal is to provide temporary accommodation to those whose houses were destroyed so that they can return back to their employment and start a normal life.

This is her story:

When the water was waist-deep, my relatives left their home and took refuge in a 3-story commercial property in Tacloban City. They stayed there during the height of the typhoon. Luckily, the property withstood the torrential rain and strong winds. Huddled together for over five hours, they were oblivious to what had happened around the city.

Here in Wellington, we waited anxiously for news from our family. I asked my brother-in-law who lived in a non-affected area in Samar to check on my mother, brothers and extended family in Tacloban and bring them some food. As some of the roads were impassable, my brother-in-law had to walk 2-3 hours to Tacloban City where he found all my relatives safe in the building. The food he brought for them was a welcome gift.

My brother's house was totally destroyed while that of my mother was partially destroyed.



Wynda Balmadrid, Johnsonville, Wellington

Wynda grew up in Guiuan, Eastern Samar. She has fond memories of this beautiful place she calls home, a peninsular town that is perched at the end of Eastern Samar facing the Pacific Ocean. She remembers fondly the 16th century Immaculate Concepcion Church, her school, the copra (dried coconut meat for making coconut oil) and commercial fishponds and of course the beautiful beaches and seashore.

All these were ravaged by Typhoon Haiyan when it hit the Central Philippines and caused unimaginable destruction to life, property and emotions of millions of people. She is shattered by the devastation of her hometown as accounted to her by her family members. For three days, she did not hear from her family.

This is her story:

My aunt and first cousins still live in Guiuan. My Tita (Auntie) told me that during the typhoon, they were battered by 340kms per hour of wind for 4-5 hours. After the typhoon, all that was left of their house were the stairs and the bathroom where the whole family ducked for cover. Fortunately, my aunt is a wholesaler of rice so they had rice to eat for a few days when relief goods were nowhere in sight. What was unfortunate was that four days after the typhoon, some survivors - hungry and desperate - ransacked her store. Her livelihood was gone in a flash.

International aid could only reach Guiuan by air because many roads were impassable.



Where to next?

Her aunt and cousins have started building a temporary kitchen. One of her cousins who is a seaman is scheduled to board his ship. His income would be their only hope to rebuilding their family home. She appeals to the government and international aid to focus on supporting fishing, the main livelihood of the people. Another is to perhaps provide coconut seedling for replanting with the hope that after 10 years, this will reap their fruits from these trees. She reckons, it will take a very long time for her hometown to recover but she is hopeful that things will turn out for the better.



CEBU

A province with a rich history and a very bright future.

By: **Matilde Tayawa-Figuracion**

Did you ever wonder where the word "Cebu" comes from? There is an anecdote (I'm not sure how true) that the word "Cebu" was coined by some Spanish soldiers in the early 16th century when they chanced upon some native Cebuanos melting animal fat and wax to make candles. The story goes that the soldiers asked the natives the name of the place but the natives mistakenly thought they were asked what they were doing in Spanish. So they answered: Sebo! (which means animal fat). And so, the Spaniards began calling the island Cebu.

Whether this anecdote is true or not, one thing is for sure, Cebu is a cosmopolitan city with a very rich history dating back to the early 16th century. It also has many historical firsts. It is the first chartered city in the Philippines. It is also the first Christianised city in the Philippines. The Basilica Minore del Sto Nino (Church of the Holy Child) is the first built in the islands and features the country's oldest relic, the figure of the Santo Nino de Cebu (Holy Child of Cebu). University of San Carlos Cebu is the oldest university in the Philippines and in Asia.

Cebu is one of the most developed provinces in the Philippines. It is a global hub for furniture making, tourism, business and shipbuilding. The real estate industry is now the fastest-growing sector in Cebu. It is a significant cultural centre in the Philippines, which hosts the Sinulog, the biggest festival in the Philippines.

Due to its burgeoning furniture-making industry, Cebu has been named as the furniture capital of the Philippines.

And who has not heard of the Lumanog guitars and the dried mangoes from Cebu?

It is also interesting to note that 80% of domestic and international shipping operators and shipbuilders in the Philippines are located in Cebu. This has given the Philippines the 4th largest shipbuilding industry ranking in the world.

With many beautiful islands, white sand beaches, luxury hotel and resorts, diving locations and heritage sites, high domestic and foreign tourist arrivals have fuelled the tourism industry of Cebu. Cebu consistently gets a big share of tourist arrivals in the Philippines. It has become the tourist gateway to Central and Southern Philippines due to its central geographic location, accessibility and natural resources.

With its central location and being the gateway to Leyte Province, Cebu is now the hub of the relief and rescue operations for national and international aid that are helping with the devastation caused by super Typhoon Haiyan that hit the central Philippines on 8 November.



San Pedro Kalunsoy chapel



a holiday home in Cebu



an old house in Colon St. (oldest street in Cebu)

Kakanin on kinoy Christmas

Sweet rice desserts will always have a special place at the Pinoy Christmas table.

By: Judith Balares Salamat

You start organising a barbecue party by the beach or by the backyard and one inevitably senses that it is summer time here in New Zealand. It is time for outdoors, time for friends and family gathering, time for still-sunny-9 pm days and Daylight Saving Time (DST), and of course, time for a Christmas celebration not in front of the fairy-tale fireplace but by your favourite park or lagoon, around familiar faces, your compatriots, commonly called kabayans. While we converge around each other perhaps with a Christmas tree stuck on the beach sand, we inevitably remember and reminisce our beloved families back home in the Philippines. Then we recall our fun and laughter after Misa de Gallo (midnight masses from the 16th of December until Christmas Eve), while buying some puto bumbong or kalamay from the church patio vendors. Who can't possibly recall the colourful array of kakanins sold by our *suki* every Misa de Gallo?

“it is a must for special occasions like Christmas”

Kakanin, this generic and coined term for these sweet, sticky, glutinous rice-based and coconut-milk/cream laced snack dishes, it is a MUST for special occasions like Christmas. Etymologically derived from “pagkain” (food) and “kanin” (rice), this type of food also connotes that it is filling because, though it is not considered part of the main meal, it is rich and flavourful and can be a part of or independent from, the main menu. It fills the stomach because its main ingredient is carbohydrate-laden glutinous/sticky rice (malagkit), then coconut milk and cream (and sometimes, grated and toasted coconut flesh for toppings, and of course, the sugar base, cane sugar, honey, or *panocha* (hardened version of sugar).

This bounty of snacks and desserts on the table on Christmas certainly shows the Malaysian and Polynesian influence (Kwan, Paul, Anatomy of Springroll) in the Filipino cuisine. Despite the younger generations' fondness of spaghetti and other sorts of pasta and sandwiches, the older generations' passion for these sticky/creamy dishes still dominate and show the natural and cultural influences of Southeast Asian cuisine in



the Filipino dessert and snack menus. More so, the bountiful coconut resources of almost all over the parts of the Philippine islands, especially in the northern Luzon region, demonstrate the array of tupig of the North Ilocandia, the *espasol* of Lucban, and the *suman* and *biko* of Bicol. The rich harvest of coconuts in these provinces also pairs with the bountiful resources of sugarcane in other parts of the islands such as Pampanga and Tarlac.

These *kakanins* usually have no exact measurements unlike the Western way of mixing and thereby cooking. The cooks generally have to be ingenious in adding the right sugar and waiting for the right consistency of the syrup so as not to spoil the topping for *biko*. Hence, the cooks have to be adept at getting the right taste and mixture to produce an effective recipe.

Imagining now of these *kakanins*? Why not order your favourite *kutchinta* or *kalamay* from your *suki* or rush to the grocery or favourite Asian store and buy your ingredients for *biko*? I bet it's a challenge if you can find the raw (not canned or boxed) ingredients. Meanwhile, we just have to be content with what we can have and use, to at least simplify or duplicate our own version of kakanin Kiwi experience. As what culinary-cum-theatre critic Doeen G. Fernandez put it in her essay-book, *Tikim*, “Savor the word (kakanin). Swallow the world.”



Diamond in the sky

A unique Filipino decoration for the season of hope and love.

By: Auie Robrigado

Parol? Growing up, it has never been the centre of our Christmas decorations. I thought it was just a Filipino Christmas lantern, a mere star decoration with too much blinking lights and crazy colours that don't really go together. Maybe it is. But there's more to it than just pieces of Japanese paper on a bamboo stick. There's a story behind the *parol*.

The *parol* is a unique symbol of a Filipino Christmas. Every time I see a *parol* hanging from a window, I feel as if it screams an announcement at me. As if saying, "Christmas is here!" quite loudly over repeated Christmas tunes. With recurring dancing lights, or bright colours, who's going to miss the message at all? Whenever you see a *parol*, it is pretty obvious Christmas has arrived even if it's still Halloween in other parts of the world.

Just where does the word *parol* come from anyway? If you want to be technical about it, it comes from the word '*farol*', a Spanish term for lantern. Many years ago it served as a guide to the churches for the daily Misas de Aguinaldo (Christmas masses) commonly known as Simbang Gabi. On a spiritual note, it was originally intended to glorify God, proudly displayed as a symbol of the dedication of the people to faithfully attend mass. Either way, the *parol* is an essential part of a Filipino Christmas tradition. It is seen everywhere in the country from the humblest of homes to the palatial ones. In fact, it has become a festival during the "-ber" months of the year – September, October, November and December – with the mid-December serving as its highlight. The town of San Fernando, Pampanga holds a Giant Lantern Festival the weekend before Christmas where the biggest, brightest and most elaborate *parols* are on show. Businesses and shop fronts in the country get into the festive spirit by displaying *parols* of different designs, sizes, style and materials. Even manang sa karinderya has a little one hanging by her stall.

Most *parols* are made of Japanese paper on assembled bamboo sticks. Traditionally, light from a coconut oil lamp or a candle enhanced its light colours. These days, Filipinos are more creative than ever with their materials, using cellophane and even shells from Capiz, a province in the Western Visayas region of the Philippines. Copper wires hold the body, which allow a more elaborate design. For its illumination, Filipinos have gone electric to give a much brighter and safer twinkle to their *parols*.

Parols are a symbol of faith too. Its colours and brightness speaks of a story that goes way back two thousand years ago. Oh right! The story! Well, here's how it goes.

Once upon a time, there were three kings searching for a newborn baby. Each of them had a gift to offer the child. But, they were lost and could not find their way. Alas! A star appeared. It was so bright, it twinkled like a diamond in the sky. It pointed them towards Jerusalem, to a manger where the King of all kings, Jesus, was born.

Have a lovely Christmas!

image sources:

<http://www.myparol.com/>

<http://www.dopaminejunkie.org/christmas-ornaments/>

<http://charmiecharmie.wordpress.com/>

<http://kapisanancentre.com/>



Maligayang Pasko!



Lest we forget, Tatay Rene reminds us why we celebrate Christmas.

By: Reynirio Sto. Domingo



*Itong aking isip ay mintis na yata
sa gawang tulaing laging ginagawa.
Paos na marahil, parang nahihiya
wala sa ensayo, di maka-ugaga.*

*Subalit ang diwa ay para bang niyog
kapag kinakatas mo, gata ang aagas.
Kaya ang tulain ay paikot-ikot
biglaang lalabas, tulang maalindog.*

*Ngayo'y magpapasko, dapat na ilahad
ang isang salaysay, pulido na ganap.
Mainam na paksa dahil sa palasak
mga nakaraan, kuwento at alamat.*

*Sa araw na ito, pinaka-dakila
alam na ng lahat, bata at matanda.
Jesus kaarawan, na siyang nagsimula
na kanyang tinubos ang sala ng madla.*

*Isang babanggitin ay kung kuripot ka
alisin mo ito, at hindi maganda.
Kung may B.O. katabi, bigyan ng Rexona
bilang aginaldo, sa Paskong masaya.*

*Dahil Kapaskuhan, itong pagdiriwang
sa kilos at gawa, liligayang tunay.
Mabuhay! Mabuhay, madlang katauhan
kaya't palakpakan huling kahilingan.*

*Itong aking tula, ngayon lang ginawa
kaya pasensiyahan, kung kulang ang diwa.
Ang hangad ko lamang, dahil sa makata
ay makapaghandog, kahit isang tula.*

*Paalam sa inyo aking tatapusin
Panauhin dito at kabayan giliw.
Pagdamutan ninyo ang aking tulain
Magandang araw po, Merry Christmas na rin!*



Christmas Wishes

Brent talks to members of our community to find out what their Christmas wishes are.

By: Brent Bautista

Christmas decorations are out. Christmas carols are playing and everywhere you turn, you can't help but feel that Christmas is indeed just around the corner. Sales and free gift wrapping can be almost everywhere, for Christmas is the season of giving and sharing. But what is the meaning of Christmas for us Filipinos? To say that we love Christmas and all the things it brings with it is an understatement.

Christmas brings along with it emotions of joy or happiness and the spirit of sharing and giving, it makes us wish. Here are the wishes of Filipino Wellingtonians.



Joey Moreno, 22,
Johnsonville

I wish that everyone would learn how to respect each other - where everyone would be happy for who you are and what you believe in. I think that respect for one another provides peace to our daily lives. So I hope that Santa Claus would drop it in our chimney this Christmas.

My Christmas wish goes to my fellow countrymen who are trying to rebuild their lives after the devastation of the super typhoon Haiyan, may they find strength and comfort through the presence of each other's helping hand. Bangon Pilipinas!



Dm Garcia, 25,
Petone, Lower Hutt



Regine Panlilio,
25, Newlands

My eternal Christmas wish is for a final enlightenment age to come, wherein we can look past all our worldly differences or man-made divisions and just see each other through relentless love and pure faith in humanity's beautiful yet humble existence.

My Christmas wish - a day off for myself somewhere in the Bahamas.



Maria Agustin, 24,
Johnsonville



Krizzia Fernandez,
20, Mt. Victoria

I want a puppy for Christmas.

I wish that the typhoon victims, most especially the kids, feel the happiness that the Christmas season can bring despite the unfortunate events that happened.



Pao Montenegro, 24,
Johnsonville



Zammerly Zamudio,
45, Vogeltown

This Christmas, I wish for the prompt recovery and rebuilding of the communities affected by typhoon Haiyan. I also wish that this tragedy would awaken the Filipino people to discern and vote for those who are sincerely concerned for their welfare and capable of improving their lives in the next election.

My wish this Christmas is to be reunited with my family back in the Philippines and spend the holidays with them.



Margaret Calvelo, 21,
Churton Park



Regine Payumo, 24,
Newlands

In these dire times, my wish is for everyone to have the Christmas they deserve.

Super cheesy but I wish everyone HAPPINESS this Xmas. :)



Brent Bautista, 18,
Vogeltown

This Christmas I wish that in the near future humanity can achieve a balance; a balance between the ones who are in need and the ones that can give, a balance in what we produce and what we consume, a balance between giving love and receiving love.



Josine Briones, 22,
Johnsonville

Christmas in the Philippines vs Christmas in New Zealand

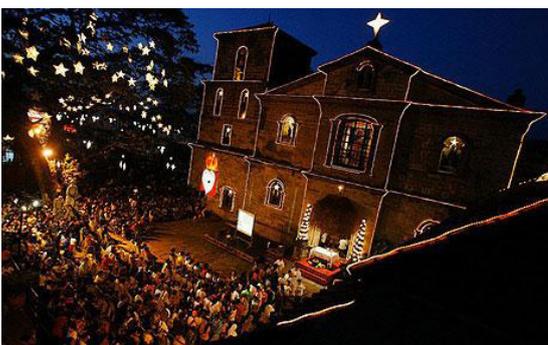
It's hard not to miss Christmas in the Philippines. But the laid back celebrations here could be just what we need.

By: Bianca Villarante

As a young child, I always thought that the Christmas season was celebrated the same way all over the world. Growing up in Quezon City, Philippines, I observed parols of various sizes hung outside people's windows, with bright, twinkling and colourful Christmas lights entwined around their houses. I heard Christmas carols being played in shopping malls and on the radio as early as September. Being younger then, I most looked forward to the presents and the delicious Noche Buena that Mom prepared -- and glazed ham was never left out of the menu.

I remembered Christmas to be the most festive holiday in the Philippines, and people didn't hesitate to make it big. Shopping malls, streets and houses were lit up with decorations and bright Christmas lights. In our house, the Christmas tree and other Christmas decorations would be taken out of storage and put up as early as November. There were years when these wouldn't be taken down until February the following year. There were parties to attend, gifts to exchange with classmates and friends, shopping to be done in the jam packed malls and a two-week break from school.

On Christmas eve, our kitchen would be abuzz with activity the whole day while Jose Mari Chan's Christmas album played repeatedly in the background (thanks to my mom) to get us in the mood. Our relatives would come and after attending the Midnight Mass, we would all partake of the delicious food for Noche Buena. There would be singing, games and of course, exchanging of gifts. As a little kid, I mostly anticipated opening my presents. Then on Christmas Day, I would wake up to more presents from "Santa". This festive mood would last until New Year and the first week of January, when we would all go back to school.



"I remembered Christmas to be the most festive holiday in the Philippines"

After we migrated to New Zealand in 2009, it didn't take long for me to realize that the Kiwi Christmas is celebrated in a subtler and sort of muted manner. Some would put up Christmas trees but there are no over-the-top Christmas decorations and definitely no Christmas carols as early as September. In school, not everyone is thrilled at the idea of a Secret Santa. Christmas parties and exchanging of gifts are not something that everyone looks forward to. The lack of festive atmosphere and anticipation for Christmas was something that made me lonely at first. It felt like Christmas was just like any other holiday in New Zealand.



Another thing that's different is we have Christmas during the New Zealand summer! People would turn on the barbie (barbecue grill) on Christmas Day. If it's a hot day, like it was last year, most Kiwi families and their friends would spend Christmas at the beach.

Nonetheless, Christmas is a special time for everyone regardless of how it is celebrated. It is a time when families and friends get together. Our family, just like many Filipino families in New Zealand, still maintains the Christmas tradition of Simbang Gabi and Noche Buena although Christmas decorations are no longer mandatory around the house -- only when my mom feels like doing it. Somehow being away from my home country made me realize that family is the most important thing during Christmas -- not the decorations, food and presents. The fact that we couldn't have grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins and other extended family makes it lonely, but at the same time, it was all the more reason for my dad, mom, brother and I to stay together and celebrate the best time of the year as a family!

Aotearoa: Land of Opportunities

How A Move Into New Zealand Changed Me



By: Ephraim Gazo

Aotearoa New Zealand truly is a land of opportunities. As I look back at the nearly 10 years of my life spent living here in New Zealand, I thought I would share with you a particular part of my journey which I believe has contributed as to where I am today and how a move into New Zealand changed me.

Our family migrated to New Zealand from the Philippines in 2004 when I was just 14 years old. I deeply admire and respect my mother, Feria who as a solo-parent run our household and kept our family together. Ever since I was a little boy, I have always dreamt of becoming a doctor as I saw health care providers as champions in our community. But after a particularly daunting and somewhat hilarious incident involving a knife and an avocado, I realized that I actually have a fear of blood. So I decided to change my career path from Medicine towards a degree in Political Science, International Relations, and Education, which I graduated from at Victoria University of Wellington three years ago.

Upon arriving into New Zealand, I initially struggled to adapt to the winter climate and the tongue-twister of the New Zealand accent. There were times when a day would go by without me talking in class simply because I was quite too shy and afraid to talk with my classmates.

“It opened the door to a number of opportunities for me to become actively engaged and involved in my local community.”

During a particular Biology class in Naenae College, my teacher told me about an opportunity to take part in the Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum, and after a long application process, I was selected as one of two Wellington representatives at this National Youth Forum. This Forum became the spark that ignited my interest in environmental sustainability and community development. It opened the door to a number of opportunities for me to become actively engaged and involved in my local community. It was also through here that I met one of my esteemed mentors, Anita Mansell,

who introduced me to a range of organisations including the Hutt Multicultural Council, the New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils, and the Asia New Zealand Foundation.

These paved the way for my decision to run for local office in 2007, as well as in 2010. In addition, I have been given a chance to serve the people of Lower Hutt as a Member of the Eastern Community Committee at Hutt City Council from 2010 - 2013.

When I was little, I spent quite a bit of time over at my grandmother's house, and every time that I was there, I would always ask her permission to check her cupboards and see what food I can eat - her response would always be the same:

“You eat and you eat, for tomorrow you may not live.”

I used to be haunted by this particular saying as I wasn't quite sure what she meant, until she explained to me that she was talking about the Latin phrase “Carpe diem” or to “Seize the day”.

I therefore encourage you all to embrace and cherish every opportunity that comes in your way, I encourage you all to adapt the phrase ‘Carpe diem’ as one of your mottos and literally ‘Make the most of everyday’ - take on every single moment and live life to the fullest without regrets whatsoever. Don't live thinking you “should have, could have or would have”. Think that you can... and you will.



Summer down under

Are you heading to the beach this summer?

By Nick Ballesteros

Coming from a country with over 7000 islands, a trip to the beach is an integral part of a Filipino family's summer. It is the norm for friends and extended family members to join in. People start cooking dishes and marinating meat for the grill the day prior. Additionally, a quick visit to the market is a must for fresh fish and fruits enroute to the beach. Such is our love for the beach that town events coincide with summer, such as the 'Fiesta ng Dagat' (Sea Festival) in the merry month of May in Dagupan City. A number of beaches have also made it to the world's tourist map, such as Boracay and El Nido.

It comes as no surprise that we have brought our affinity to the ocean and the sand with us here in New Zealand. And while our circumstances have changed, our values and habits make us 'stand out' from the crowd, so to speak. So how do you spot Filipinos on the beach? Here are some telltale signs.

Abundance of food

Rice is a staple, and so are a variety of tasty dishes that go with it. These are usually brought in Tupperware bowls, or in the pots they were cooked in. Adobo is a favourite as this dish does not spoil so easily (if there is anything left, that is). If the outing is for a birthday celebration, expect pancit (noodles) to be part of the menu.

The spread can easily serve the crowd twice over, and is spread out on a picnic mat to such abundance that there is little or no room left to sit in!

Sports and Entertainment

I have actually seen people bring their videoke machines along to the beach back in the Philippines! If there is a sure way to spot Filipinos, it would be the videoke. Alas, we have left these behind. But sporting activities such as badminton, frisbee and volleyball, are still popular choices. And so is portable music!

Relaxing by the shore

You will see most of the adults taking short walks by the beach instead of taking a dip. Why? Because the water's cold! Too cold for the warm tropical waters we are so accustomed to.

The ladies are especially mindful of the sun's tanning effect on this part of the world, and would normally don a combination of wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirt, or pants (a definite change from the bathing suits). But there is hope. Our acclimatised kids do not mind the wind and water at all. The grown-ups are also discovering the joy of crabbing and fishing, so the cold waters are braved in exchange for the bounty of the sea. Thank goodness for wetsuits!

Merriment

Hear the sound of animated chatter and laughter? That would be the joyful sound of friends and families gathered together for a wonderful day at the beach. But in this case, I don't think it's just the Filipinos who are having a great time!





Check Up with the Doc

We follow a Filipino doctor's journey to practice medicine in New Zealand

By: Meia Lopez

No. This is not an official consultation, I will get more than 15 minutes of his time and I'm not going home with a prescription. I'm meeting Rico del Rosario, General Practitioner (GP) and A&E doctor. He is living his calling and this is his story.

He was in his fourth year of residency training in the Philippines when he came to New Zealand in 1999. At the time when he applied to come here, Filipino doctors' qualifications gained in the Philippines were recognised. But he was caught in between changes in immigration and labour policies that reversed this recognition. A qualified doctor like Rico could not continue his medical practice; he needed to retrain to practice here. And that would take time and money.

"You hear stories of doctors driving taxis – that's true. I worked in Auckland as a caregiver at a rest home and at NZ Post at the same time. I later worked in a laboratory and hospitals as a phlebotomist (taking blood samples)."

Recounting the past is a bit easier to talk about now but Rico admits that his first couple of years in New Zealand were really trying times. Initially, he was content just to have a job. However he struggled with the thought of not being able to practice medicine. Doctors he'd met while working at the rest home knew he was a doctor. They encouraged him to go back into medical practice – do his internship again, take the exam and get registered. With strong determination and hard work, he started on his journey. He has since worked at various hospitals in Auckland, Hawkes Bay, Petone and Paraparaumu before going to Napier for a locum (short term) assignment. In

between all that, he established a private practice in Napier as well.

With his background and experience at the MCU Hospital Emergency Department in Caloocan City, it is not surprising that he likes the action in the ER. When asked to compare working in Philippine and New Zealand hospitals he smiles, "The emergency cases at MCU would involve gunshot or stabbing wounds. I've never had that here. The cases are mostly from sporting injuries".

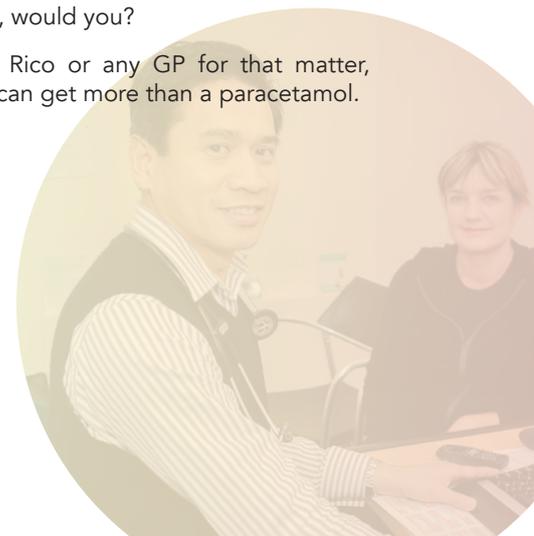
On being a GP, he explains how they are the gatekeepers for funding from the government. They can't and don't freely give out prescription or request for laboratory tests if these are not warranted (So there goes the plan for a prescription for my cold.). Being the gatekeepers, they are the best people to talk to even for simple headaches that could be masking a bigger, more serious problem. He mentions depression as one of the issues he has come across here. Not surprisingly, no Filipino has come forward to talk to him about it. Not that we don't suffer from it, it's just that we don't consult a doctor about it. "It's not in our psyche. You get over it and then move on. We are a resilient people. *Iba talaga.*" But that shouldn't stop you from seeing him anyway.

He mentions that Kiwis are proactive and focused on prevention. They anticipate the problem before it actually happens. As an Asian doctor, he would like to see more focus given to the Asian population's health. With Asians' generally slight build, we are often perceived to be healthy when in fact we may not be. "We (Filipinos) don't invest much in our health. Many Pinoys don't see a doctor when they feel a discomfort until it comes to a point when it's too late." I wouldn't want to be in that situation, would you?

When you see Rico or any GP for that matter, remember you can get more than a paracetamol.

Just what the doctor ordered (tips to a healthier you)

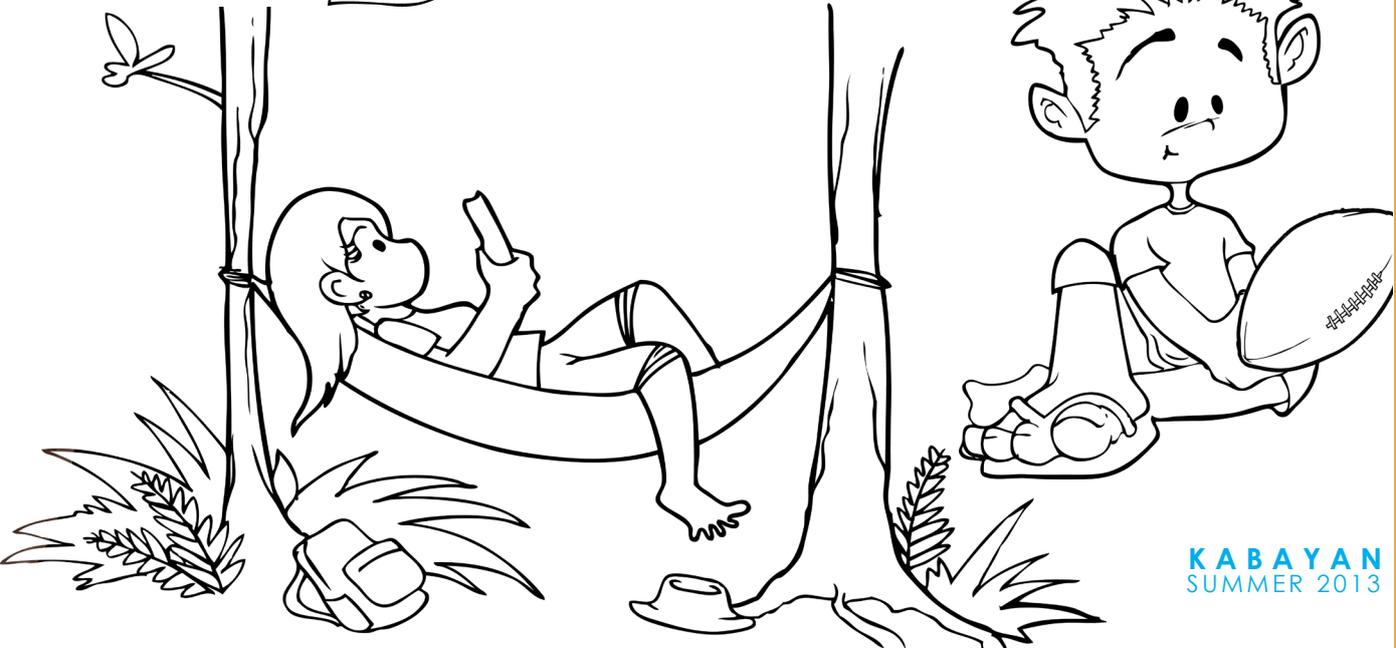
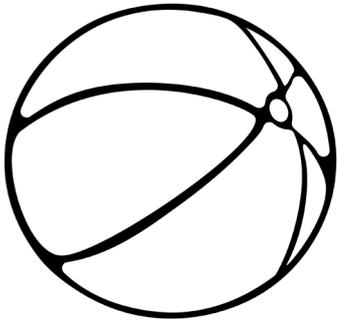
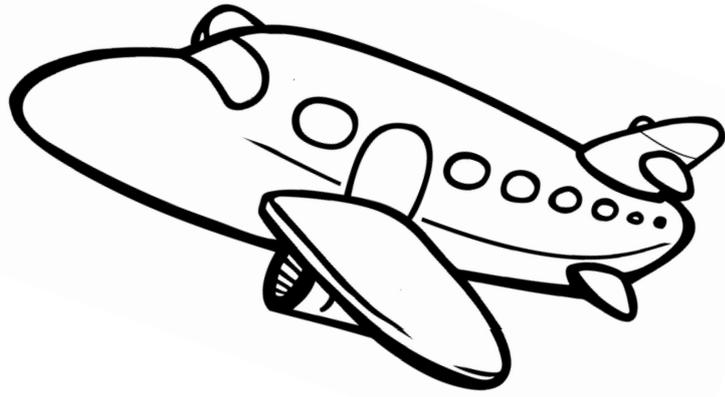
- Invest in your health – Migrants need to be proactive and prevention is the key. Avail of preventative care (mammograms, cervical screening, check cholesterol and blood sugar levels regularly)
- Exercise – 30 minutes of exercise a day like brisk walking or play a sport you will enjoy
- Diet – you can still enjoy your favourite Filipino dishes like Sinigang but with less fat and Chicken Adobo without the chicken skin
- Rest, relax and enjoy life – make sure to spend quality time with your family and yourself
- Remove vices – Quit smoking and drinking



A day at the beach

Hey kids! Colour in this picture!

Illustration by: Mike Javier



- **The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3D Fundraiser for victims of typhoon Haiyan**
Sunday, 15 December 2013
Lighthouse Cinema
52 Beach Street, Petone
- **New Year's Picnic**
Wednesday, 1 January 2014
Waitangi Park, Wellington
- **Mother Goose the Pantomime**
Until 11 January 2014
Circa Theatre, Wellington
- **Wellington Sevens 2014**
Friday, 7 February – Saturday, 8 February 2014
Westpac Stadium, Wellington
- **AMI Round the Bays 2014**
Sunday, 23 February 2014
Frank Kitts Park, Wellington
- **Soundcheck Music Fusion 2014**
Saturday, 8 March 2014
Sacred Heart College Hall
65 Laings Road Lower Hutt



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