



THE GRAPEVINE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE PHILIPPINE
NURSES ASSOCIATION OF CENTRAL CALIFORNIA



JUNE 2026 ISSUE



PNACC Executive Board 2024-2026



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 About The Grapevine
- 2 -3 Editorial
- 4-5 President's Message
- 6-11 From Our Members
- 12-15 Feature Articles
- 16-18 Spotlight
- 19-23 National Nurses Month
- 24 Mother's Day Feature
- 25-43 Community Service & Events
- 44 Membership Corner
- 45-48 Fundraising Events
- 49 Calendar of Activities
- 50-51 Upcoming Events
- 52 Officers & Board of Directors
- 53 Committee Chairs/Co-chairs
- 54 Editorial Staff

ABOUT US

Founded in 1989 by a dedicated group of Filipino nurses under the mentorship of the late Dr. Emperatriz Rabago, the organization was originally named the Filipino Nurses Association of Central California. In 1991, it became an official chapter of the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) and adopted its current name, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC).

Since its founding, PNACC has grown into a respected professional organization committed to advancing the professional development of Filipino-American nurses in Central California. Through education, collaboration, leadership, and community service, PNACC promotes excellence in nursing and strengthens the role of Filipino nurses as valued members of the healthcare team. The organization maintains an active presence at the local, state, national, and international levels.

The Grapevine is published as the official newsletter of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC). All articles reflect the opinions of their authors and are not necessarily those of PNACC. Submission of articles and pictures to the newsletter grants PNACC unrestricted permission, rights, and license to use, reproduce, exhibit, broadcast, advertise, and exploit any or all parts as deemed necessary by PNACC.

Connect with us!



pnaccofficial@gmail.com



www.facebook.com/PNACC

Editorial

"KALAYAAN, KINABUKASAN, KASAYSAYAN" (FREEDOM, FUTURE, HISTORY)



Written By: Jenniver Westfall, BSN, RN

Editor-in-chief

PNACC Secretary

As we commemorate the 128th Anniversary of Philippine Independence, we proudly embrace this year's theme, "Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan" (Freedom, Future, History). It is a reminder that our past shapes our present, and our actions today help build the future for generations to come.

We also recognize National Nurses Month in May, a time to honor the dedication, compassion, and resilience of nurses everywhere. For Filipino nurses, this dual celebration is especially meaningful, linking our professional calling with our cultural heritage and national pride. For Filipino nurses in the United States, this theme holds special meaning. Our history is one of dedication, resilience, and compassionate service. For generations, Filipino nurses have brought clinical excellence, malasakit, and unwavering professionalism to communities across America, becoming an integral part of the nation's healthcare system.

The freedom celebrated on June 12 is reflected in the opportunities created through the sacrifices of those who came before us. Many Filipino nurses left their homeland with hope and determination, building meaningful careers while carrying with them the values that define our culture. Their contributions have extended far beyond the bedside, as educators, researchers, military officers, administrators, innovators, and healthcare leaders.

As members of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC), we honor this legacy by advancing nursing excellence, supporting one another through mentorship and professional development, and serving our communities with compassion and integrity. Together, we continue to strengthen the voice and leadership of Filipino nurses while inspiring the next generation to lead with purpose.

As we celebrate both National Nurses Month and Philippine Independence Day, let us remember that Kalayaan is a gift earned through sacrifice, Kasaysayan is a legacy we are called to honor, and Kinabukasan is a future we build through service, leadership, and unity.

May we continue to uphold the highest standards of our profession while proudly carrying the Filipino spirit wherever we serve.

Maligayang ika-128 na Araw ng Kalayaan! Mabuhay ang Pilipinas! Mabuhay ang mga Pilipinong Nars!

President's **MESSAGE**



Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
2024-2026
PNACC President

As I reflect on the months from April through June, my heart overflows with gratitude and pride for the dedication, compassion, and unity that each member of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California has shown. These three months blossomed with service, advocacy, cultural devotion, celebration, and heartfelt connection, reminding me why PNACC stands strong as a true family anchored in Compassion, Community, and Continuance.

April opened with meaning and purpose as PNACC participated in the Run with the Heroes event at Valley Children's Hospital. Walking alongside families, children, and advocates reminded us how far our reach extends beyond clinical settings and into the heart of our community. Simultaneously, our monthly routines of membership engagement, education, fellowship, and service rooted us in consistency and connection- forming the foundation of everything we do.

May bloomed with joy, faith, celebration, and leadership. On May 2, our very first PNACC Got Beauty and PNACC Got Talent Season 2 event shined with empowerment, pride, and camaraderie, bringing out the confidence and spirit of our nurses in such a beautiful way. Soon after, on May 7, we uplifted nurses and staff during Valley State Prison's Appreciation Day in Chowchilla. On May 14, PNACC proudly celebrated multiple nominees at the Nurse Leadership Coalition's RN of the Year Awards- including our beloved Hall of Famer, Luz Newell. I was so, so incredibly proud to see our members recognized regionally for their excellence. One of my favorite moments this month was our Mother's Day celebration combined with our membership drive, which created a heartfelt and warm experience for our PNACC community. It was deeply moving to see mothers honored and new members welcomed in such a loving, family-centered atmosphere, truly one of the most heartwarming highlights of the quarter. On May 30, we gathered in devotion for Flores de Mayo, praying, singing the Rosary, and offering flowers to our Blessed Mother; and that same evening, we embraced Filipino culture at Fresno State's Alaala Cultural Presentation, celebrating our heritage through dance, music, story, and unity.

President's **MESSAGE**

June continued this radiant momentum. On June 7, PNACC volunteers showcased courage and compassion as they participated in the America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride in Lake Tahoe, supporting Blood Cancer United through a fundraising effort filled with purpose. We also proudly supported UCP+ and CareMax Senior Solutions in their golf tournament fundraiser, strengthening our commitment to disability advocacy and community support. PNACC continued uplifting local leaders by attending CVBNA member Keisha Nesbitt's book signing, celebrating her success and contributions to the nursing community. On June 12, we celebrated Philippine Independence Day VisMin Organization,, honoring our rich history and grateful for the cultural strength we carry into our profession. Later in the month, our Mahjong for Memories Alzheimer's awareness event blended cultural tradition with education, bringing connection, advocacy, and heart into one meaningful gathering.

From April to June, PNACC embodied leadership, faith, heritage, service, and love. Every event, every celebration, every prayer, and every act of support illuminated the generosity and strength of our members. I am truly and profoundly proud of each one of you. Guided by Compassion, Community, and Continuance, we continue building a legacy that will uplift generations of Filipino American nurses for years to come.



FROM OUR *Members*

"RUN WITH HEROES" BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO SUPPORT GEORGE'S PASS



**Written By: Lance Elep, Nursing Student, Fresno State
PNA Central California Member**

On April 18, 2026, thousands gathered at the grounds of Valley Children's Healthcare for the inspiring "Run with Heroes" community event, a meaningful fundraiser dedicated to supporting George's Pass - an initiative that continues to bring hope and assistance to children and families receiving care through Valley Children's Hospital. The highly successful event featured 5K and 10K runs and walks attended by individuals, families, healthcare workers and community supporters from across the Central Valley.

The event was passionately led and organized by Shelly Reyes, one of the dedicated board of directors of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) and an employee of Valley Children's Hospital. Through her commitment to service and advocacy, Shelly helped initiate and promote George's Pass, a heartfelt program focused on helping support pediatric patients and their families during challenging times. Her leadership brought together healthcare professionals, volunteers and community organizations in a united effort to promote wellness, hope and generosity.



FROM OUR *Members*



Written By: Lance Elep, Nursing Student, Fresno State
PNA Central California Member

RUN WITH HEROES BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER TO SUPPORT GEORGE'S PASS

Adding to the community outreach efforts, PNACC proudly hosted an Alzheimer's awareness booth during the event. The booth was actively manned by Cecilia Utleg, Fatima Estacio, Rizza Elep and Lance Elep, PNACC student member and Fresno State Nursing Junior student who engaged attendees with educational information regarding Alzheimer's disease, caregiver support, prevention strategies and the importance of early recognition.

The booth attracted many visitors throughout the day, allowing PNACC to further its mission of health promotion and community education.



FROM OUR *Members*



Written By: Argie Utleg, BSN, RN
PNACC Member

Alzheimer's awareness at Valley State Prison's Employee Appreciation Day

On May 6, 2026, the spirit of gratitude, collaboration and community engagement filled the grounds of Valley State Prison during its Employee Appreciation Day celebration. The event honored the dedication and hard work of healthcare professionals, correctional staff and employees who continuously serve the institution with commitment and compassion.

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly participated in the event through an informational booth focused on promoting Alzheimer's awareness and community education. The booth highlighted the importance of early detection, caregiver support, healthy aging and community involvement in addressing the growing impact of Alzheimer's disease. Educational materials were distributed and meaningful conversations took place among attendees who expressed appreciation for PNACC's advocacy efforts.

One of the highlights of the event was the strong interest shown by many Filipino registered nurses employed within the institution. Several nurses expressed their intention to join PNACC or renew their memberships, recognizing the organization's active involvement in professional development, community outreach, health education and cultural unity among Filipino American nurses in the Central Valley.

The successful event coordination was led by Rose Balbon, a respected past Executive Board member of PNACC, whose leadership and dedication contributed greatly to the smooth and festive celebration. Her commitment to fostering camaraderie and employee recognition was evident throughout the day.



FROM OUR *Members*

The celebration featured an abundance of delicious food, exciting giveaways, raffle prizes and an entertaining program that brought joy and appreciation to all attendees. PNACC members also had the opportunity to meet and interact with CEO Dr. Garcia, whose presence underscored the administration's support for employee wellness and community partnerships.

The event served as another meaningful opportunity for PNACC to strengthen professional connections while continuing its mission of service, education and advocacy throughout the community.



FROM OUR *Members*



**PNACC Got Beauty Queen Celeste Lim of St. Agnes
Medical Center
By Celeste Lim, BSN RN
PNACC Member**

Participating in PNACC Got Beauty was truly a meaningful and unforgettable experience for me. They say beauty is more than what we see on the outside, and this event proved exactly that. To me, beauty is kindness, compassion, and the willingness to show up for others. As nurses, we dedicate our lives to caring for people, and this event allowed us to celebrate not only our appearance, but also our hearts and purpose. PNACC Got Beauty reminded me that we can use our time, talents, and even our fabulous gowns for something greater—to inspire, uplift, and serve the community. Beyond the glamour, the event highlighted confidence, unity, and service. I am grateful to have represented St. Agnes Medical Center and proud to stand alongside nurses who continue to lead with grace, compassion, and dedication.



**What PNACC Means to Me
By Maria Wright, BSN, RN
PNACC member**

Being a member of PNACC has been a meaningful and rewarding experience for me. As an organization composed of dedicated nursing professionals and leaders, PNACC continues to advocate for better healthcare legislation and community wellness throughout California and beyond. The recent PNACC Got Beauty and Talent event made me realize how deeply the organization impacts both its members and the people we serve. PNACC promotes compassion, service, and unity among healthcare professionals while supporting the needs of Central California communities. I am proud to be part of this passionate organization and honored to serve as a staff nurse in Kaiser Permanente's Telemetry Department.

FROM OUR *Members*



PNACC Got Beauty: An Experience of a Lifetime

**By Jonalyn Caliao, BSN, RN
PNACC Member**

Participating in PNACC Got Beauty was truly an unforgettable experience. It was more than a pageant or talent showcase—it was a celebration of confidence, resilience, purpose, and the many talents nurses possess beyond the workplace.

As nurses, we spend countless hours caring for others and often place the needs of our patients and families before our own. This event gave me the opportunity to step outside my comfort zone and share another side of myself with fellow nurses and the community. It became a platform where I could express not only my talent, but also my passion, strength, and dedication as a healthcare professional.

One of the most meaningful parts of the experience was inspiring others by showing that nurses can be compassionate, talented, confident, and strong all at once. Beauty is not only about appearance—it is about having a kind heart, a resilient spirit, and the courage to continue serving despite life's challenges. PNACC Got Beauty reminded me that true beauty comes from within and shines through the way we care, lead, and uplift others.

The event also allowed me to connect with incredible nurses who shared their stories, talents, and journeys. Seeing everyone support one another created an atmosphere filled with positivity, empowerment, and unity. It was inspiring to witness nurses thriving not only in healthcare, but also in leadership, fitness, the arts, and community service.

I am deeply grateful to the PNACC organizers for creating such a meaningful event that encouraged nurses to embrace their individuality, pursue their passions, and continue being role models both inside and outside the profession. This experience reminded me to lead with compassion, confidence, strength, and grace while inspiring others to believe in themselves and let their inner beauty shine.

Feature Article

THE HEART OF SERVICE: A NURSE'S REFLECTION ON PNACC FATHERS, HUSBANDS, AND MALE MEMBERS A FATHER'S LOVE THROUGH THE EYES OF A NURSE: A PNACC REFLECTION ON OUR MALE MEMBERS AND MY HUSBAND



Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026

In nursing, we are often trained to assess, intervene, and evaluate clinical needs. But over time, experience teaches us something deeper: we also learn to witness humanity in its most vulnerable and most powerful forms. One of the most profound observations I have made is how love, especially a father's love, reveals itself in the healthcare setting. Through the eyes of a nurse, and within the context of our PNACC male members, including my own husband, that love becomes both visible and unforgettable.

In the PNACC, we often celebrate excellence, leadership, and service. While nursing is a predominantly female profession, our male members bring a unique and grounding presence. They remind us that compassion has no gender. Whether serving as bedside nurses, community volunteers, or supportive spouses of nurses, their quiet strength often mirrors the same qualities we associate with fatherhood, protection, stability, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment.

I have seen this repeatedly in clinical and community settings: a father sitting by the bedside of a sick child, holding back tears while asking thoughtful questions about medications; a husband advocating for his wife's care plan while trying to remain composed; a son stepping into responsibility when his parent can no longer speak for themselves. These are not just roles, they are expressions of love that do not always need words.



Feature Article

In PNACC activities and outreach programs, I have also witnessed our male members serve with humility. They lift heavy supplies during medical missions, assist in organizing logistics during community events, and stand ready during emergencies, not seeking recognition but simply fulfilling a commitment to service. Their actions reflect a fatherly kind of love toward the communities we serve, steady, dependable, and quietly protective.

On a more personal level, my husband has deepened my understanding of this reflection. Through him, I have seen what it means to love not only through grand gestures, but through consistency, showing up, staying present, and making sacrifices that often go unnoticed. As a nurse, I used to define care in terms of clinical outcomes. But through him, I have come to understand that care also lives in patience, presence, and perseverance.

There are moments in healthcare when emotions are unspoken but deeply felt. A father gripping a chair instead of his child's hand during a procedure. A husband standing silently outside a hospital room, gathering strength before walking in. A male nurse balancing professional composure with personal empathy because he understands what it means to protect life. These moments teach us that love, especially paternal love, is often expressed in restraint rather than display.

Through the lens of nursing and through the fellowship of PNACC male members, I have come to appreciate that fatherhood is not limited to biology. It is a role of responsibility, compassion, and quiet courage. It is found in our colleagues, our volunteers, and in the partners who stand beside us in life and service.

In the end, a father's love, seen through the eyes of a nurse, is not just observed. It is honored, remembered, and carried forward in the way we care for others every day.

Feature Article

WHEN MEMORY FADES, COMPASSION REMAINS: NURSES LEADING THE WAY IN ALZHEIMER'S CARE



Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026



Alzheimer's disease is a progressive neurological disorder that affects memory, thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform everyday activities. As the most common cause of dementia, Alzheimer's disease impacts millions of individuals and families worldwide. Beyond the clinical challenges, the disease often brings emotional, physical, social, and financial burdens to patients and caregivers alike. In addressing this growing public health concern, nurses play an indispensable role in providing compassionate, evidence-based care that promotes dignity, comfort, and quality of life.

Nurses are often among the first healthcare professionals to recognize the early signs of cognitive decline. Through routine assessments, patient interactions, and observation, nurses can identify changes in memory, communication, judgment, and behavior that may indicate the onset of Alzheimer's disease. Early recognition is critical because it enables patients and families to access timely interventions, treatment options, support services, and future care planning.

Feature Article

Education is another vital component of nursing care. Nurses serve as trusted educators for patients, families, and communities by providing information about disease progression, symptom management, medication adherence, and safety strategies. They help caregivers understand the challenges associated with Alzheimer's disease and equip them with practical tools to manage daily responsibilities. Nurses also promote healthy lifestyle practices, including regular physical activity, social engagement, cognitive stimulation, proper nutrition, and management of cardiovascular risk factors, all of which may contribute to overall brain health.

Advocacy remains a cornerstone of nursing practice in Alzheimer's care. Nurses champion person-centered care that respects each individual's values, preferences, and life experiences. They advocate for patients' rights and ensure that their voices remain central to care decisions, even as cognitive impairment progresses. Nurses also connect families with community resources, respite care programs, support groups, and healthcare services that can help improve outcomes and reduce caregiver burden.

Effective communication is essential when caring for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease. Nurses use patience, empathy, and therapeutic communication techniques to establish trust and reduce anxiety. By creating supportive and structured environments, nurses help patients maintain a sense of security, independence, and self-worth for as long as possible.

Recognizing the growing need for Alzheimer's awareness and education, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) continues to support initiatives that promote understanding of dementia and its impact on individuals, families, and communities. Through educational programs, community partnerships, and professional development opportunities, PNACC empowers nurses to serve as knowledgeable advocates and compassionate caregivers. These efforts reflect the organization's commitment to improving health outcomes and strengthening the nursing profession through service, education, and leadership.

Feature Article

Caregiver support is equally important in Alzheimer's care. Family caregivers frequently experience stress, burnout, anxiety, and grief while caring for loved ones with dementia. Nurses provide emotional support, counseling, education, and referrals to valuable community resources. By addressing caregiver well-being, nurses help strengthen the support system that is essential for effective long-term care.

As the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease continues to rise, nurses remain at the forefront of care, education, advocacy, and research. Through compassion, clinical expertise, and unwavering dedication, they make a profound difference in the lives of individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and those who care for them. Their contributions are essential in preserving dignity, enhancing quality of life, and shaping a more compassionate future for dementia care.

References

Alzheimer's Association. (2024). 2024 Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, 20(5), 3708–3821.

Fazio, S., Pace, D., Flinner, J., & Kallmyer, B. (2018). The fundamentals of person-centered care for individuals with dementia. *The Gerontologist*, 58(Suppl. 1), S10–S19.

Livingston, G., Huntley, J., Sommerlad, A., et al. (2020). Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2020 report of the Lancet Commission. *The Lancet*, 396(10248), 413–446.

Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. (2023). *Caregiving strategies for older adults with delirium, dementia, and depression*. Toronto, ON: RNAO.

Spotlight



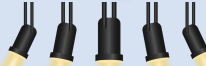
NURSING HALL OF FAME SPOTLIGHT: LUZ NEWELL

During this year's Nurses Month celebration, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California proudly celebrates one of its most distinguished and inspiring leaders, Luz Newell, as a Nursing Hall of Fame awardee at the NLC event. This prestigious recognition is presented by the Association of California Nurse Leaders Central San Joaquin Valley Chapter in honor of her lifelong commitment to nursing excellence, leadership, education, mentorship, and community service.

With more than four decades of remarkable service, Luz Newell has become a symbol of dedication, resilience, and compassion within the nursing profession. As Founding President-Elect and three-time President of PNACC, she played a pivotal role in shaping the organization into a respected force for healthcare advocacy, scholarship, volunteerism, and international outreach. Under her leadership, PNACC expanded its impact through medical missions, fundraising initiatives, educational programs, and partnerships that touched countless lives locally and abroad.

Luz's leadership shined especially bright during the COVID-19 pandemic. In one of healthcare's most difficult moments, she helped mobilize volunteers and resources that delivered nearly 2,000 care packages to frontline healthcare workers throughout the Central Valley. Her calm leadership, creativity, and unwavering commitment inspired nurses to continue serving with courage and She was able to secure grants for Fresno Adult School. Her initiative made the tuition of the school affordable. What truly distinguishes Luz is her compassion beyond the classroom. She has freely offered weekend tutoring, mentored future nurse leaders, and personal, and Alzheimer's care.

Spotlight



Beyond leadership, Luz is deeply respected as a transformative educator and mentor. Serving for many years as a nurse educator and Director of Nursing, she guided students toward academic and professional success through innovation, discipline, and encouragement. When the pandemic disrupted traditional education, she quickly mastered virtual teaching platforms and simulation technology to ensure students could continue their clinical learning. Her dedication contributed to exceptional NCLEX success rates and empowered students to graduate despite unprecedented challenges. She was able to secure grants for Fresno Adult School. Her initiative made the tuition of the school affordable. What truly distinguishes Luz is her compassion beyond the classroom. She has freely offered weekend tutoring, mentored future nurse leaders, and personally supported struggling students, including helping a homeless nursing student secure housing so she could complete her education. These quiet acts of service reflect the true spirit of nursing. Her mentorship is extended towards PNACC's President-elect, Rizza Elep, as she served as her preceptor for her MSN in Education.

Luz's influence also extends internationally through keynote speaking engagements on advanced practice nursing, neurosurgery, infection control, and Alzheimer's care. Through programs like "Balik-Turo," she continues to advance nursing knowledge globally while mentoring the next generation of leaders.

This Nursing Hall of Fame recognition celebrates not only Luz Newell's extraordinary achievements, but also the enduring values of PNACC—service, leadership, mentorship, diversity, and compassion. Her legacy will continue to inspire nurses for generations to come.



Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026

MEMBER *Spotlight*



RIZZA VALERIO ELEP
MSN, RN, PCCN

Master of Science in Nursing
*Enhancing Safe Patient Handling Competency Through
Simulation-Based Education*
Walden University



FIEL D. GAMAD
DNP, MSN, RN, FNP-C, ENP-C, PMHNP-C

RN of the Year - Research
Central San Joaquin Valley



BERNARD V. PAYONGAYONG
MSN ED, RN, CNOR

RN of the Year - Education
Central San Joaquin Valley

NATIONAL *Nurses Month*

HONORING NURSES, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: PNACC ON NATIONAL NURSES MONTH



Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President

Each May, during National Nurses Month, we celebrated the unwavering dedication, compassion, and excellence of nurses across the nation. For the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California, this celebration was not just symbolic—it was demonstrated through meaningful action, leadership, and service.

PNACC stood as a powerful force in advancing the nursing profession while uplifting the community it served. Guided by its mission of Compassion, Community, and Continuation, the organization transformed recognition into meaningful impact. Through its monthly volunteer work at community food distribution events, PNACC nurses consistently served hundreds of families, proving that nursing extended far beyond the bedside.

Education and awareness remained central to PNACC's mission. From organizing continuing education seminars to promoting Alzheimer's awareness throughout the community, the organization remained committed to improving public health while empowering nurses through lifelong learning. PNACC advocated for early education, support for caregivers, and community engagement surrounding Alzheimer's disease, reflecting its dedication to holistic and compassionate care.



NATIONAL *Nurses Month*

HONORING NURSES, EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: PNACC ON NATIONAL NURSES MONTH



Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President

As part of the National Nurses Month celebration, PNACC proudly recognized nurses during its Monthly Membership Drive held on May 9 at Jowli's Filipino Cuisine. The special gathering honored the invaluable contributions of nurses while strengthening camaraderie, mentorship, and professional connection among members and guests. The event served as both a celebration and a reminder of the profound impact nurses made every day in healthcare and in the community.

PNACC also championed scholarship opportunities, leadership development, and Nurse Excellence Awards, ensuring continued support for future and current nurses. Through collaboration, volunteerism, and advocacy, PNACC continued to inspire the next generation of healthcare leaders and proudly exemplified the true spirit of nursing service throughout National Nurses Month and beyond.



NATIONAL *Nurses Month*
**CELEBRATING NURSING EXCELLENCE,
LEADERSHIP, IMPACT, AND LASTING INFLUENCE**



Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President

Being nominated for the Leadership category was both an honor and a meaningful experience. The nomination represented recognition of dedication, hard work, and commitment to serving others within the nursing profession and the community. Standing alongside so many accomplished nurses from throughout the valley served as a reminder that leadership in nursing comes in many forms — through education, mentorship, volunteerism, advocacy, collaboration, and compassionate patient care.

Another historic highlight of the evening was the merging of the Hall of Fame induction ceremony with the RN of the Year Awards for the very first time after both events had been held separately for the past 10 years. The combined celebration created an even more meaningful occasion by honoring both current nursing excellence and the enduring legacy of nurse leaders who have helped shape healthcare in the Central Valley.

Among the Hall of Fame inductees was Luz Newell, one of the founders of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California. Her induction was a proud and emotional moment for PNACC members, recognizing her years of leadership, mentorship, advocacy, and dedication to advancing Filipino nurses and healthcare within the community. Her recognition reflected the lasting influence of nurses who continue to inspire future generations through service and leadership.



NATIONAL *Nurses Month*



Adding to the significance of the occasion was the attendance of representatives from the California State Senate, who presented official resolutions honoring the nominees and award recipients. Their participation highlighted the vital role nurses play in strengthening healthcare systems and improving community wellness throughout the region. The resolutions served as meaningful acknowledgments of the tireless contributions nurses provide both inside and outside healthcare facilities.

The atmosphere throughout the event was uplifting, supportive, and inspiring. Nurses cheered one another on, celebrated achievements together, and demonstrated the camaraderie that defines the profession. The evening was a powerful reminder that nursing is not simply a career, but a calling rooted in compassion, resilience, leadership, and service.

The ACNL Central San Joaquin Valley Chapter Nursing Hall of Fame and RN of the Year Awards once again demonstrated that the future of nursing in the Central Valley remains strong, innovative, compassionate, and united.

The Association of California Nurse Leaders (ACNL) Central San Joaquin Valley Chapter, also known as the Nursing Leaders Coalition (NLC), brought together more than 200 nurses, healthcare leaders, educators, and community supporters for an inspiring evening recognizing excellence in nursing throughout the Central Valley. The event celebrated the dedication, compassion, innovation, and leadership nurses demonstrate every day in caring for patients and strengthening their communities.



NATIONAL *Nurses Month*

This year's RN of the Year celebration recognized nominees in several distinguished categories, including Leadership, Education, Innovation, Clinical Practice, and Research. Nurses from hospitals, clinics, academic institutions, and community organizations across the region gathered together to honor one another's achievements and celebrate the profound impact nurses continue to make in healthcare.

Among the proud attendees was the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC), represented by four tables of members and supporters. PNACC nurses came together in solidarity to celebrate not only the nominees and winners, but also the spirit of collaboration and unity among nursing organizations throughout the valley. Their strong presence reflected the organization's commitment to professional growth, mentorship, education, advocacy, and community service.

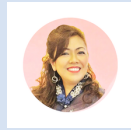
One of the memorable highlights of the evening was the recognition of nurses who have gone above and beyond in their respective fields. The categories of Education and Research honored nurses whose work continues to shape the future of healthcare through teaching, evidence-based practice, and scholarly contributions. The Leadership category celebrated nurses who inspire others through mentorship, advocacy, innovation, and service to the profession.

This year's Education Award recipient was Bernard Payongayong, a current Board Member of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California. His dedication and leadership have positively impacted the nursing community and healthcare workforce throughout the Central Valley. The Research Award was presented to Fiel Gamad, a very active PNACC member, recognizing outstanding contributions in advancing nursing knowledge and evidence-based practice. Their accomplishments reflected the excellence and passion demonstrated by nurses across the region.



Mother's Day FEATURE

A TRIBUTE TO A WONDERFUL MOTHER: MAMA ZENY



**Written By: Cecilia Utleg MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President**



There are mothers who nurture with love, and there are mothers who dedicate their entire lives to the success and happiness of their children. Our mother, Zenaída (Mama Zeny for short), is one of those extraordinary women whose sacrifices, strength, and unconditional love shaped the lives of our family forever.

Born and raised in the humble town of Camiling, our mother lived a simple yet meaningful life. She worked as a devoted 5th grade teacher, touching the lives of countless students with patience, compassion, and dedication. Teaching was not just a profession for her; it was a calling. She believed education could change lives, and she carried that belief not only into her classroom but also into our home.

As parents, our mother and father dreamed of giving all four of us children a better future. Life was not always easy, and opportunities were limited. Yet instead of surrendering to hardship, our mother made one of the greatest sacrifices a parent could make. She chose to retire early from teaching and traveled far from home to Italy. Leaving behind her family, her comfort, and the life she knew was painful, but she endured it all with courage and determination because her children's future mattered more than her own comfort.

Her sacrifices were never in vain. Through her hard work and perseverance, all four of us earned our bachelor's degrees, while my sister and I went on to complete our master's degrees. Every diploma we received carried our mother's fingerprints of sacrifice, love, and endless prayers. Behind every achievement stood a mother who quietly worked, sacrificed, and believed in us even during difficult times.

Even after helping us reach our dreams, our mother's love and service never stopped. She became a guiding force in helping raise her grandchildren, offering care, wisdom, patience, and unconditional affection. Until now, she continues to support us in countless ways through her kindness, generosity, and selfless efforts. Her presence brings comfort, strength, and unity to our family.

Our mother, Mama Zeny, is more than a parent. She is our inspiration, our foundation, and our example of true love and sacrifice. Her life reminds us that greatness is not measured by wealth or recognition, but by the lives touched through compassion, hard work, and devotion to family.

What a wonderful mother she truly is.

Community SERVICE

PNACC CONTINUES COMMUNITY SERVICE THROUGH DANIEL'S FOOD PANTRY



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President Elect 2024-2026

On June 6, 2026, members of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly joined Holy Ground Family Fellowship and Friends Association (HGFFA) in supporting the monthly food distribution at Daniel's Food Pantry. Held on the first Saturday of every month, this outreach program continues to provide essential food assistance to individuals and families facing food insecurity within our community.

Representing PNACC were dedicated volunteers Fatima Estacio and Guia Arceo, who generously gave their time and compassion to help organize, distribute, and serve food to community members in need. Their commitment reflects PNACC's mission of promoting health, wellness, and service beyond the bedside while strengthening partnerships that uplift vulnerable populations.

Daniel's Food Pantry has become a beacon of hope for many families by providing access to nutritious food and fostering a spirit of kindness and community support. Through collaborations with organizations such as HGFFA, PNACC continues to demonstrate the values of compassion, volunteerism, and community engagement that are central to the nursing profession.

PNACC extends its sincere appreciation to HGFFA, all volunteers, donors, and community partners whose generosity makes this monthly outreach possible. Together, we continue to make a meaningful difference—one family, one meal, and one act of kindness at a time.



Community SERVICE

PNACC SERVES AS FIRST AID SUPPORT AT INAUGURAL UCP PLUS GOLF TOURNAMENT AT COPPER RIVER COUNTRY CLUB



Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026

On May 26, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, PNACC proudly served as first aid responders during the very first golf tournament organized by UCP Plus, led by Roger Slingerman, in partnership with Caremax Senior Living under the leadership of President Ethel Groger. The event was held at the prestigious Copper River Country Club and gathered a total of 128 enthusiastic golfers for a full day of friendly competition, fellowship, and community engagement.

PNACC's role as first aid support highlighted the organization's continued commitment to community service, safety, and volunteerism beyond traditional healthcare settings. Our presence ensured that immediate health assistance and first response care were readily available throughout the duration of the tournament, providing peace of mind to participants, organizers, and guests. Representing PNACC on the course were dedicated members Danny Baruela, Sam Bugay, husband of member Ate Elnora Bugay, as well as loyal supporters Roland Fontanilla and Jerry Cadiz. Their teamwork, vigilance, and readiness to respond to any medical needs demonstrated the professionalism and compassionate spirit that PNACC members consistently bring to every community event. Throughout the day, the PNACC team remained actively engaged, monitoring players and assisting with minor health concerns as needed, while also supporting hydration and wellness awareness under the warm outdoor conditions. Their presence was both reassuring and essential in maintaining a safe and enjoyable environment for all participants.

Community SERVICE



The successful collaboration between UCP Plus, CaremaxSenior Living, and PNACC reflects the strength of partnerships within the community, uniting healthcare professionals and organizations in service of wellness, recreation, and outreach. PNACC is honored to have contributed to this milestone event and looks forward to future opportunities to serve in similar capacities that promote health, safety, and community connection.



Community SERVICE

PNACC FIRST AID SUPPORT AT FLORES DE MAYO CELEBRATION – MAY 30, 2026 AT PDDM (PIOUS DISCIPLES OF THE DIVINE MASTER) CONVENT, FRESNO



**Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026**

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) served as first aiders during the beautiful Flores de Mayo celebration held at the PDDM Convent on Cornelia Avenue, Fresno, California, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM.

The program began with a reverent rosary led by young participants, accompanied by the Filipino- American choir singing uplifting Marian hymns that filled the convent with devotion and prayer.

Following the rosary, a solemn procession moved from the church toward the garden where the image of Mama Mary was honored, creating a serene atmosphere of faith and unity.

In a touching moment, Sophia Ibarreta crowned Mama Mary, followed by the sister's recitation of the Litany, deepening the spiritual reflection of all attendees present.

The PNACC founding president Nancy Hoff offered the final prayer, expressing gratitude and blessings for the community and the success of the Marian celebration.

After the spiritual program, a warm fellowship followed, where delicious food generously provided by the Fil Catholic League was shared and enjoyed by all participants.

Community SERVICE



This meaningful event highlighted the spirit of community, devotion, and service that defines the Flores de Mayo tradition among Filipino families in the Central Valley.

PNACC members were honored to provide safety support and first aid assistance, ensuring the well-being of all participants throughout the gathering. The collaboration between the church organizers, youth, choir, and community volunteers reflected a strong sense of unity and shared faith.

Overall, the celebration of Flores de Mayo at PDDM Convent became a memorable expression of devotion to Mama Mary, strengthened by prayer, music, procession, and fellowship that brought everyone closer together in faith and service.

PNACC's participation as first aiders underscored its commitment to community health outreach, compassion, and volunteer service, supporting cultural and religious celebrations while ensuring safety, preparedness, and responsive care for all attendees during the event held today.

Community EVENTS

“PNACC CELEBRATES MOTHER’S DAY, FLORES DE MAYO, AND FATHER RUBI PETER’S SACERDOTAL ANNIVERSARY



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN

PNACC PRESIDENT-ELECT(2024-2026)



The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) joyfully participated in the celebration of Mother’s Day, Flores de Mayo, and the Sacerdotal Anniversary of Father Rubi Peter, C.M.F., held on May 10, 2026, at Saint Paul Catholic Newman Center. The meaningful gathering brought together families, community leaders, parishioners, and healthcare professionals in a celebration of faith, gratitude, and Filipino tradition.

The event honored mothers for their unconditional love and sacrifices while also recognizing the dedication and spiritual leadership of Father Rubi Peter, C.M.F., on his sacerdotal anniversary. The Flores de Mayo procession added beauty and devotion to the celebration, highlighting the rich Filipino Catholic heritage through flowers, prayers, and community participation.

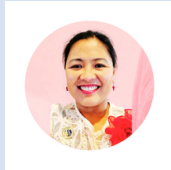
PNACC members proudly supported the event through active participation and fellowship, reflecting the organization’s commitment to compassion, cultural unity, and community engagement.

The celebration served as a reminder of the importance of faith, service, and family in strengthening the community. Through events like these, PNACC continues to promote Filipino values and meaningful connections across generations.



Community EVENTS

PNACC Proudly Supports Lance Elep at Magkaisa Filipino Club's "Alaala" Cultural Showcaset



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President Elect 2024-2026

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly celebrates the outstanding performance of Lance Elep during the Magkaisa Filipino Club's presentation of Alaala, a cultural event dedicated to honoring Filipino heritage, traditions, and community spirit.

Lance captivated the audience with his talent, confidence, and passion, exemplifying the values of excellence, cultural pride, and leadership among Filipino youth. His performance served as a meaningful reminder of the importance of preserving our rich cultural legacy while inspiring the next generation to embrace their Filipino identity.

PNACC remains committed to supporting programs and events that promote cultural awareness, youth development, and community engagement. By encouraging young leaders like Lance, PNACC helps strengthen connections across generations and fosters pride in the Filipino-American experience.

We congratulate Lance Elep and the Magkaisa Filipino Club for a successful and memorable event that beautifully celebrated the power of culture, unity, and remembrance through Alaala.



Community EVENTS

PNACC AT THE CALIFORNIA CLASSIC: A MOTHER AND SON REPRESENTING COMMUNITY AND CONTINUANCE



**Written By: Rizza Elep MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President Elect 2024-2026**

The California Classic became more meaningful this year as the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California proudly joined the celebration through the representation of Rizza and Lance Elep, a mother-and-son team embodying compassion, community, and continuance.

As a dedicated nurse leader and incoming PNACC President, Rizza Elep proudly carried the organization's mission of service, leadership, and Filipino representation into a vibrant community event that brought together sports, culture, and unity. Beside her was her son, Lance Elep, a Fresno State University student and active PNACC student member, whose participation reflected the importance of engaging the next generation of Filipino American leaders.

Their presence symbolized more than attendance—it highlighted the power of family, mentorship, and intergenerational involvement within PNACC. Through events like the California Classic, PNACC continues to strengthen visibility in the community while creating opportunities for younger members to participate, lead, and grow.

For Rizza and Lance, representing PNACC together was both a proud family moment and a reminder that leadership and service can inspire across generations. Their participation reflected PNACC's ongoing commitment to uplifting culture, building connections, and fostering future leaders within the Filipino nursing community.



Community EVENTS

PNACC IN MOTION AT THE CLOVIS TRAIL FEST 2026



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President Elect 2023-2026

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California proudly participated in the Clovis Trail Fest 2026 last May 2, bringing together nurses, families, community partners, and supporters in a meaningful celebration of health, wellness, and community engagement. The event highlighted PNACC's commitment to promoting active lifestyles, cultural unity, and public health awareness throughout the Central Valley.

Members of PNACC enthusiastically joined the walk and community activities, representing the organization's spirit of compassion, leadership, and service. Wearing their PNACC shirts with pride, participants demonstrated the importance of physical wellness while strengthening connections within the community. The event also became an opportunity to promote camaraderie among nurses and healthcare professionals outside the clinical setting.

PNACC's participation reflected its continuing mission to advocate for healthier communities through visibility, outreach, and involvement in local initiatives. Community members were able to engage with PNACC volunteers, learn more about the organization's programs, and witness the strong presence of Filipino nurses making a positive impact beyond healthcare facilities.

The Clovis Trail Fest also served as a reminder that wellness extends beyond hospitals and clinics. Through events like this, PNACC encourages individuals and families to embrace preventive health practices, outdoor activities, and community connection as part of a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

As PNACC continues to rise in leadership and service, participation in events such as the Clovis Trail Fest strengthens its vision of fostering compassion, community, and continuance while inspiring future generations to stay engaged, active, and united.



Community EVENTS

PNACC LEADERS AND MEMBERS SUPPORT AMERICA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL BIKE RIDE 2026



**Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026**

On June 7, 2026, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly demonstrated its commitment to health, wellness, volunteerism, and community service by participating in and supporting the annual America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride around the scenic Lake Tahoe.

Representing PNACC, President Cecilia Utleg and her husband Argie traveled to Lake Tahoe to cheer on and support three active PNACC members who successfully completed the challenging ride. Their presence reflected the organization's dedication to promoting healthy lifestyles, physical fitness, and fellowship among nurses and their families.

America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride is more than a cycling event. It serves as a major fundraiser for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, helping support research, patient services, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by blood cancers. Through their participation and support, PNACC members contributed to a cause that extends far beyond the cycling community, touching countless lives across the nation.

The ride, which circles the breathtaking shores of Lake Tahoe, attracts thousands of cyclists each year who embrace the challenge while raising funds and awareness for blood cancer research. The accomplishment of the three PNACC cyclists exemplified determination, resilience, and a commitment to making a difference.

Joining the group was Father Carlo Balaguer, whose presence brought inspiration, encouragement, and a spirit of unity throughout the event. His support added a meaningful dimension to the gathering, reminding participants of the importance of faith, service, and community.

President Utleg and her husband volunteered their time to encourage riders and celebrate their achievements, demonstrating PNACC's culture of service and support. Their participation highlighted the organization's ongoing commitment to wellness initiatives and charitable causes.

PNACC continues to champion activities that promote health, volunteerism, and community engagement. By supporting events such as America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride, members not only invest in their own well-being but also help advance important causes that improve the lives of others



Community EVENTS

A JOYOUS CELEBRATION OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY AT THE PARK



Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026

The Visayas-Mindanao Association of Central California hosted a wonderful Philippine Independence Day Picnic at Dry Creek Park in Clovis on June 13, 2026, bringing together families and friends for an afternoon filled with fellowship, food, laughter, and Filipino pride.

My husband, Argie, and I had an amazing time participating in the many fun-filled activities. One of the highlights of our day was joining the paper folding game, where we proudly earned 3rd Place! It was exciting to see participants of all ages enjoying friendly competition and cheering one another on.

No Filipino celebration would be complete without delicious food, and this picnic certainly did not disappoint. Guests enjoyed a generous potluck feast featuring a wide variety of homemade Filipino dishes, including two whole lechons, which quickly became crowd favorites. Everyone shared their favorite recipes and desserts, making the event feel like one big family reunion.

Entertainment continued throughout the day with lively games, dancing, and karaoke, where many talented singers showcased their voices and kept the crowd entertained.

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) was also honored to participate by providing a First Aid Response Booth to ensure the safety of attendees. We also hosted a membership information booth, allowing visitors to learn more about our organization and the services we provide to the community. As part of our contribution, we were happy to donate desserts for everyone to enjoy.



Community EVENTS



A special thank you goes to President Ethel Groger and the entire Visayas-Mindanao Association team for organizing such a successful event. Her outstanding leadership, dedication, and warm hospitality created a welcoming atmosphere where everyone felt at home.

Events like these remind us that celebrating our heritage is about more than honoring our history—it is about strengthening friendships, building community, and creating lasting memories together. Mabuhay, and happy Philippine Independence Day!



Community EVENTS

PNACC SERVES AT THE MONTHLY FILIPINO MASS AND FATHER'S DAY CELEBRATION



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN

PNACC President Elect 2024-2026

On June 14, members of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly served as first aid responders during the Monthly Filipino Mass at St. Paul Newman Center. It is always an honor for our nurses to support our faith community by providing a safe environment while serving with compassion and dedication.

The Mass was celebrated by Father Art Gramaje, who shared an inspiring message that resonated with everyone in attendance: "Where God's providence takes you, God's grace will sustain you." His words reminded us that through every challenge and opportunity, we can place our trust in God's guidance and find strength in His unwavering grace.

The celebration was especially meaningful as we also honored Father's Day, offering prayers and blessings for all fathers, grandfathers, father figures, and those who lovingly fulfill paternal roles in our families and communities. We thank them for their sacrifices, leadership, and unconditional love.

Following the Mass, everyone gathered for a joyful salo-salo hosted by the Sacred Heart Fellowship Group. The fellowship hall was filled with laughter, conversation, and an incredible feast featuring a delicious whole lechon, a variety of favorite Filipino dishes, and an assortment of delightful desserts. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with friends, welcome new faces, and strengthen the bonds within our Filipino community.

Events like these beautifully reflect PNACC's commitment to our mission of Compassion, Community, and Continuance. By serving both the physical and spiritual needs of our community, we continue to build meaningful relationships while promoting health, fellowship, and service.

Thank you to Father Art Gramaje, the Sacred Heart Fellowship Group, our PNACC volunteers, and everyone who made this Father's Day celebration such a memorable and faith-filled occasion. We look forward to serving our community again at the next Monthly Filipino Mass.



Community EVENTS

PNACC CELEBRATES FAITH, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY AT THE FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President Elect 2024-2026

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) proudly joined the celebration of the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua, reaffirming its commitment to promoting faith, Filipino heritage, and community engagement. Members attended the Eucharistic celebration and fellowship, joining parishioners and families in honoring one of the Church's most beloved saints.

Following the Mass, PNACC members enjoyed fellowship with clergy, parish leaders, and the Filipino community, strengthening relationships that extend beyond healthcare into service and compassion. Dressed in traditional Filipiniana attire, members proudly showcased the beauty of Filipino culture while encouraging unity among generations.



PNACC believes that nursing is more than a profession—it is a ministry of healing, service, and love. By participating in faith-based community events such as this, the organization continues to promote holistic well-being, cultural pride, volunteerism, and meaningful community partnerships.

PNACC remains dedicated to serving Central California through health education, outreach programs, leadership development, and active participation in community and faith initiatives. Together, we continue to RISE, VOICE, and ENGAGE—building healthier communities while preserving the rich traditions and values that unite us as Filipino nurses.

Community EVENTS

MAHJONG FOR MEMORIES: RAISING ALZHEIMER'S AWARENESS THROUGH CONNECTION AND PREVENTIVE HEALTH



Written By: Jenniver Westfall, BSN, RN,
PNACC Secretary 2024-2026

PNACC's Alzheimer's Project, Mahjong for Memories: Raising Alzheimer's Awareness, was a community event dedicated to promoting brain health, social connection, and education about Alzheimer's disease. There were prizes to win and, of course, delicious food to enjoy, making it both meaningful and fun. The inaugural gathering, held on June 27, 2026, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the UCP+ Central California Campus, 2044 E. Nees Avenue in Fresno, was a resounding success. Younger attendees, including members of the PNACC Executive Board, enjoyed learning the game alongside seasoned mahjong players, while veteran enthusiasts eagerly requested longer sessions on a regular basis. Inspired by the overwhelming response, PNACC is now collaborating with community partners to make future gatherings possible, including support from a local restaurant that has offered to host upcoming sessions.

*Playing Together.
Remembering Together.
Every tile played helps
preserve a memory.*



Mahjong's popularity in the Philippines is deeply rooted in the country's history of Chinese migration. Over generations, the game was adapted to local customs and everyday life, becoming much more than a pastime. It evolved into a cherished part of Filipino social culture, valued not only for entertainment but also for its unique ability to bring people together across generations. One reason mahjong has remained so enduring is its role as a community-building activity. Whether played in homes, neighborhood gatherings, or family celebrations, the game creates a relaxed setting for conversation, laughter, and meaningful connection. It is often played not simply to win but to spend time together, exchange stories, and strengthen relationships. Mahjong also holds a unique place in Filipino mourning traditions. Playing mahjong during wakes has long been an accepted custom, serving to keep the bereaved company, honor the deceased, and help raise funds to offset funeral expenses, reinforcing the strength of community support during times of grief.

Community EVENTS



The Filipino style of mahjong has evolved into a distinct cultural tradition, blending simplified rules, larger hands, Spanish influences, and local terminology. Today, it's enjoying a resurgence among millennials and Gen Z, transforming from an activity associated with older adults into a modern social pastime.

Mahjong's mix of memory, strategy, focus, and social interaction makes it an effective way to promote awareness of Alzheimer's disease and preventive brain health. The game keeps players mentally active through pattern recognition and decision-making while fostering connection and conversation, an environment where people can comfortably discuss memory loss and support those affected by dementia.

With Alzheimer's impacting millions worldwide, prevention and early awareness are increasingly vital. Research shows that healthy habits—regular exercise, balanced nutrition, good sleep, stress management, social engagement, and mentally stimulating activities—may help reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Managing chronic conditions, avoiding tobacco, limiting alcohol, and staying current with medical checkups further support long-term brain health.

Community events like Mahjong for Memories show that learning about Alzheimer's can be both meaningful and enjoyable. They bring together individuals, families, caregivers, and neighbors to strengthen memory, concentration, friendship, and lifelong learning. These gatherings remind us that protecting brain health begins with everyday choices: staying active, staying connected, challenging our minds, and prioritizing preventive care. Every tile played symbolizes hope, awareness, and our shared commitment to preserving memories. As PNACC expands Mahjong for Memories, each event becomes an opportunity to build community, encourage healthy aging, and demonstrate how simple activities can have a powerful impact on both heart and mind.

Community EVENTS

PNACC MEMBERSHIP DRIVE CELEBRATES COMMUNITY AND AMERICA'S 250TH INDEPENDENCE DAY



**Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026**

On July 3, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) successfully held its Membership Drive at Jowli's, bringing together current and prospective members in celebration of community, professional growth, and service. The event also commemorated the 250th Anniversary of the United States' Independence, making it a meaningful occasion to reflect on the freedoms and opportunities that have allowed Filipino American nurses to contribute significantly to the nation's healthcare system.

The event featured a livestream hosted by Joe Estacio, allowing members who were unable to attend in person to participate in the celebration. Through engaging discussions, attendees learned about the many benefits of PNACC membership, including networking opportunities, continuing education, mentorship, leadership development, and community outreach.

A highlight of the event was the renewal of four PNACC memberships, reflecting our members' continued dedication to the organization's mission of promoting excellence in nursing, advancing professional growth, and serving the community with compassion and professionalism. Every new and renewed membership strengthens PNACC's ability to advocate for Filipino nurses, develop future leaders, and expand programs that benefit both our members and the communities we serve. Together, we continue building a supportive network that fosters collaboration, lifelong learning, and service.



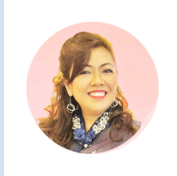
Community EVENTS

PNACC extends its heartfelt appreciation to Joe Estacio for hosting the livestream, to everyone who attended the event at Jowli's, and to those who renewed their membership. Your enthusiasm and commitment are vital to our continued success.

As we celebrate America's 250th Independence Day, we also celebrate the spirit of unity, service, and resilience that defines both our nation and the nursing profession. Together, we continue making a difference, one member at a time.



Membership CORNER



Written By: Cecilia Utleg, MSN, RN, PCCN
PNACC President 2024-2026

On April 25, 2026, the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) successfully held its Membership Drive at Genko's/LBC Place, bringing together nurses, supporters, and community members in a meaningful afternoon of fellowship, service, and advocacy. Guided by the organization's commitment to "Compassion, Community, and Continuance," the event became more than just a membership campaign—it became a celebration of unity and purpose.

The gathering highlighted PNACC's continued efforts to strengthen the organization by encouraging both new and renewing members to actively participate in the mission of supporting Filipino American nurses and the communities they serve. Several members proudly signed up and renewed their memberships that day, reflecting the growing dedication and enthusiasm within the organization. The event also provided an opportunity for members to reconnect, share experiences, and inspire one another to continue advancing the nursing profession through volunteerism, leadership, and education.



Fundraising Events

PNACC'S GOT TALENT SEASON 2 AND PNACC'S GOT BEAUTY 2026: CELEBRATING FILIPINO EXCELLENCE, CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY



Written By: Rizza Elep, MSN, RN, PCCN

PNACC President Elect 2024-2026

The Philippine Nurses Association of Central California (PNACC) once again brought together talent, culture, leadership, and community spirit through the successful presentation of PNACC's Got Beauty 2026 and PNACC's Got Talent Season 2. The event showcased not only the incredible gifts of our Filipino-American community, but also the heart behind PNACC's mission... to uplift, inspire, and empower through engagement and unity.

The evening began with registration and guest arrival, followed by a meaningful opening program that honored both the United States and the Philippines through the national anthems. Adam Geraldo performed the "Star-Spangled Banner," while Rizza Elep, President-Elect, delivered the Philippine National Anthem, "Lupang Hinirang." The invocation was led by Mae Baustista, Board Director, followed by a warm welcome address from Cecilia Utleg, President 2024-2026.

One of the highlights of the evening was the PNACC's Got Beauty Showcase Introduction, featuring beauty queens Celeste Lim, Jonalyn Caliao, and Maria Wright. Each delegate represented grace, confidence, intelligence, and cultural pride. The showcase celebrated beauty beyond appearance by emphasizing leadership, advocacy, service, and empowerment within the Filipino-American community.



The PNACC's Got Talent Season 2 performance segment energized the audience with a variety of musical and live entertainment performances. Opening the talent showcase were Lance and Ryver Elep, who captivated the audience through their heartfelt performance, with Lance also showcasing his piano skills. Other talented performers included Cassie Valerio, Lawrence Enriquez, Angelica Buensuceso, Ryan Abundo, Tata Balane, Paul Benitez, Nissa Sanarez, Adam Geraldo, Paula Nadores, Leonardo Gacad, Isabella Simbre, and a special reflective performance titled Reflection. Beauty delegates Jonalyn Caliao and Celeste Lim also participated in the talent segment, while Maria Wright proudly represented the beauty delegates during the evening's showcase.

Fundraising Events



The performances reflected courage, creativity, passion, and the willingness to step outside one's comfort zone. More importantly, the event fostered connection and belonging—reminding everyone that PNACC is more than an organization; it is a family rooted in community, compassion, and continuance.

Following a dinner and networking break, the evening transitioned into the highly anticipated coronation ceremony, which included sashings, crowning, and trophy awarding. The ceremony celebrated not only achievement and talent, but also the confidence, dedication, and hard work of every participant. The final walk and serenade, accompanied by a live band performance by Ryan Abundo, Paul Benitez, and Tata Balane, brought the evening to a memorable and heartfelt conclusion.

The event concluded with certificate distribution led by Cecilia Utle and Ma. Victoria De Castro, followed by closing remarks from Ma. Victoria De Castro, Event Director and Public Relations Committee Chair. The evening was gracefully hosted by emcees Joseph Estacio and Van Lauro of Ayala Land, whose professionalism, humor, and energy kept the audience engaged throughout the program. Music for the evening was provided by DJ Tala Benitez, adding excitement and entertainment to the celebration.



Fundraising Events



PNACC also extends its heartfelt gratitude to the generous sponsors and community supporters whose contributions helped make the event successful. Special thanks to Ayala Land, Rizza Gamueda, Mhargie of M&3As LLC, Mae Marsili of Fabuluxe Skin Aesthetics, Philippine Kitchen, Nadin Benson, Clean Earth Builders, Lynne's Afforde Kuxe, LBC, Irvin and Jingle for donating cakes, Trina Reilly of House of Colors, Elvie Sevilla of Valley Heart Savers CPR LLC, Spotlight, Kaiser Telemetry, and Serenewind. Their generosity and support demonstrated the power of community partnerships and commitment to PNACC's mission and programs.

Events like these continue to strengthen relationships, encourage engagement, and create opportunities for members to express themselves beyond their professional roles. Through programs like PNACC's Got Talent Season 2 and PNACC's Got Beauty 2026, PNACC proudly celebrates Filipino excellence, unity, creativity, and heart while continuing to inspire future generations through community, compassion, and continuance.



Fundraising Events



**Written By: Lance Elep, Nursing Student, Fresno State
PNA Central California Member**



Performing in PNACC Got Talent 2 was once again a memorable and meaningful experience for me. This was my second year participating in the event, and this time, I had the opportunity not only to sing “Blue” with my younger brother, Ryver, but also to accompany our performance on the piano. Being able to combine singing and playing music made the performance even more special and personally rewarding.

Ryver and I were honored to be the first performers of the program, which gave us the opportunity to open the event with energy, confidence, and excitement. Performing together strengthened our bond as brothers and reminded us how music can bring people together and create lasting memories.

Lance & Ryver

As a junior at California State University, Fresno and a student member of the Philippine Nurses Association of Central California, I truly appreciate organizations that encourage youth involvement, creativity, and cultural connection. PNACC Got Talent 2 provided a supportive environment where students and families could showcase their talents while building confidence and community spirit.

I am grateful for the encouragement and support from PNACC, my family, and everyone who cheered us on. This experience will always be one of the highlights of my college journey and musical growth.

Calendar Of ACTIVITIES

Monthly Recurring Activities

**1st Saturday of Every Month – Holy Ground Family Fellowship
Assembly Community Outreach**

2nd Saturday of Every Month – PNACC Membership Forum

2nd Sunday of Every Month – Filipino Mass & PNACC Participation

Major Upcoming Events

September 2026

**September 12, 2026 (Saturday) – Central Valley Nursing &
Leadership Summit**

September 26, 2026 (Saturday) – Jaya Concert

October 2026

October 17, 2026 (Saturday) – Walk to End Alzheimer's

October 31, 2026 (Saturday) – Two Cities Marathon Bib Pick-Up

November 2026

November 1, 2026 (Sunday) – Two Cities Marathon

**November 14, 2026 (Saturday) – PNACC Nurse Excellence &
Scholarship Awards Night & Induction Ceremony**

PNACC *Upcoming Events*

Save the Date
37th Anniversary Celebration

INDUCTION OF OFFICERS
2026-2028

NURSE EXCELLENCE & SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

 NOVEMBER 14, 2026
LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED

RISE + VOICE + ENGAGE

  
RISE + VOICE + ENGAGE

PNACC
Scholarship Awards

will be presented during the
37th Anniversary Celebration
PNACC Induction of Officers 2026-2028

UCP+ Central California Campus
2044 E. Nees Ave. Fresno, CA 93720

Applications

DEADLINE
23:59
09.01.2026

Apply at <https://pnacc-nursingnetwork.com>

PNACC
Nurse Excellence Awards

will be presented during the
37th Anniversary Celebration
PNACC Induction of Officers 2026-2028

UCP+ Central California Campus
2044 E. Nees Ave. Fresno, CA 93720

**Leadership
Education
Clinical Practice
Innovation in
Professional Nursing
Informatics
Advanced Practice
Nursing Research**

Nominations

OPEN 00:00 07.06.2026
CLOSE 23:59 09.07.2026

Log on to <https://pnacc-nursingnetwork.com>

SAVE THE DATE!
Join Us!

EMPOWER. EQUIP. ELEVATE.

— Central Valley —

**NURSING
AND
LEADERSHIP
SUMMIT**

Celebrating Our Differences.
Strengthening Our Profession.

 **SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 12,
2026**

 **VENUE:**
Conference Rooms G 150 A & B
9300 Valley Children's Place,
Madera, CA 93636-8762



 DIVERSITY. INCLUSION. EXCELLENCE.
Stronger Together.

Upcoming EVENTS

CORDIALLY INVITES YOU TO THE
CINA 6th Annual CINA Event
SATURDAY, October 3rd, 2026
11:00 AM TO 3:30 PM
REGISTRATION BEGINS 11:00 AM

THEME: Indian Nurses - Rooted in Culture,
Committed to Care and Leading the future in
Nursing.

Venue:
Woodward Lake Clubhouse
10250 N Westshore Dr.
Fresno, CA 93730

RSVP and Zelle to CVINACA@gmail.com
By September 15th, 2026:
Members: \$55 | Students: \$25
Non-Members: \$60 or \$75 for membership + free entry
and at the door + \$5 to all entry

FILIPINO MASS
August 9, 2026
2:00 PM
Venue:
Saint Paul Catholic Newman Center
1572 East Barstow Ave
Fresno, CA 93720
Tel. No. 559 436 3434

Mass Presider
Father Rudy Esmero

Mass Sponsored by
Rodolfo Lorenzo & Family
Armelo & Maribel Marcelino
Rey & Susan Santillan
*Come, let us celebrate the Eucharist
in faith, hope, and love.*

JOIN US FOR A LIVE WEBINAR
In partnership with the **ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION**

PNA Metro DC PNA Virginia PNA Richmond, Virginia

**AAPI Brain Health:
Alzheimer's & Other Dementia Awareness**

This webinar is designed to raise awareness and promote brain health within the AAPI community across the Metro DC and Virginia regions. We will be inviting various AAPI organizations, healthcare professionals, caregivers, students and community members to participate.

Date
August 8, 2026

Time
10:30 AM - 11:50 AM EST

**Janette V. Moreno, DNP, RN, NEA-BC,
NPD-BC, FSIEN, FADLN**
Caritas Coach, Role-Driven Practice Coach
Director, Education and Professional Development
Stanford Health Care

Edie Yau
Senior Director for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Engagement for the Alzheimer's Association

The Philippine Nurses Association of America Foundation is an approved provider of continuing education by the California Board of Registered Nursing, CEP #46314.
1.0 Contact hour will be awarded at the completion of this program.

PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC.

Get ready for an unforgettable journey at the
48th PNAAP Annual National Convention

This year, we're taking you on a spectacular
Inter-Island Cruise in Hawaii — a week of learning, networking,
and celebration while sailing through paradise.

Save the date **July 17-24, 2027**

Host Chapter:
PNA Hawaii

PNACC OFFICERS *and* BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2024 - 2026



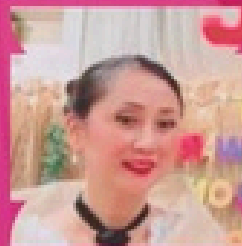
Philippine Nurses Association of Central California 2024 - 2026



Cecilia Utleg
President



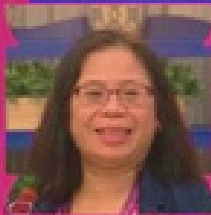
Rizza Elep
President-Elect



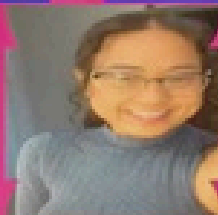
Laura De Vera
Vice President



Jenniver Westfall
Secretary



Fatima Estacio
Asst. Secretary



**Cherry Alacar
Moore**
Treasurer



Lorna Romero
Asst. Treasurer



Jennifer Martizano
Auditor



Luz Newell
Parliamentarian



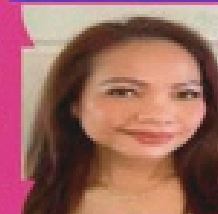
**Athena M.
Olliquiano**
PRO



Meldy Martin
Immediate Past
President



Carolyn Perez
Board of Director



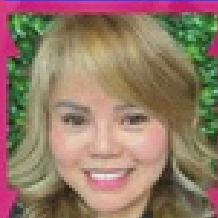
Analie Antero
Board of Director



Raumella Bautista
Board of Director



Guia Arceo
Board of Director



Marie M. Baybay
Board of Director



**Bernard V.
Payongayong**
Board of Director



**Ma Victoria De
Castro**
Board of Director



Shelly Reyes
Board of Director

PNACC COMMITTEE CHAIRS/CO-CHAIRS 2024 - 2026

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	CO-CHAIR	MEMBERS ADVISER
Archive	Guia Arceo	Cecilia Utleg	Nancy Hoff
Awards	Marie Baybay	Laura De Vera	Eleonor Baruela
Bylaws/Constitution	Cecilia Utleg	Rizza Elep	Luz Newell
Budget & Finance/ Ways & Means	Cherry Moore	Lorna Romero	Meldy Martin
Education/ Scholarship	Bernard Payonggayong	Jennifer Martizano	Rizza Elep
Human Rights/ Sunshine	Mae Bautista	Rizza Elep	Nancy Hoff
Membership	Analie Antero	Fatima Estacio	Yolly Maron
NOMELEC	Meldy Martin	Cecilia Utleg	Mila Nino
Practice & Research	Carolyn Perez	Laura De Vera	Luz Newell
Public Relations/ Social/FB	Ma. Victoria De Castro	Athena Oliquiano	Lilia De Leon
Website/Newsletter	Shelly Reyes	Jenniver Westfall	Maricon Estebar

The Grapevine

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor-in-chief

Jenniver Westfall, BSN,RN

Associate Editor

Cecilia Utleg, MSN,RN, PCCN

Editorial Staff Members

Laura De Vera, BSN, RN

Rizza Elep,BSN, RN, PCCN

Lorna Romero,BSN, RN, DWC

Mila Nino, BSN, RN

Fatima Estacio, BSN, RN

Contributors:

PNACC members

Photographer:

Rizza Elep, BSN, RN, PCCN

Advisory Board:

Luz Newell,MS,APN,MPA,CNOR,CRNFA

Maricon Estebar, BSN,RN