



FICOnnect

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FICOBANK Launches Its Mobile Money Financial Services through the Wais na Nanay Savers Club



Photo shows the representatives of the USAID Philippines, Globe GCash and FICOBANK, along with some Barangay Officials of District 2, Benito Soliven, Isabela, during the launching of the Bank's Mobile Money Financial Services through the Wais na Nanay Savers Club.

In full awareness of its vital role in helping mothers to become wiser with their financial management decisions, FICOBANK has created its Wais na Nanay Savers Club (WNSC). The WNSC is designed to foster financial literacy among mothers and be their source to learn the fundamental money-management skills. It is well-focused on the importance of saving for the future needs and aspirations of family, thus, molding members into wiser mothers, as it helps them make their dream of a bright future a reality. Corollary to this move, a Facilitator's Manual on Participatory Appraisal and Mobilization (PAM) was developed to initiate the savings program among mothers.

The soft testing of WNSC-PAM, along with the launching of the Bank's Mobile Money Financial Services, was done in Barangay District 2, Benito Soliven, Isabela on February 11, 2014. It was held in coordination with the Local Government Unit of Benito Soliven and the Barangay Officials of District 2. This special event was attended by: the FICOBANK's Chairman of the Board, Atty. Estalcker A. Argonza, SVP for Treasury & Corporate Services, Atty. Hubert E. Molina, and some department/office/unit heads; the United States Agency International Development (USAID) Philippines' Deputy Mission Director,

FICOBANK's Lucky 13: The Preeminent Tales of 2013

The year in review proves to be one of the challenging years for FICOBANK. But then, FICOBANK sustained the growth of its business through exceptional banking standards and practices despite the toughest test of times. Thus, as a year-end tradition, we, at FICOnnect, listed 13 of the prime events that can justify FICOBANK's capability to surmount all types of adversities, be it natural or man-made, and make itself emerged as one of the country's best-performing countryside banks in 2013.

Let's take a look back at FICOBANK's preeminent tales of 2013. Here is a rundown of the Lucky 13 news stories:

13. BSP Approval on Increasing FICOBANK's Capital Stock. The Central Applications and Licensing Group (CALG) of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) had approved on March 5, 2013 the application for the amendment on the Articles of Cooperation of the Bank. The said approval allows the Bank to generate more funds to finance its current operation, as well as its expansion plans.

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FICOBANK to Put Up Five New Branches

As it carries out its developmental mandate by expanding its reach, FICOBANK is set to open its additional five new branches to meet the growing demand for loans and other financial products and services that come along with a growing economy.

Just last October 4, 2013, after filing its application and complying with all the required documents, FICOBANK got the stamp of approval from the Central Applications and Licensing Group of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to establish its new banking offices.

Three of these branches are intended to be established in Nueva Ecija, which will be located in San Jose City and in the municipalities of Rizal and Zaragoza. The other branches shall be put up in Cauayan City, Isabela and in Baliuag, Bulacan. As required by the BSP, these branches shall be opened within three years from the date of approval thereof.

After the opening of these new branches, the Bank will have a total of 32 banking offices, which will be operating in a wider area and servicing a greater number of people in Northeast, Northwest and Central Luzon. Sure enough, more deposits shall be generated and more loans shall be extended, especially to the priority sector/sub-sector of the economy, such as, the agriculture sector and the SME sub-sector.

With this network-expansion undertaking, FICOBANK will certainly increase its production potential, which will subsequently help boost the local economic growth—fitting well with its distinct corporate identity of being a valuable community asset.

— Fae Marie Louise M. Esteban

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Authorized Capital Stock is the maximum number of shares a certain entity is allowed to issue for its capitalization. The amount thereof is stated at the entity's Articles of Cooperation of which, in accordance with Article 99 of Republic Act 9520, also known as the Cooperative Code of the Philippines, only a vote of at least three-fourths of all the members with voting rights present and constituting a quorum can effect an amendment.

12. FICOBank Bags More Awards from BANGKOOP. The Cooperative Banks Federation of the Philippines (BANGKOOP) presented to FICOBank the Award of Excellence for its outstanding financial performance in 2012. Four more Awards of Distinction have also been given to the Bank for besting other cooperative banks in the Philippines in terms of resources, deposits, net worth and net income. It was given during the 25th Annual General Assembly, July 29, 2013, of BANGKOOP.

11. Launching of New Money-Transfer Service. FICOBank, through a money-transfer agreement with BDO Unibank, Inc., launched the newest on the list of its money-remittance services—the MoneyGram Money Transfer—last January 29, 2013. This money-transfer facility will surely cater the needs of a greater number of people and will definitely give FICOBank another edge on its fee-based services for those who are working or residing abroad.

10. Hosting of Study Visit. High-ranking officials of member-institutions of the Asia-Pacific Rural and Agricultural Credit Association (APRACA) in India visited FICOBank on May 9, 2013. The study visit was designed to provide the participants with the opportunity to learn from the government regulators and practitioners regarding the growth, development and promotion of rural and cooperative banking in the Philippines, and discover the best practices and approaches which they may adopt or replicate in their country.

9. Setting Market Footprint in Gapan City, Nueva Ecija. After setting up its market foothold and making its strong market presence in Cabanatuan City and Guimba, Nueva Ecija, FICOBank set its new market footprint in Gapan City. Residents of Gapan City, and its adjacent municipalities, can now enjoy a wide range of financial products and services that are accessible within the proximity of their respective residences, workplaces, businesses

and offices, as the FICOBank's branch in the said city carried out its inaugural banking activities on February 11, 2013. With it, the Bank will equally have the opportunity to grow further, diversify its customer base and boost its presence in the financial market. FICOBank Gapan is conveniently located at KL Building, Tinio St., San Vicente, Gapan City, Nueva Ecija.

8. Transfer of FICOBank Branch in Mangaldan to San Fernando City. After a thorough study of the social and economic conditions of the City of San Fernando, Pampanga, the Board of Directors, through the strong recommendation of the Senior Management, decided to relocate FICOBank's Mangaldan Branch in it to take advantage of its great market potential. Following FICOBank's success in setting its market footprint in Gapan City, Nueva Ecija, the Bank hit another huge market, as San Fernando (Pampanga) Branch launched its inaugural banking activities on June 17, 2013.

7. Rollout of POGI Points. As FICOBank's Jewelry Loan aims to saturate the market in pawnbroking operation, the Bank made use of a reward promo for its clients. The promo is dubbed as FICOBank Patronage Optimum Guaranteed Incentive (POGI) Points. POGI Points promo intends to reward Jewelry Loan clients for their continuing patronage to the Bank's Jewelry Loan product. The promo period was from September 2013 to February 2014. Jewelry Loan clients may receive rewards through interest discounts and/or gift items from their POGI Points.

6. Retirement of EVP/COO Soledad S. Cabantac. On June 28, 2013, the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, the mother of FICOBank, bade farewell to all FICOBankers. By way of thanking her, the Human Resource and Administration Department, together with the Business Development Department, organized a simple program on that day, at four o'clock in the afternoon at the Corporate Office Training Hall, to extend best wishes for her retirement. After almost four decades of fruitful years of hard work and dedication with FICOBank, now, it is her time to take a permanent vacation and enjoy the life ahead.

5. Mid-Term Review of FICOBank's Five-Year Development Plan. The Bank conducted a Mid-Term Review on July 26-27, 2013 at the Baguio Burnham Suites in Baguio City, with the theme "Staying in Business amid

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Mr. Reed J. Aeschliman, and Project Management Specialist, Ms. Maria Teresita F. Espenilla; the Chief of Party for the USAID SIMM Project, Mr. Mamerto E. Tangonan; and the Barangay Officials of District 2, represented by Barangay Councilor Juanito B. Agustin.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the program started with an invocation, led by Ms. Riel Kamille V. Nera (Research & Development Assistant of the Bank's Business Development Department). This was followed by an opening message from Mr. Juanito B. Agustin, who expressed his warm welcome and gratitude to FICOBank and the USAID Philippines for helping Benito Soliven, particularly their *barangay*, in scaling development for its constituents. Afterward, Dr. Robert R. Palac, Business Development Department Head, gave the participating mothers a briefing on the WNSC program's background, description, purposes and advantages, as well as the rewards and freebies that the members may be entitled to. Meanwhile, Ms. Marjorie J. Cabigas, Todo Finance Unit Head, demonstrated how to make a deposit transaction with FICOBank, using the GCash platform, via mobile phone. This was followed by a message from Mr. Aeschliman, highlighting the result of their studies, wherein most of the members of Filipino households have no access to banking products and services, but more than 80 percent of Filipinos have access to mobile phones. This is the primary reason why USAID make use of the mobile phone technology in scaling innovations on how people use money. He also congratulated FICOBank for being one of the pioneers in cooperative banking in the country and admired the growth and expansion which the Bank has attained.



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Mr. Jake Joaquin C. Asirit

Graphic Designer

Mr. Kevin Marc M. Sinagub



FICOBank Marks Its 37th Founding Anniversary



Organizations, companies, associations and the like celebrate their founding anniversaries to remember how they've started, look back over the past years, and see how far they've come now. This is also their way of commemorating what they have achieved and how they have grown.

Year 2013 marked the 37th founding anniversary of FICOBank. This was celebrated on September 10 at all banking offices of the Bank in Regions I-III by front-office managers and staff, together with valued clients and business allies. The celebration culminated on September 14, 2013 at the FICOBank Corporate Office, with the theme "Staying Strong, Stable and Sustainable amid Challenging Banking Environment." Though the business of banking gets tougher and more competitive, FICOBank never fails to prove itself in fulfilling its role in the community.

A soulful doxology rendition by the Kalibnusan Chorale signaled the formal opening of the said event at 9:00 a.m., which was followed by the singing of the Philippine national anthem and FICOBank theme song. Afterward, Rev. Emerson C. Miguel of the God is Able Church in Alicia, Isabela delivered his enlightening words of encouragement in achieving one's goal, which ended with a song and a prayer. Later on, Dir. Florentino T. Somera, Jr. gave his simple, yet wit-filled, opening remarks. He proudly said that despite the struggling and trying times that FICOBank had experienced, it still managed to survive, claiming its achievements over those years. He confidently added that for the years to come, with its deep faith to God, the Bank will be stronger, more stable and sustainable in whatever challenges that will come along its way.

As has always been one of the highlights of such celebration, nine more FICOBankers were honored with Loyalty Awards for their 10 years of dedicated service to the Bank, and they are: Mr. Rommel M. Lindo (ICTD Head); Mr. Dionicio A. Marquez, Jr. (Credit Department Head); Mr. Reynaldo U. Valdez, Jr. (FICOBank San Fernando BM); Ms. Geraldine D. Abrasaldo (FICOBank Santiago ABM); Ms. May P. Mabunga (FICOBank Bambang AEOM); Ms. Bernadette S. Castro (HRAD Assistant); Mr. Dennis Glenn M. Ibana (FICOBank Alicia LO); Mr. Marlon G. Jacinto (FICOBank Head Office LO); and Mr. Melvin S. Peralta (Todo Finance Unit CO). Director Somera, together with the President & CEO, Mr. Herminio G. Ocampo, and SVP for Treasury & Corporate Services, Atty. Hubert E. Molina, conferred each awardee a 12-karat gold brooch, depicting the Bank's iconic logo.

Meanwhile, President Ocampo gave his anniversary message. He shared a quote that states, "The farther we can look back, the farther forward we can see." He emphasized that those significant and inspiring

FICOBank Converts Its Remaining Extension Offices into Full-Fledged Branches



After the Bank's Board of Directors' approval, during its regular meeting held on January 10, 2014, which was subsequently authorized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), in its letter dated January 28, 2014, the six remaining extension offices (EOs) of FICOBank in Aurora, Echague, San Mateo and Tumauni (Isabela), Bambang (Nueva Vizcaya) and Diffun (Quirino) are now officially converted into full-fledged branches.

Following the conversion of the Bank's extension offices in Ilagan City, Tuguegarao City and Cabagan (relocated afterward in Gapan City) into regular branches is its tactical move to put its remaining EOs to a higher notch.

It was in 2007 when FICOBank Diffun and FICOBank Aurora were inaugurated as field offices (FOs), under the domain of Maddela Branch and Roxas Branch, respectively. On the other hand, FICOBank Bambang, FICOBank Echague, FICOBank San Mateo and FICOBank Tumauni were opened as field offices in 2008, which were used to be attached to the Bank's branches in Solano, Jones, Alicia and Ilagan City, respectively. All of these FOs were converted into extension offices in 2010 and 2011.

As a post-approval condition, FICOBank was required by the BSP to notify it of the actual dates of the start of operation of the abovementioned operating units, as regular branches, for not later than five banking days from such opening. Furthermore, the Bank was also required to comply continuously with the pertinent regulations on maintaining a branch office and the adequacy of the means of reporting/communication between its Head Office and such branches.

With the conversion of the extension offices into full-fledged branches, along with the opening of five more branches, as approved earlier on by the BSP, FICOBank will soon have a total of 32 banking offices.

This significant development in the banking landscape of FICOBank assures better image of its corporate brand, better delivery of its financial services and better outcome of its banking operation.

- FML Esteban

FICOBank Net Income Up by 20% to Php96M in 2013

FICOBank has once again proven that there's more to attain, as it posted a significant net profit of Php96.01 million in its year-end report for 2013. This figure represents an increase of Php15.86 million or 20 percent, as compared to last year's record of Php80.15 million.

The remarkable growth in the net income was brought about by the Bank's steady stream of earnings from its core lending activities, which resulted to a gross income amounting to Php445.09 million (indicating a 7.33-percent increase from the previous year's Php414.68-million level), and the decisive reduction in interest and controllable expenses. In comparison to the same period last year, interest income grew by Php79.30 million, or 24.32 percent.

The Bank has also been efficient in using its resources, as its cost-to-income ratio went down to 78.43 percent from the 80.67 percent of the same period last year. In addition, the growth in net profit did better than the growth in total assets, which resulted to a better return on assets of 3.50 percent from the preceding year's 3.39 percent.

As loans are the major source of its income, the Bank did an aggressive loan generation, and was able to release Php7.49-billion loans. And as of end-December 2013, its total loan portfolio soared to Php1.71 billion, up by 9.61 percent from the year-ago level of Php1.56 billion. Such increase was driven by the introduction of the FICOBank POGI Points Promo for its Jewelry Loan clients and the re-launching of Salary Loan, with new product features. In reference to the former, a Php4.20-billion Jewelry Loan volume was generated, up by Php45.65 million, as compared to the previous year's level of Php4.15 billion. As to the latter, a worth-mentioning growth of Php30.83 million in Salary Loan portfolio, or 778.53 percent, was registered from the year-ago record of Php3.96 million.

Furthermore, the Bank continued the strict implementation of various risk-mitigating measures to its lending operation, with the end of building up a superior asset quality. At year-end, it was able to post a past due ratio of 5.20 percent. It slightly improved from last year's 5.24-percent record.

On the growth trend of the balance sheet, the Bank posted a 16-percent growth (Php377.10 million) in its total assets. The total capital of the Bank also rose by 15 percent (Php50.75 million), as of end-December 2013.

Undeniably, the Bank shows an exceptional year-after-year performance. As the strategies are already laid down in the Board-approved impact-based and result-based plans and programs of the Treasury & Corporate Services Group (TCSG) and the Operation & Banking Services Group (OBSG), respectively, FICOBank is optimistic that the same will be realized at the end of year.

- Fae Esteban

Strategic Planning Review in Boracay

Amid the pressures of daily grind of work, *both business and personal*, brought about by the intricate operation of the Bank, industry competition and a nagging wife or loved one, eight members of the Board of Directors, five Senior Officers, the Corporate Secretary and two BOD staff of the Bank took their time off and went to Boracay last February 21-23, 2014 for a three-day Strategic Planning Review. The planning session went smoothly and went even beyond expectations. Aside from the sensitive and more complicated strategic directions of the Bank, members of the Board and Management were able to agree, level off and unite their proposed actions for the best interest of the Bank. It is expected that said plans and actions will be put into motion in no time.

- Ahem

FICOBank Partners with GXI for Its Mobile Money Banking



In pursuing its commitment to innovative banking, FICOBank has recently entered into a partnership with the G-Xchange, Inc. (GXI), a subsidiary company of Globe Telecom, on November 05, 2013. This partnership is in line with the offering of the Bank's Mobile Money (M-Money) Banking facility to the public.

Through GXI's Bills Payment and Powerpay Plus facilities, the Bank can now make its loan-disbursement-and-collection and special-savings-account-deposit-and-withdrawal activities convenient, with the aid of mobile phones. Using the Globe's GCash platform, loan proceeds of Microfinance clients and loan payments of both Microfinance and Jewelry Loan borrowers can now be easily disbursed and collected, respectively. Likewise, special savings account holders can now conveniently make their deposit and withdrawal transactions with the Bank, even in remote places, as long as there are Cash-In/Cash-Out (CICO) agents of GCash in the area. With this technological, yet economical, way of doing banking, such clients don't have to worry anymore in carrying bulk amount of money and in waiting for their turn during long queues in the Bank.

This new banking facility comes with a co-branded M-Money Card for the clients to convert—with great ease—their mobile money into real money, which can be used in all MegaLink automated teller machines (ATMs) nationwide. In addition, clients may also opt to do their M-Money Banking through GCash authorized outlets.

The Implementing Agreement between FICOBank and GXI was signed by: the FICOBank's President & CEO, Mr. Herminio G. Ocampo, and Chairman of the Board, Atty. Estalder A. Argonza; and the GXI's Regional Sales Manager for North Luzon, Mr. Al M. Rañola. The Chief of Party for the USAID SIMM Project, Mr. Mamerto E. Tangonan, witnessed the said contract signing.

Certainly, this is just only FICOBank's first step in providing its clients an easier access to its banking services through its M-Money Banking facility—a fast, secure, hassle-free and reliable approach in bringing about a worthwhile banking experience.

- Riel Kamille V. Nera & Kevin Marc M. Sinagub

FICOBank Holds Its First Big-Time Bankwide Auction Sale

As part of FICOBank's asset disposal strategy, with the aim to thwart the continuous increase of its Real and Other Properties Acquired (ROPA), the ROPA Disposal Unit and the Jewelry Loan Unit of the Asset Management & Legal Department (AMLD) and the Credit Department, respectively, in cooperation with all the operating units and other support departments, held the first-ever and big-time bankwide ROPA Auction Sale on December 2, 2013.

The ROPA Auction Sale was made up of the Jewelry Auction Sale and the Real Estate Public Auction. It was participated by various interested buyers from Regions I, II and III. The Jewelry Auction Sale was carried out on a "First Come First Served" basis, while the Real Estate Public Auction was done on a sealed envelope bidding.

The Jewelry Auction Sale ran from December 2 to 6, 2013. As part of the overall preparation for the scheduled auction sale, electronic copies of "Jewelry for Sale" brochures were prepared through the joint efforts of the Business Development Department (BDD), the Information & Communication Technology Department (ICTD) and the Human Resource & Administration Department (HRAD). The said brochures were issued, along with the Auction Sale Guidelines, to all FICOBank's operating units for the information of, and appraisal by, their prospective buyers. The approval of the purchase offers were communicated to, and approved solely by, the Jewelry Loan Unit Head. However, the credit sales made to the directors, officers, stockholders and related interests, or collectively referred to as DOSRIs, were subsequently subjected to the approval of both the Bids & Awards Committee and the Board of Directors.

The Real Estate Public Bidding was scheduled on December 6, 2013 (9:00 a.m.) at the Training Hall of FICOBank in Minante 1, Cauayan City, Isabela. During the pre-auction phase, hardcopies of the ROPA brochures, bearing the photo, vicinity map, basic descriptions of the property and the minimum bid price, were prepared through the joint efforts of AMLD, BDD and HRAD. The said brochures, together with the Auction Sale Guidelines, were issued to all operating units for their potential participants' consideration and action. All interested participants were required to fill out the prescribed registration form, and to present or deposit an amount of Php10,000.00, as show money, in compliance to the pre-auction registration requirements. The participants were oriented, in detail, as to the rules of the bidding, such as, the "as-is-where-is" conditions, terms of payment and others.

At the time of the auction, minimum bid prices were set, as basis for which the bidders will set their respective bid prices, which may be payable either thru cash or installment. The duly accomplished bid forms were placed on a sealed envelope and submitted accordingly to the facilitators who determined the winning buyers. The same, however, were subjected further to the approval by the members of the Bids & Awards Committee.

The first-ever and big-time bankwide ROPA Auction Sale was a success, as the income derived from it amounted to Php2.28 million, for both Jewelry and Real Estate Auction.

- Lara Manzano

Credit and Guarantee Lines Give a Big Boost to FICOBank's Lending Operation

The Bank, aside from the deposits generated from the banking public, boosts its lending activities through borrowed funds from creditors, resulting to a yearly increase in loan volume and portfolio. The quality of its loan portfolio also improves due to the credit guarantee coverage that is made available by its guarantee-providers.

Presently, FICOBank has six funding institutions whose help is of vital importance to the Bank's lending operation. They are the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP), National Livelihood Development Corporation (NLDC), Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) and Small Business Corporation (SBC), which the Bank has a credit line in each of them for a total of Php1.285 billion. The Bank has also a total of Php300-million guarantee lines from the Agricultural Guarantee Fund Pool (AGFP) and SBC.

With these credit lines, the Bank could rediscount its borrowers' Promissory Notes or could drawdown funds from such lines of credit for re-lending. And, with the guarantee lines, the Bank could transfer and share the credit risks of its unsecured or partially secured loan accounts. These credit and guarantee lines are important in achieving the Bank's target loan volume and portfolio quality. Such lines are also beneficial to microentrepreneurs, businessmen, professionals, farmers, fishers and other segments of the market and sectors of the society, as they could now fully access the lending services of the Bank.

It is also important that credit lines are in current status; otherwise, external funding would not be available. It may not totally paralyze the banking operation, but having a current status of credit lines with the funders is important to have a better flow of lending operation. An increase in the Bank's loan portfolio would mean the generation of more interest and non-interest incomes.

Right now, the Treasury Department, headed by Ms. Juvy M. Galutera, administers and monitors such credit and guarantee lines, communicates with the funders/guarantors, and negotiates on interest rates and guarantee fees. These are, of course, carried out with the approval of the Senior Management and full support of the staff of the Rediscounting Unit of the Treasury Department.

With a total of Php1.585-billion credit and guarantee lines, the Bank has a better leverage in its lending operation.

- Mary Grace Laggui & Valen Grace Tolentino

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years are the Bank's today's motivation to pursue its journey toward banking excellence. He also encouraged all FICOBankers that no matter how competitive the banking environment will be, as long as everybody will work hand in hand, the Bank can move across on what it takes to become—a stronger bank. He ended his speech by stressing that radical transformation through revolutionary business model and proper management of the Bank's most important resources (e.g., clients and employees) are the keys for FICOBank to sustain its growth and success.

This was followed by the awarding of the Lifetime Achievement Award and Plaque of Recognition to Ms. Soledad S. Cabantac, the Bank's former Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer. The Bank will forever be thankful for all of her titanic efforts and history-making accomplishments that greatly contributed to what is FICOBank today.

After witnessing an entertainment number from the Isabela Dance Sport & Cultural Group, the most-awaited awarding of the Best Performing Branches/Extension Office for CY 2012 took place. FICOBank Head Office got the highest rank with its greatest feat. It was followed by FICOBank Tuguegarao (Cagayan), FICOBank Aurora (Isabela) and FICOBank Alicia (Isabela) for the second, third and fourth places, respectively. The Managers of these operating units were correspondingly adjudged as the Top Performing BMs/EOM. Dir. Eufemio M. Basuel wrapped up the said celebration with his acknowledgment-laden closing remarks.

Sharing the grand-anniversary moments were the Board of Directors, Senior Management, Department/Office Heads and staff, Branch/Extension Office Managers and deputies, coop-stockholders' representatives, former Chairmen and Directors, and some of the Agricultural Cooperative Development Officers (ACDOs).

With just being what it is—*ang bangkong pinagtibay ng panahon*—FICOBank can declare victory over adversities at all times. After all, these 37 remarkable years are just a start of decades of years of doing innovative banking, as the Bank shall continue to make notable accomplishments, year after year.

– Fae Marie Louise M. Esteban

FICOBank Increases Its Single Borrower's Limit

As FICOBank is continuously performing, growing and expanding, its capability in carrying out its banking activities, particularly its lending operation, is also expected to be at a higher level. As of December 31, 2013, the Bank's single borrower's limit (SBL) is at Php95 million.

The SBL is imposed on banks by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) as a prudential measure to avoid undue credit concentration or excessive credit exposure, which may cause significant loss to a bank should the borrower defaulted on his/her/its obligation. By capping lending to a single client, the potential loss of a bank in case such client fails to pay his/her/its obligation will be limited.

The BSP, in its *Manual of Regulations for Banks* (MORB), states that: "Consistent with national interest, the total amount of loans, credit accommodations and guarantees that may be extended by a bank to any person, partnership, association, corporation or other entity shall at no time exceed twenty-five percent (25%) of the net worth of such bank. The basis for determining compliance with the single borrower's limit (SBL) is the total credit commitment of the bank to or on behalf of the borrower."

The Bank's capital at the end of 2013 is pegged at a Php380.41-million level. This is represented by a 15-percent growth, or a Php50.75-million increase, from that of 2012's record of Php329.66 million.

This provision on SBL enables FICOBank to spread the risks inherent in its lending activities; hence, producing a better quality of loan portfolio. And, with its increasing SBL, the Bank is also creating greater opportunity for its loan-takers, with high net worth and superior collaterals, to access big-ticket loans.

– Fae Esteban

SBC Approves FICOBank's Php100-Million Portfolio Guarantee Facility Application

On January 7, 2014, Small Business Corporation (SBC) has approved the accreditation of FICOBank to make use of its Portfolio Guarantee Facility (PGF). With it, FICOBank can enroll up to a total of Php100 million of its risk-based SME loan portfolio for guarantee coverage. A Master Guarantee Agreement (MGA) was signed thereafter by the Bank's President/CEO, Mr. Herminio G. Ocampo, and by the SBC's OIC-President/COO, Ms. Ma. Luna E. Cacanando.

This PGF is an automatic guarantee that shall cover the SME accounts of the Bank under its Risk-Based Lending (RBL) methodology. Each account should have a borrower risk rating of "6" or better, and can either be unsecured or partially secured. Also, SME borrowers who are engaged in farm-level agri-business activities are also qualified to be covered by the said facility, provided that each has/is: (i) an asset of at least Php3 million; (ii) registered with DTI, SEC or CDA; (iii) at least three years of track record; (iv) at least 10 employees; and (v) a clear market, preferably under contract-growing arrangement.

Following such approval was SBC's visit to FICOBank on February 24-27, 2014. SBC reviewed some of the Bank's SME accounts that are to be enrolled under its PGF and interviewed some loan officers and department head/officer who handle and manage such accounts. Such visit ended with an exit meeting attended by the SBC's representatives and FICOBank's department heads/officers.

In like manner, SBC has also approved the Bank's application for the renewal of its Php30-million Omnibus Credit Line, of which Php15 million is intended for the Jewelry Loan borrowers while the other half is for the SME Loan borrowers of the Bank.

With this, FICOBank is now more capable of extending greater credit access to SMEs that will improve their productivity and help realize their growth goals, thus, boosting the SME sector of the country.

– Fae Esteban

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Difficult and Stringent Banking Environment,” to assess the progress of its 2011-2015 Development Plan, entitled “Firmly FOCUSED.” The event was attended by the Bank’s Board of Directors, senior officers, heads of the different departments and offices, area managers and some branch/extension office managers.

4. FICOBank Partners with G-Xchange, Inc. In pursuit of more innovative banking services, the First Isabela Cooperative Bank entered into a partnership with G-Xchange, Inc. to offer money disbursement and collection through Mobile Money (M-Money). The contract signing was held at the FICOBank’s Training Hall on November 05, 2013. The Memorandum of Agreement between FICOBank and G-Xchange, Inc. was signed by the FICOBank’s President/CEO, Mr. Herminio G. Ocampo, and Chairman of the Board, Atty. Estalcker A. Argonza, together with the Regional Sales Manager for North Luzon of G-Xchange, Inc., Mr. Al M. Rañola. It was witnessed by the Chief of Party from USAID Philippines, Mr. Mamerto E. Tangonan. Also present during the contract signing were some of the officers of FICOBank and G-Xchange, Inc.

3. FICOBank’s ROPA Auction Sale. FICOBank, through its Asset Management and Legal Department-Disposal Unit and Credit Department-Jewelry Loan Unit, in cooperation with all its operating units and other support departments, held its first-ever and big-time bankwide ROPA Auction Sale on December 2, 2013, with the aim to thwart the continuous increase of its Real and Other Properties Acquired (ROPA). The ROPA auction sale was made up of the Jewelry Auction Sale and the Real Estate Public Auction. It was participated by various interested buyers from Regions I, II and III. Jewelry Auction Sale was carried out on a “First Come First Served” basis, while the Real Estate Public Auction was done on a sealed envelope bidding. The income derived from the said auction sale amounted to Php2.28 million for both Jewelry and Real Estate Auction. The Bank’s ROPA Auction Sale was indeed a success.

2. BSP Approval on Five New Branches. After filing its application and complying with all the required documents, FICOBank got the nod of the Central Applications and Licensing Group of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), on October 4, 2013, to open its five new branches. Three of these will be located in the city of San Jose and in the municipalities of Rizal and Zaragoza—all in the province of Nueva Ecija. The other branches shall be put up in Cauayan City, Isabela and in Baliuag, Bulacan. With this branch network expansion, the Bank will soon have a total of 32 banking offices, which will be operating in a wider area and servicing a greater number of people in Northeast, Northwest and Central Luzon.

1. FICOBank Net Income Up by 20% to Php96M in 2013. Undeniably, the Bank showed an exceptional year-after-year performance. It has proven once again that there’s more to attain, as it posted a significant net profit of Php96.01 million in its year-end report for 2013. This figure represents an increase of Php15.86 million or 20 percent, in comparison to 2012’s record of Php80.15 million. The remarkable growth in net income was brought about by the Bank’s steady stream of earnings from its core lending activities, which resulted to a gross income amounting to

Php445.09 million (with a 7.33-percent increase from previous year’s Php414.68-million level), and the decisive reduction in interest and controllable expenses.

– RKV Nera

FICOBank Launches...

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Board Chairman Atty. Argonza gave his closing remarks afterward, appreciating the presence of the representatives of the USAID Philippines and the Globe GCash on the said launching. After which was the account activation of the Wais na Nanay Savers Club members. The program was masterfully steered by Mr. Kevin Marc M. Sinagub and Ms. Abigaile A. Ramones, Marketing Communication Assistant and Compliance Office Assistant, respectively.

FICOBank, in partnership with Globe GCash, may now deliver a more expedient banking service to its WNSC members, eliminating hassles and external barriers in saving money and making these member-mothers save up to Php100.00 expenses on transportation and two-hour travel time.

– Riel Kamille V. Nera & Kevin Marc M. Sinagub

The Planned Makeover of the FICOBank Head Office Building

To enhance further its public image, FICOBank Corporate Office will undergo major renovation to give rise to a new and innovative structure at the same site where it is presently located and set to be the permanent FICOBank Head Office. The building, which is about to be remodeled soon, is expected to have a better and spacious place for HO banking operation, treasury undertaking and administrative functions.

The would-be new FICOBank Head Office building will enfold gold-and-blue-colored walls with crystal-clear glass panels in most of its partitions. Similar to most of the newly erected offices of the Bank, the HO building will be aesthetically designed, with lots of add-ons to suit the convenience of its distinct clientele and corporate workforce.

The construction is likely to begin anytime this year, as its building plan and capex budget are already available. Engr. Angelito L. Perez, FICOBank’s Resident Engineer and Officer-in-Charge of the said project, will assume full responsibility in the supervision of the renovation of the building. The former FICOBank Head Office that is located in San Fermin, Cauayan City, Isabela will just serve as FICOBank’s branch in Cauayan.

The banking operation of the Head Office will be distinct from that of the branches, as it will deal with a range of corporate accounts and particular segments of the market that are not currently served by the Bank. This is to avoid conflict of operation between the HO and the operating units. The banking operation of the Head Office is under the direct supervision of the SVP for Treasury & Corporate Services. It is manned by well-trained and customer-service-driven personnel, headed by Mr. Ronald C. Busto.

– Riel Nera



Achieving Our Bank's Objectives with the Aid of Internal Control and Audit

The primary purpose of any business activities and projects undertaken, or to be undertaken, by our Bank is to achieve its objectives. On the same manner, the main purpose of internal control is to assist our Bank in achieving its objectives. But, time and again, risks frequently get in the way. Risks are sets of circumstances that hinder the achievement of our Bank's objectives. However, there are a number of ways our Bank can manage its risks to bring them to a level which we, the members of the Board, deem acceptable through some processes, referred to as controls. In other words, internal control is a process which manages our risks, as controls are part of our Bank's risk management framework.

If our Bank's objectives are threatened by risks, the concerned echelon(s) of our management is/are responsible for identifying and assessing the risks and in ensuring that there is an appropriate response to all risks. On the other hand, our internal audit function provides independent and objective opinions—based on verifiable facts and viewed without bias—to our Bank's management, as to whether our risks are being managed within the acceptable levels.

As a rule, the Board is responsible for setting policies on our Bank's risk management and internal control. Receiving and reviewing "processed reports" on risk management system and processes and getting assurance that these are working effectively and efficiently are essential parts of our responsibilities. As such, we periodically conduct a review of the effectiveness of our Bank's internal controls. In backstopping the Board, our Senior Management takes the full responsibility for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risks, for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control, and for providing assurance to the Board of Directors that it has done so.

The Audit Committee, as a Board-level committee, is responsible to monitor and review the effectiveness of our Bank's internal control function, and to provide advice as to how "effectiveness" might be judged. The Committee is also required to oversee and assess the role and effectiveness of our internal audit function in the overall context of our Bank's risk management system. On the other hand, the Internal Audit Department is responsible in carrying out its function on risk-based internal auditing—a methodology used in providing assurance that risks are being managed within our Bank's risk appetite.

More importantly, all our employees have their respective responsibilities for internal control, as part of their individual accountability in achieving the objectives (financial and non-financial) of our Bank. With our outstanding operational and financial performance in 2013, the internal, as well as the external, audit function will surely form an opinion that our Bank's internal control is indeed "EFFECTIVE," as it was.

Atty. Estalcker A. Argonza



Defining the Future of Banking: Speed and Quality of Execution Matter Most

Today's banking environment is going through a revolutionary change. With the different forces reshaping significantly the business landscape of banking, we, at FICOBANK, believe that the future of banking will have a representation of more challenges, along with some changes. At our Bank, taking new challenges means seeking new opportunities, and having some valuable changes means not only growing a lot but making a big difference. We will make the best out of these opportunities, perform our mandates with excellence, provide our clients a banking experience they rightfully deserve, and increase our shareholders' value. Through these, we will be able to sustain our Bank's growth, expand further its area of operation and fully realize its business objectives.

Our Bank has proven, as the years passed by, its corporate promise of providing its clientele with worthwhile banking experience through top-quality service delivery. But, time and again, various forces affect our banking operation, e.g., technological advances, evolving customer behaviors and expectations, intensifying competition, etc. The conventional ways of banking are now becoming obsolete. These redefine the ways of banking and call for some changes now and in the future.

On our part, we are confident that our Bank is adaptively and effectively managing all of these, as they should be. With our IT infrastructures (e.g., Lending System, Teller System, Client Information System, Online Banking System, etc.), our day-to-day transactions and affairs with our clients and other stakeholders are becoming easier and faster. In fact, with the aid of modern technology, we have just recently embarked on Mobile Money (M-Money) Banking. Though still at an initial phase, a great number of our clients can now enjoy a fast, secure, hassle-free and reliable means of making branchless banking transactions; thus, shifting from the traditional banking to convenience banking. And, as always, we make sure that our customers' banking-related needs are promptly addressed with appropriate financial, technological, procedural and legal solutions. With our ever-dynamic leadership, highly skilled and very dedicated people, effective risk management and internal control system, well-designed policies, procedures, rules and regulations, and efficient communication system, our service delivery is always at its best. As a result, we are able to maintain a superior portfolio quality, build a strong balance-sheet position and record a better operational and financial performance, year after year. In addition, the identity of our Bank and our relationships with our stakeholders are forever deeply rooted in the organizational culture we abide by and firmly embedded in the best practices and approaches we carry out.

We will never be complacent, however, with these—so to speak. We still need to do a lot of things, i.e., creation and adoption of new business models, development of new products and services, enhancement and/or development of more infrastructures/systems, etc. These will enable us to rise above the greater challenges ahead, such as, changing market conditions, emerging threats of competition and other external forces, empowered and sophisticated customer base, detrimental impact and effects of the incoming ASEAN-wide financial integration, ever-changing regulatory requirements, and the like.

The more-promising future of banking is the direction that our Bank is focused on, as it is the strategic path that we intend to thread. And as we go on with our institutional journey, we will incessantly keep our corporate-brand promise of staying in the business of banking for good. No matter what, we're "built to last." Aren't we?

Herminio G. Ocampo

Legal Matters

Atty. Hubert E. Molina



"Ignorantia legis neminem excusat," which means "ignorance of the law excuses no one," is a legal principle holding that a person who is unaware of

a law may not escape liability for violating that law merely because he or she was unaware of its content (en.wikipedia.org). This Latin maxim or legal principle is adopted in our existing laws under Article 3 of the New Civil Code, which states that "Ignorance of the law excuses no one from compliance therewith." Thus, it is imperative to know the existing laws, especially the new ones, in order to avoid violating them or be updated of new rights as well as obligations. Here are a rundown of previously promulgated laws.

Republic Act No. 10627, or otherwise known as the "Anti-Bullying Act of 2013," prohibits bullying in elementary and secondary schools, and authorizes school authorities to slap appropriate sanctions against the perpetrators. Under the implementing regulations of the said law, bullying is defined as "severe or repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at another student that has the effect of actually causing or placing the latter in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm or damage to his property; creating a hostile environment at school for the other student; infringing on the rights of another student at school; or materially and substantially disrupting the education process or the orderly operation of a school." Physical contact such as punching, pushing, showing, kicking, slapping, tickling, headlocks, inflicting school pranks, teasing, fighting and use of weapon are prohibited acts of bullying. Cyber-bullying, or any bullying done through electronic means, is also unlawful. The term shall also include any conduct resulting to harassment, intimidation or humiliation, through

New Laws Update!

the use of other forms of technology, such as, but not limited to, texting, e-mail, instant messaging, chatting, internet, social media, online games, or other platforms or formats. Disciplinary sanctions such as written reprimand, community service, suspension, exclusion or expulsion may be imposed depending on the nature, severity and gravity of the offense. In addition to the disciplinary sanction, the bully shall also be required to undergo an intervention program, which shall be administered or supervised by the school's Child Protection Committee. The parents of the bully shall be encouraged to join the intervention program.

Republic Act No. 10609, or the "Protection of Students' Right to Enroll in Review Centers Act of 2013," prohibits public and private colleges and universities to compel students about to take professional licensure tests to enroll in a prescribed review center. It has been observed that some schools had previously required their students to enroll with their partner review centers and students were required to pay not only fees for the review but also packages for transportation, board and lodging. Under the new law, higher educational institutions are strictly prohibited from making review classes as a pre-requisite for graduation or completion of the course and withholding the transcript of scholastic records, diploma, certification or any essential document of the student. Those violating the law will be suspended from office and their professional license will be revoked. School officials or employees who will be found guilty for disobeying the law, such as deans, advisers or professors, shall be imprisoned from six months and one day to six years and will be fined of Php750,000.00.

Republic Act No. 10572 amends the provisions of the Family Code by establishing the liability of the absolute community or conjugal partnership for an obligation of a spouse who practices a profession and the capability of either spouse to dispose an exclusive property without the consent of the other spouse. Under the amendatory law, "Either spouse may exercise any legitimate profession, occupation, business or activity without the consent of

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From My Notes & Files

Emilio U. Rico, Jr.



In 2013, the operating units managed to post a positive income, recording a year-on-year growth of 15.51 percent.

This was brought about by an improved loan portfolio quality and the continued patronage of the existing clients. Despite the onslaught of typhoons, majority of the branches performed well, except for the newly opened and some existing ones where a few of their big-ticket accounts turned sour and a number of their clients opted not to avail anymore of the Bank's financial products. While the operating units recorded an outturn, risks to growth remain, which include global gold price fluctuations and natural disasters, among others. However, we are optimistic that the Operation & Banking Services Group (OBSG) will be able to adjust its strategies without any difficulty, so as to come up with a better performance for calendar year 2014.

The general strategies include the following:

- To maintain and/or further improve the performance of the five best branches that contribute around 45% of the OBSG's total

OBSG CY2014 Prospects

- income;
- To maximize the growth potentials of the branches located in more developed areas;
- To turn around the performances of branches registering losses and/or negative growth; and
- To improve the placements and skills of the OBSG's human capital.

These are just some of the strategies that we are planning to implement in order to sustain, if not improve, our growth trajectory. Thus, with proper implementation, we are confident that the target given to us is achievable. Moreover, we are cognizant of the role that people play in realizing this goal; besides, it is them who have the power to make and unmake the Bank. Primary consideration shall then be provided for their welfare and needs. Rewards shall be given to those who are dedicated and hardworking (not on patronage politics, sycophantic and the like), and sanctions shall be imposed to those who cannot deliver; thereby, maintaining a breed of professional employees.

In closing, no matter how good a plan is, it will be useless, if everyone is not willing to participate. Thus, cooperation can never be undervalued, as this goes well with the saying: "In unity there is strength." Cheers to a prosperous 2014!

New Laws...

the other. The latter may object only on valid, serious and moral grounds. In case of disagreement, the court shall decide whether or not: (1) The objection is proper; and (2) Benefit has accrued to the family prior to the objection or thereafter. If the benefit accrued prior to the objection, the resulting obligation shall be enforced against the community property. If the benefit accrued thereafter, such obligation shall be enforced against the separate property of the spouse who has not obtained consent. The foregoing provisions shall not prejudice the rights of creditors who acted in good faith. Further, either spouse may mortgage, encumber, alienate or otherwise dispose of his or her exclusive property."

Republic Act No. 10175, or the "Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012," was signed into law by President Aquino on 12 September 2012. Almost immediately, numerous petitioners filed a case in court questioning the constitutionality of the said law, crying that the law has unabashedly violated their right to expression. Recently, the Supreme Court has just issued its ruling declaring the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 most of the questioned provisions to be constitutional. However, activities which intrude upon privacy of individuals or corporations were declared unconstitutional. So what is this law all about? The Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 is the first law in the Philippines that specifically criminalizes computer crime, which prior to the passage of the law had no strong legal

precedent in Philippine jurisprudence. It aims to address legal issues concerning online interactions. Among the cybercrime offenses included in the law are illegal access (hacking), data interference, device misuse, cybersquatting, cybersex, child pornography, identity theft, illegal access to data and libel. But the new Act received mixed reactions upon its enactment, especially on the grounds of freedom of expression, freedom of speech and data security. The law also reaffirms existing laws against child pornography, an offense under Republic Act No. 9775 (the Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009), and libel, an offense under Section 377 of the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines, also criminalizing them when committed using a computer system. Finally, the Act provides for a "catch-all" clause, wherein all offenses currently punishable under the Revised Penal Code are likewise punishable under the Act when committed using a computer, with corresponding stricter penalties than if the crimes were punishable under the Revised Penal Code alone (<http://www.ilonggotechblog.com>). If found guilty of any of those enumerated offenses, the penalty of imprisonment and/or fine will be imposed.

Indeed, the above new laws are difficult to understand, *especially the Cybercrime Prevention Act*, but it is always prudent to know them for "ignorance of the law excuses no one from compliance therewith."

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Thoughts to Ponder upon

By Ronald C. Busto



To let the Bank see you on its side, you need to do some concrete things, such as:

- know the Bank's mission statement and philosophy;
- support the Bank's functions;
- show an interest on the development and growth of the Bank;
- focus on what you could contribute to the Bank, not on what you can get out of it;
- actively speak well on behalf of the Bank; and
- make your interest in the Bank be noticed and recorded somehow.

Insincere employees will never mind even if they act like a company pawn. On the contrary, if you are strong enough to resist it, co-employees will take your lead and follow suit. Set an example. Be outspoken in your praise for the Bank. It is such a fashionable thing to do when you want to make your mark, but you have to be sincere and bold. But what if you don't feel good about the Bank? Then get out. It's a two-way process. The Bank employs us. We work for the Bank. We work (give) and the Bank pays (give). We take and the Bank takes too. If you are unhappy about this relationship, then get out (get divorced and find another lover). We have to love our Bank, as such is our role in this particular relationship. SET AN EXAMPLE. BE OUTSPOKEN IN YOUR PRAISE FOR THE BANK.

Under any circumstance, we are under the direction of the owners of the Bank, with the Board of Directors, as representative of the owners, and the President, acting for and on behalf of the Board. They are our bosses. If they are dreadful, then we should not work for them. Go and look some place else. But if we are going to work for them, then that is our choice, and we have to stick with it, live with it, support it and believe

in it. Otherwise, you'll go mad or insane.

DON'T PLAY POLITICS!

Politicians are people paid to play politics. We are not because we are managers. We manage situations in our respective branches and departments. We manage ourselves. We don't have to play politics, like playing on the rails. We are bound to get hurt, as playing politics would mean using people to further your ends. With it, you will become unpleasant, selfish, narrow-minded and cheap. Playing politics invariably involves intimidating people, being sly, getting things done by lying or by other dishonest means, not being yourself or true to others, and, generally, behaving appallingly. Try to be involved with the unpopular, but important, programs and/or activities of the Bank because they attract less attention and less competition. Some go for the less popular team or department. We can shine here without having to compete all the time. Every company has people who get things done without backstabbing. Hangout with these people.

Share information that will help the Bank grow more. This will take the wind out of the sails of those who play politics. Be everyone's friend, so no one can accuse you of being cliquey or stand-offish.

Although we are not going to play politics, we still have to be on our guard. We should be aware that playing politics goes on, and we should be ready to deal with it in an appropriate way. Watch out for the hidden agenda, the concealing motives, the smear campaign, the lying, the gossip, the jockeying for power control, the whispering and the similar sort of such things. Some banks or companies seem to breed that sort of bad behavior. Refuse to play politics and get a reputation of being plain-spoken, apolitical, honest, aboveboard, open, sincere and straightforward. With such reputation, nothing can cause us difficulties.

IF WE REFUSE TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS, THEN WE WILL BE SEEN AS HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY.

Staying Positive despite Challenges



According to Richelle E. Goodrich, *"Many times, what we perceive as an error or failure is actually a gift. And eventually, we find that lessons learned from that discouraging experience prove to be of great worth."* This is how Ms. Glo likens her life's mistakes. For her, committing mistakes would not make you a lesser person; rather, it is the opposite, as long as lessons are learned and reforms are made.

Ms. Gloria A. Miguel was born in Baculud, Ilagan, Isabela in June 1989. She is the youngest among the brood of three. "During my childhood days, I'm not that much aware of how important schooling was. At that particular point in time, I only go to

school because I see my playmates do so. I even remember how my father chases me with his *pamalo* for me to go to school," she giggly said.

She said that there are moments in life when a person would learn something unexpectedly. "An incident happened on June 20, 2004 that brought financial constraint to our family. From then, I realized that there are many things in life that should be taken seriously and treated with utmost importance," she shared. "With it, I was motivated to study very hard, making me mindful of how important learning is. And those forgone years when I was in elementary and high school have been paid off when I was in college," she added. In 2008, she graduated at the University of La Salette in Santiago City, with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, major in Business Management.

It was in August of the same year when she became a FICOBanker, as a Marketing Assistant of the Business Development Department. "It was really a challenging experience when we, with Sir Maki and Sir Dondi, had to stay in our workplace 'til dawn just to finish the 2008 Annual Report of FICOBank. Nevertheless, it was a fulfilling one because the project was satisfactorily completed on time out of everybody's cooperation. One more thing that I've enjoyed, at that juncture, was the production of advertisements and heard them aired over the radio," she recalled. In 2009, she became a Management Trainee where she experienced to be a Credit Officer, Loan Bookkeeper, Loan Officer, Teller and Treasury Assistant in various departments and branches of the Bank. "I was so thankful that they all welcomed me, and I've learned so many things about the operation of the Bank from them," she said. After that, she was assigned as the Executive Assistant of Ma'am Ponet (Area Manager of Northeast Luzon) for about two years. "I was so blessed that I've experienced to work with her and learned some of her valuable *diskartes*," she said.

For her big break, owing to the sterling qualities and upright attitude that are innate in her as a true leader, she is now the second-in-command of FICOBank Aparri, being its Assistant Branch Manager. She said that being away from home is indeed a great challenge, considering that she is the *bunso* of their family. "With this greater responsibility that is given to me, I know that more challenges will also be encountered. Making mistakes would be inevitable, but learning from them would be a fulfilling experience," she positively exclaimed. "Though hefty load of work is expected from this post, I'll just have to embrace and enjoy doing the same, and be optimistic that all will go well through our team's effort and dedication," she affirmed.

- Fae Esteban

Just Giving Her Best Shot



"Do it right the first time." This powerful phrase is her principle in life. For her, doing a thing right the first time means doing it with quality. When a person doesn't give something the proper effort, often the result is not satisfactory. Then that person will find himself/herself in the position that he/she has to do it again. This is her philosophy, mentality and performance standard.

Ms. Christian Joy "CJ" R. Reyes graduated at the University of Saint Louis in Tuguegarao City, Cagayan in 2009, with a bachelor's degree in Legal Management. She also received recognitions, such as, Student Engagement: Leadership Award, Services Award, Leadership Award for Youth and Adults, and Schools Debate Award.

Afterward, she joined FICOBank as a Roving Technical Assistant (RTA). Later on, she became a Management Trainee, where she was assigned to, and trained for, various posts like BDD assistant, loan officer, credit officer, teller and credit analyst in the different department/office and branches of the Bank. Then, in 2011, she was designated as the Executive Assistant to the Senior Vice President for Operation & Banking Services, under the supervision of Mr. Emilio U. Rico, Jr. Her management skills and leadership potentials have never been left unnoticed. With the right attitude and qualities that she has, she got what she truly deserves—the branch management of FICOBank Echague.

According to her, the most difficult part in being a manager is how to handle her team. She said that she must motivate each of her staff every day and must never get tired of doing it. "I have to establish a plan of action that requires cooperation among my staff, encourage each of them, and explain to them the beneficial effects of achieving our goals. This is a tough, yet challenging, responsibility because such is a matter of how to deal with different people and problems. Sometimes, by punishing one person will end up punishing the entire team. However, tolerating a person's inappropriate behavior may destroy your own credibility. Nevertheless, applying the same standard to everybody from the very beginning is probably the best way in handling such," she shared. Moreover, she said that she has a lot of pleasurable times in doing her job. And the most cherished moment is when she has to be a mother, a sister, a friend and even be an opponent to her staff.

Ms. CJ always makes sure that FICOBank Echague is continually providing its clients with quality banking experience. "I never assume our customers are satisfied with our products and/or services. So, I am doing my best to follow up all of our clients about the products/services they availed from the Bank because their feedback/comments could provide valuable insights and significant inputs in enhancing the respective quality and features of our financial products and services. Clients, as well, always

A Dreamer, a Believer and an Achiever



"Accept all challenges so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory." This is his principle in life and serves as his key to success. He proves this as he is now the Head of the Internal Audit Department.

Mr. Albert Velayo Agnes is a *bona fide* Cauayaño, born and raised in Cauayan City, Isabela, the ideal city of the North. He is the youngest among the three children of Mr. Ricardo Agnes and former Ms. Emelinda Velayo. He was a consistent honor

pupil/student during his elementary and high school days. He was also a Jose Rizal Awardee, for being consistently a Dean's Lister, when he graduated in college.

Mr. Agnes once dreamed of becoming a Certified Public Accountant (CPA). That's why he took BS Accountancy when he was in college at the Saint Mary's University in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. Due to the incorrect registration of his name in his Birth Certificate, he was not able to take the board examination immediately right after his graduation. "I regret the time I have waited before fulfilling my dream of becoming a CPA. It took me six long years, after my graduation, before I eventually took the licensure exam because of such technical problem, which I did nothing to correct it in the early days," he said. However, as Mr. Agnes is a man who is a dreamer, a believer and an achiever, that particular problem was not a hindrance in fulfilling his dream. For this reason, he effortlessly passed the licensure exam for public accountants in October 2010.

Early life for him was difficult. "*Mahirap* because I even experienced to sell 'ice buko' or ice cream on-stick during my elementary. I tried to work in furniture and construction, during my high school, and in hollow block making during weekends, semestral breaks and vacations in my college. I also went through rice field activities, such as, plowing, mowing, 'magtabas,' 'magtanim,' 'maggapas,' etc., with my father, mother and brother (Jowel), as we don't have enough means to support our financial needs," he recalled. "But by helping each member of the family, we were able to overcome it and have our college degree," he added.

Before joining FICOBANK in November 2009, he first served as cashier/bookkeeper at the Cyclone Airways, Inc. in Cauayan City (Isabela). After more than one year of stint with that company, he joined the Royal Class Trading and Transport Corporation as Officer-in-Charge/Operations Manager at its Bataan Branch. In search, however, of greener pasture, he finally joined the Bank as an Audit Assistant until 2012. In February of that year, he was assigned as OIC of the Internal Audit Department. Few months later, he was reassigned to the Compliance Office as Compliance Office Assistant. Owning a distinct competence, the Bank's Management finally gave him a big break in his employment by appointing him as Head of the Internal Audit Department in February 2013. "I don't have any idea about what qualities the Bank has seen in me, but whatever

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Five-Day Learning Chronicles of a Newbie

By Paula Mae M. Pereña



Day 1

Today is a special day, for it is my official starting point at work after a length of time reflecting, taking vacation and making decisions. I and my fellow trainees were truly puzzled on what will happen in the next few hours and the rest of the day with mixed emotions inside. It seems to be the first landing of our feet on the ground of the unknown until we're introduced to FICOBANK personnel and turned over to our respective heads and departments.

There we met Dr. Robert R. Palac, Head of the Business Development Department (BDD) where I am assigned at. He diligently discussed the functions of BDD in a whole, the plans and programs for this year 2014 and a lucid view of our job scope and descriptions.

Reading is intended for the rest of the day that reminds me of my student years. I've just realized today how essential marketing is in every organization or business, as well as the brilliant concepts behind it. I strongly agree when Philip Kotler said that, "It takes a day to learn marketing, but a lifetime to master it." Marketing is simply defined as the process of combining several important activities designed for 3S, which are to sense, serve and satisfy consumer needs, while achieving the goal of the company to provide more than what its competitors could offer. What I've read today focused on the *Fundamentals of Marketing* and the broad view of *Viral Marketing* by Chiqui Escareal-Go and Dr. Donald Patrick Lim, respectively. The former includes the philosophies in marketing applied by variety of institutions and the particular factors that lead to the satisfaction of customers in a mercurial season. In marketing, you have to be leery enough to consider a research or an evaluation about the challenges encountered by a customer in selection process or decision making. I've noticed also the importance of being watchful in our competitors' moves to take a million miles beyond their strengths and avoid possible occurrence of disturbances.

It is really fascinating to encounter viral marketing, for it is really interesting. It's the creative way of maximizing the effects of your action, with a minimum budget and period of time. Literally, virus multiplies more than a million times in just a minute; therefore, I consider it so productive and effective strategy of marketing, if properly applied. The discovery of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg is a great application example of this strategy. Here, you can create a virus via media (computer, mobile phone, television, newspaper, etc.) and the art of relaying message verbally or the so-called "word-of-mouth." What's good here is that you are giving your customers sufficient space to express what they feel, even if that's a good or a bad point. Although it seems that you're opening a chance for your competitors to trap you, it should be our mindset that a good name normally has a lot of counter attacks. What matters is that you can suddenly convert this scenario into a golden opportunity to portray the leading role of the story. It is stated that the metrics to measure its success are through thumbs-up-likes, comments, downloads, sales, rate and tagging. The risk here is the contagious investment of time in creating conversations with customers, for it is a great influence that could cause anyone to spread it verbally or electronically. With all of these, I can

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Lost in Paradise (Not only once but twice!)

By Ahem



Is it a case of adventure or misadventure? The series of events or misfortunes happened when members of the Board and Management went to the enchanting paradise of Boracay, where they held their three-day planning review. It provided a much needed breather to the members of the Bank's Board and Management. Even before the scheduled date, some participants, *especially the first-timers*, felt excitement and thrill with just the thought of going to Boracay. The adventure, *or misadventure*, started on the dawn of February 21 when members of the Board went to NAIA 3 for their flight to Caticlan. Since they cannot be accommodated by one vehicle, a director and the Corporate Secretary boarded the Bank's car. Majority are already waiting at the airport when they discovered that their two companions are missing. After some calls, the missing duo was spotted near the Cavite Expressway, obviously going to Cavite. In the nick of time, the duo was able to make its flight but only after draining some sweat and causing some panic. The second set of participants, *four members of the Senior Management*, have their own share of misadventure, as they headed first to NAIA 2 instead of NAIA 3, losing a comfortable 30-minute lead time of their scheduled flight. Fortunately, all participants were able to board their respective flights and arrived in Boracay safely and on time.

First Day, February 21

The first group arrived in Boracay at around 8:30 in the morning while the second group arrived at around 10:30 in the same morning. Normally, check-in time at the hotel will only start at 2:00 p.m., but since the group was already there and some rooms are available, some were accommodated while the others have to wait for their respective rooms to be vacated. While waiting, the first group went to the D' Talipapa, *which is located just at the back of the hotel*, for lunch. The set up is similar to *Dampa* in Manila, where one has to shop for sea foods first and have it cooked by any of the restaurants surrounding the market place. The prices are prohibitive, either double or triple than the price here in Isabela, as they are intended for the foreign tourists. Male crabs are selling for Php700.00

per kilo, female crabs for Php900.00 per kilo, and of course, Php800.00 for *baklang* crabs. How about a lobster that costs Php3,000.00 to Php4,000.00, can you beat that? The Koreans obviously loved the lobster, as they even had their pictures taken while holding a lobster with gigantic size. The Filipino tourists like us, *not to be outdone by foreign counterparts*, never complained about the prices. The sea foods are simply awesome! The participants had a sumptuous lunch, as if it is their last meal of their lives, *to think that that is only their first meal in Boracay*. When the second group (the author included) arrived for lunch, the first group was already in the middle of their eating with drinking melee. The Chief Compliance Officer and the two SVPs shopped for additional *pulutan* like fresh *talaba*, *halaan* and *tanigue*, and ordered some more bottles of cold beer. After four bottles of Pale Pilsen, I went to look for an ATM to withdraw the fund for the meals of the group while the others are enjoying their extended lunch with drinking. The first ATM of PNB was offline, so I have to go farther. [After 10 minutes of walking on the powdery white sand beach of Boracay with the beautiful scenery, (sexy women in their skimpy bikinis being part of the scenery, as you are allowed only to look but cannot touch), I reached D' Mall where there are three ATMs of BPI. On my way back, I passed again the beautiful sceneries, some Caucasians, many are Koreans and Chinese. I cannot help but be mesmerized by the beauty of the place. It is really a paradise. After zombie-like walking for 20 minutes, I realized that I no longer recognize the place where I am. I have gone back and forth for 30 minutes, but still I cannot find the street going back to D' Talipapa. Did I panic? Nahh, never! This is my third time to go to Boracay, but still lost. Who cares! The group is now calling me to have our last shot for the bed, at 2:00 in the afternoon, and after some more minutes, I was back with the group. They are teasing me for deliberately avoiding the drinking session despite explaining to them my dilemma. Well, what can I say, I should have kept to myself my predicament since they're not listening anyway.]

In the afternoon of the first day, the group had their separate walking or surveying activities in the beach. In the evening, the participants regrouped again and had their dinner at D' Talipapa, though in a different restaurant. After dinner, the participants went to their separate hotel rooms to end the day.

Second Day, February 22

(The Chief Compliance Officer and I, though on separate rooms, woke up at 4:45 in the morning and went for a morning jog and beach walking. As we passed by the closed bars, some foreigners were still roaming around; some were on the beach, wasted from the previous night's happening. After 45 minutes, we reached the other end of the island, and we walked/jogged back. After some longer time, we reached the other end of the island and it seems that the place is unfamiliar. 'Twas déjà vu! I was lost again! This time, however, I am with the person who is known at FICOBank as being perennially got lost, the Chief Compliance Officer. Did we panic? Nah, never! But now, he believed the story about me getting lost the previous day.)

After breakfast, the members of the Board and Management had their planning session. The planning session was done in no time, since even before the scheduled meeting, critical issues were already decided and ironed out. After which, the group decided to have a bonding activity by having an island hopping and hired a motor boat. But mind you, the decision came after a hotly contested debate as to whether the weather condition, *which is cloudy*, is conducive to island hopping or not. Despite the hesitations of some, it was finally and unanimously decided, to proceed with the island hopping. The walking from the hotel to where the boat is located, *which is in Station 1*, took the group, especially the young once, around 30 minutes to reach, compared to 20 minutes of the younger generation. After wearing their respective life vests, the group boarded the

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Five-Day Learning...

from Page 13

simply conclude today that you should let your creativity and imagination overflow freely to produce or introduce compelling reasons that will spread the infection of your strategy for the achievement of your goals.

After reading and reflecting, Dr. Palac assisted me and Sir Kevin for the division of geographic assignment. I admit how naïve I am, at that time, not knowing what was that for. Sir Kevin discussed and gave me an overview about the process of requests from different branches for flyers, tarpaulins and other marketing collateral. I know, and I believe myself, that everything I've learned today isn't enough for me to be an excellent Marketing Communication Assistant instantly, but I can do something, which is to take initiative to go deeper, work hard, learn from others' experiences and read more for the best upshot, not only for myself but also for the institution where I am in.

Day 2

Today is more on application compared to yesterday. I started my day reading the *A to Z* by Josiah Go. "A" stands for Awareness, on which we should generate it for our products and services among our consumers. Under awareness is advertising or the act of persuading, informing and convincing target markets. For me, this awareness is a should-be task of every institution, where clients will come to realize why they should embrace our offer and, at the same time, direct us to our objectives, as a company. On the other hand, "B" is for Brand Equity and Valuation. I've realized here the great impact that can be created by just a simple brand. The originality, relevance, satisfying and some motivating factors are the should-be attributes to consider in a brand. I've stopped there for Sir Kevin called me to make a briefing about the things I should know and do in actual application. I am very much appreciative of this privilege. It's like receiving a big magnifying lens to see our role in a whole, not just theoretically. I've witnessed how Adobe Cs2 works while we're processing the request for flyers of Tuguegarao Branch. We went to PS Commercial for the payment of the request. I really appreciate a lot how Sir Kevin instructed me the itemized to-do steps in this process and introduced me the approving persons or signatories I should familiarize myself of. I have also discovered today that the Business Development Department is also responsible in dealing efficiently with different inquiries and concerns via e-mail from clients and prospects through the guidance of Dr. Palac. At the same time, BDD is also the provider of calling cards requested by different Branch Managers, Assistant Branch Managers and Loan Officers for business purposes.

After these, I go back reading again, and there I found out the famous personalities or businesses made known for their marketing strategies in the Philippines, like Jollibee, Procter & Gamble, Nestlé, San Miguel, MLhuillier, etc. They have assorted stories, but I am very much in salute of Jollibee's humble beginnings, from an ice-cream parlor to a hamburger chain until it became Jollibee, and now as owner also of Chowking, Red Ribbon, Greenwich and Mang Inasal. It also highlighted the usual misconceptions about marketing, which are synonymous to sales, advertising, selling and daily business operation. I am also one of those who believe before that marketing is all about sales, but it's not. I'm very blessed to have this kind of opportunity to learn and grow, as day goes by, and be corrected for what is only true. I'm optimistic believing that everything in the next days will turn out for good.

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A Dreamer, a Believer...

from page 13

it is, I do understand that the Board and Management believed in what I am capable of for the position that they have entrusted upon me. Although it's a great challenge on my part, it enhanced my career, particularly my line of

work," he articulated. "To perform my assigned tasks and to meet the Board and Management expectations are the most challenging things about being an IAD Head," he added. On the other hand, he imparted that all the training courses that the Bank had allowed him to attend and complete, specifically the Risk-Based Internal Audit and Risk-Based Lending conducted by the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines (RBAP), have honed further his skills and improved more his competence to carry out his core function and get things done properly.

He is happily married to Czarina Nina, who responsibly takes care of their little boy, Czar Aldrich.

As an advice to his fellow FICOBankers, he said: "In every job and position you are into, whatever it is and how hard would it be, do your best, as if it's your last job."

– Riel Kamille V. Nera

James is Number One!



James Rey Gacias is the undisputed number one Account Officer (AO) of FICOBank in 2013. This is based on the regular performance evaluation conducted by the Todo Finance Unit (TFU). All Account Officers are being evaluated quarterly for their performance on portfolio size, portfolio quality, outreach, loan volume and compliance. On all four quarters of 2013, James was always number one.

James is naturally a goal-oriented person. During his training at the TFU in September 2012, he promised to make his branch, wherever that will be, number one in Todo Ani Loan. And he did! In 2013, Solana Branch was first in the list of performing branches in Region 2 in terms of Todo Ani Lending. All of the 138 Todo Ani Loan accounts, amounting to Php13,385,000.00 in portfolio, is being ably managed by this young man.

Though new and young at FICOBank for only 18 months of service so far, he had struggles to face: the big portfolio size, the vast branch area of operation, an unreliable motorcycle, including personal struggles. But as he says, "Work with Love and with God." This is his formula of success.

James is 29 years old and still single. He is the youngest among the children of Pilar Rey and Pablo Gacias. He finished BSBA Management Accounting at the Saint Paul University, Tuguegarao City. He was Accounts Payable Assistant at the Accounting Division of Friendly Care Foundation, Inc., a subsidiary of ABS-CBN Foundation, before he decided to find work near his residence in Tuguegarao City. He was so happy to be hired by FICOBank not long after. Choosing to sacrifice work for the privilege of taking care an ailing beloved mother paid off. Here with FICOBank, his journey to excellence began.

Congratulations James! Your 23 AO-colleagues, as well as your coaches at the TFU and Solana Branch, applaud you for a job well done! We know you can go further these years ahead.

– Marjorie J. Cabigas

Five-Day Learning... *from page 15*

Day 3

"Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadow."
- Helen Keller

Today is another blessed gift and nothing will I expect than a heart-tank full of positivism, hope and courage. I have spent my early hours doing cutting and wrapping of calling cards requested by different Bank operation personnel. After these, I go back reading again and there I encountered the two division of company's marketing environment, which is the microenvironment and macroenvironment. For me, this topic is vital to be considered by institutions in order for them to monitor threats, search for more opportunities and to transact effectively. Microenvironment consists of four components, which are company's internal environment, marketing channels that cooperate to create value, markets in which company can sell publics with potential to achieve objectives, and competitors. On the second hand, macroenvironment comprises of major actors or forces that affect the company, such as, demographic, economic, natural, technological, political and cultural. I've realized here how urbane marketing is, and maybe that is why it's entitled as "brain of every business" because it's the key that unlocks profit, company's progress and achievement of goals.

The second topic tackled in the book while I'm reading is consumer behavior. It is stated that the buyer's decision process is influenced by culture, social, personal and psychological factors which are difficult to be controlled by marketers. It is illustrated in Maslow's theory that what need you prioritize, e.g., security, is what matters to you and will strongly lead you to decisions that will make you feel so secure. I can conclude today how challenging to be a marketer is, and you need to take it seriously whatever it takes for excellence.

Day 4

"Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."
- John Wooden

This line really refreshes, inspires and motivates me to stand the day with confidence despite the attached worries about the things I cannot do. It also reminds me during my interview with Dr. Palac, for he said that nobody knows everything, but you can be sure that everyone knows something that makes a great difference. He also added that it's the willingness to learn that matters.

Dr. Palac and Sir Kevin are on official business today and tomorrow. Sir Kevin instructed me yesterday to format a calling card for some personnel, and just let it stand by for printing. I take time doing this, for I honestly admit that I'm not a techie when it comes to a software, such as Adobe Cs2, but I feel glad to try and come up on it in my own way, although I know my work needs to be polished. Truly, I'm revived that we are forever student, for we never stop learning.

After accomplishing the abovementioned task, I've read about competitive benchmarking, wherein it's the process of constantly measuring how our best and next-best competitors are performing or excelling for the purpose of comparison and improving what we

have. It is stated there the three forms of benchmarking—strategic benchmarking, customer benchmarking and cost benchmarking. This process is not the obvious or direct comparison with firms, but via market research to quantify the trends and most-often-used strategies by institutions. I've also encountered the subject of demand that is inevitably changing and unpredictable due to technology upgrade, income-purchasing ability, social and environment forces. It is also indicated here the SWOT analysis, defined as strength, weaknesses, opportunity and threats, to be used as effective metrics in every institution to consider for development and progress.

Truly, behind a great author is a great reader. I am a certified lover of communication and I want to know more about it. Way back, I'm dreaming to become an author, columnist, writer or whatever you may call it, but obstacle mentality slowly invaded me, such as, until when will I pursue writing and to whom authors will I submit my piece for corrections. I've hidden this desire until I found myself happily writing once again and reignited the passion that I've kept for so long. Truly, if you trust God, He will let your dreams come to pass.

Day 5

"To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it."
- Mother Teresa

Today is the last working day of this week, and I'm thankful to be reminded by this line that we have the responsibility to fill our tank of enthusiasm, joy, excitement and hope, and be replenished to our endless supply of God's blessings on a daily basis. We must do our best in everything we do and God will do the rest.

I have spent enjoying most of my time today reading the *FICO*nect. I'm very much amazed how dedicated the personnel of FICOBank are when it comes to contributing their best part by means of writing. I really admired the articles written by Jackie M. Juan, former Planning/Marketing Assistant of BDD, entitled "At the Back of My Mind" and "Marketing" that really caught and flattered my attention. I can still quote what he said: "Marketing is the brainpower that leads business direction to the path of success. It is the bow and arrow of business." He also stated, in his first article, how he struggled in the position he previously held. He emphasized that the Business Development Department, where I am right now, is one of the Bank's vital departments.

I've encountered also a topic today that it is vital for us to know carefully the company's key factors for success (KFS) that depends to its degree of importance, such as, image for the public, number, location of branches and government regulations. I also learned that, as marketers, we should always be updated on what are the trends in business or marketing, even if it is outside the country. It is very important for us to present or provide an attractive, fresh and catchy thing to our consumers, which cannot be provided by our competitors.

I know now how challenging it is to be assigned at BDD. I am scared a bit, but the small voices inside of me never give up on encouraging me to strive for excellence and to take heart and courage, for it is once said that "A good steward of small things will be entrusted for more." We should wear integrity at all times even if nobody's around.

Lost in...

from page 14

boat and went island hopping. As the group passed by the end of the island, they saw the cottage of Manny Pacquiao or what's left of it, and not far from the said place are the proofs of abuses of some businessman in chopping off some part of the mountain to construct their hotels or residences.

In the middle of the sea, we stopped and the boat captain announced that we can have our snorkeling activity. After some urging from the author, some dived in the water to have a peek on what is down there in the water. Not to be outdone, the Chairman and the President, *in their (not skimpy, thank God!) underwear*, likewise joined the others. Literally, they are in each other's arms, especially when they finished swimming, as they pulled each other in boarding the boat.

Then, the boat headed to an isolated island, the crystal cove island. The biggest test for the group was what confronted them in going to the island, i.e., rain and big waves. Seawater splashed unceasingly on the faces of some, while some are dripping from rain water. There was a suggestion to return to the main land and even questioned the durability of the boat as to whether it can withstand the big waves. The President just laughed it off just like a kid riding his first horse and the Chairman just kept his cool. Others are praying and nervous. Majority just enjoyed the ride. A big sigh of relief was felt when the boat reached the island. The island is equally enchanting and beautiful. The landscape inside the island is simply amazing.

Next stop is across the island again, but it meant crossing the sea with big waves and strong wind being part of the package. But this time, the group is raring to go and ready. After crossing the sea, the group was treated to a sumptuous buffet where Caucasians *in their bikinis* likewise took their lunch. 'Twas already 1:30 p.m. at that time, so the food was more important than the scenery; but, *of course*, the food was excellent because of the scenery and ambiance.

The group enjoyed every bit of the ride, but they were just happy to be back in the main island. Immediately after arriving at Station 1, the group members scampered separately toward their hotel rooms. Some walked, some rode a tricycle, but others got lost (*also! but this time, it's not the author*).

Third Day, February 23

After morning jog/walk, the group prepared to depart from Boracay. The members of the Senior Management had their flight at 10:30 a.m., *supposedly, but the flight was delayed for one hour*, in Caticlan. The members of the other group went to Kalibo first, roamed around and had their flight at 7:00 in the evening.

Boracay is really wonderful. The place is so beautiful, enchanting and mystifying. No wonder, foreign tourists are smitten by it. Truly, it's more fun in the Philippines. BUT at the end of the day, no matter how beautiful the place is, you still wish that you are with your loved ones or twice or other love! Whatever! There is still no place like home.

Just Giving Her...

from page 12

appreciate this follow-up activity, especially when something hasn't gone right, and there's still the opportunity to correct it. In addition, I'm confident enough that we, at Echague Branch, will achieve our year-end targets through sheer determination and teamwork, and, of course, with the help of our Almighty God's guidance," she positively claimed.

She describes herself as assertive, conscientious and motivated. She is a person with personal integrity, doing what she had promised. She said that being a manager is a challenging privilege, and that she must be able to respond appropriately to any given situation and be motivated from within to achieve their team's targets/objectives. "Accepting this position is the biggest decision I've made. Performing a managerial role for the first time is hard. It takes forethought and the ability to be introspective and self-regulated. It's not 'business as usual' because the expectations now are different," she said.

For her, handling different situations is never easy, but learning things, at the end, would be worth enough for all the struggles. "Four years ago, I've learned an important lesson from my first superior who really became my most important mentor. He told me that his secret to success is to 'Look at each day as a new opportunity to be at your best. Set high goals. Be honest. And never say no. Work with people who share your passion for doing their best.' I've always remembered this advice and try to live it every day," she related. "And as I live every day, there are more things that I've also learned too. One is to be persistent. Not to give up too soon because the solution might probably right in front of me. Another is to give every person a second chance because first impressions can often be misleading. And, lastly, I used to think that there is only one best solution to a problem, but I've learned that this kind of thinking limits the possibility of great success," she added.

As to her future plans/goals, she said that her long-term goals involve growing with the Bank where she can learn more, take on greater responsibilities and contribute as much of value as she can. "I see myself taking on new and exciting challenges in an enjoyable environment. Hopefully, it will be FICOBank for last. Indeed, joining FICOBank is merely a chance worth enduring. I believe this post will go a long way in helping me meet my career goals even more," she said. "And to my fellow FICOBankers, what will happen next in your life, and whether you choose to pursue your dreams (both now and in the long run), will depend on you. Always remember to bring out the best of you every day and share your experiences that may inspire others. Just give your best shot. It's important to note that focusing on how you can do everything right the first time does not mean that you are trying to be perfect. It only means that you are changing your perspective on the 'how' part of your job and improving your overall performance," she shared.

- Fae Esteban

Living Well His Legacy



It was in February 2012 when the late BM Xerxes T. Dela Cruz was transferred to FICOBank Alicia to lead the team in continuously serving, at the best possible means, the branch's clients in its area of operation.

With his almost two years of stay at the branch, we, his staff, saw his strong-willed leadership, uncompromising dedication for great performance and purposeful commitment in serving the clients. *Tatay Xerxes*, as we used to call him, was so kind and thoughtful to each one of us. He didn't take advantage of his position nor used his power as he led us. Instead, he showed that all of us are equal, and we are a family. He had been such a great father, brother and friend to us.

Every single day that we worked with him, all what he wanted was for the good of Alicia Branch, performing at its best (and he succeeded, as FICOBank Alicia was one of the top-performing branches in 2012). Everytime he arrived in the morning, each of us never missed to see the energy and good aura in him, which inspired us to do well on our respective jobs. During Mondays, he would call for a meeting to hear, and learn from, God's words and for our team to talk about issues and/or problems that our branch needed to deal with. When he saw that all of us are busy and stressed on our works, he would crack jokes or anything that will make us laugh and relax for a little while. Even when we have lunch or snack together, his "green jokes" always made us laugh 'til our tummies ache. During Bank's activities, as much as possible, he wanted our team to be complete, actively participating and all are happy.

On the same manner, we saw how happy and excited he was for the wedding of his *unico hijo*. He even asked our opinions/suggestions for the betterment of his son's wedding. He repeatedly told us how he dearly loved his wife, *Nanay* Pilar, and his son, Mark. We really felt the great importance that he gave to his family. For *Tatay Xerxes*, any amount of problem can never make him and his family down. He has always been steadfast in living his life and optimistic in all the things he faced.

Truly, he is a leader that would do anything for the common good of all. He never failed to show how much he loved his FICOBank family. He even told us that when he will retire, he still wanted to serve the Bank by being a member of the Board of Directors.

But there are things in life that come unexpectedly, where one has

to come to an end. In December 2013, the whole FICOBank family was shocked, in pain and deeply cried when that time has come to bid its final *adieu* to the Bank's longest-serving branch manager and one of its home-grown assets. *Tatay Xerxes* joined the Almighty Father after two-and-a-half decades of dedicated service to the Bank.

Though his physical presence left us, his memories, contributions and "Michael Jackson moves" will always be remembered and forever be treasured. For us, at Alicia Branch, BM Xerxes will be our inspiration, our guidance and our light in every decision we will make.

To *Tatay Xerxes*, all the lessons and experiences you've shared to us—your FICOBank family—will forever be your precious legacy. We'll always be grateful to you *Tatay Xerxes*. You will eternally remain in our hearts. We miss you, and we love you *Tatay Xerxes*!

– FICOBank Alicia Branch Team

Growing Manpower for a Growing Business

Aside from its clients, another staying power of the Bank in the business of banking is its partnership with its employees. As its business is growing, FICOBank also ensures that its workforce is doing the same, not only in quantity but more of the career growth of each employee.

With the Bank having a familial setup, as well as the sought-after and worth-working-for career paths and privileges, 19 new FICOBankers join the family, for the period covering August 2013 to February 2014. And they are:

Name	Position
1. Atty. Emmanuel Marquez	HRALD Head
2. Frederique Obiedoza	Management Trainee
3. Alvin Del Rosario	Credit Officer
4. Constantino Unite, Jr.	Loan Officer
5. Catalino Guzman	Account Officer
6. Jadwin Almuete	Account Officer
7. Romeo Deuna	Account Officer
8. Hilario Jardinez	Account Officer
9. Narciso Orozco	Account Officer
10. Michael Ponce	Account Officer
11. Princess Joy Fabianes	Teller
12. Ma. Katrina Suzette Valdez	Loan Bookkeeper
13. Mary Grace Laggui	Treasury Assistant
14. Roderick Barroga, CPA	Audit Assistant
15. Novelyn Andaya	BSO Assistant
16. Zenaida Maricris Jao	Credit Assistant-Jewelry Loan Unit
17. Swit Kristin Aubrey Antolin	Technical Writing Assistant
18. Paula Mae Pereña	Marketing Communication Assistant
19. Carlito Cura	Driver

Congratulations!

– Kristal Bea P. Samson

The New Edifice of FICOBank Tumauni



A building that is inspired by an innovative façade and cushy interior design has been made available to provide the clients with a satisfying banking experience. An eye-catching and more spacious banking office that could accommodate greater number of transacting and visiting clients was made possible with this image-enhancing move. Added to its exterior design was the new and embossed acrylic signage, which gives more appealing look to the Bank.

FICOBank Tumauni, after a couple of months of renovation, has its new appearance inside and out. The construction work started in August 2013 and ended in December of that same year. The newly renovated and expanded banking office is situated at Uy Bldg., National Highway, Lingaling, Tumauni, Isabela.

FICOBank Tumauni was opened as a field office in October 2008, and it was converted into an extension office on February 3, 2011. On January 10, 2014, the Bank's Board of Directors approved its application for conversion into a full-fledged branch, which was later authorized by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) in its letter dated January 28, 2014.

With its five fruitful years of providing its ever-increasing clientele with an excellent customer service, FICOBank Tumauni never failed to impress the Bank's Management with its better-than-before performance, reflecting a significant growth in its key result areas, namely: net income, loan volume, loan portfolio and ADB-based deposits. This is because FICOBank Tumauni team, headed by BM Emmanuel A. Bartolome, possesses the right attitude, knowledge, skills and competencies to make the branch perform better.

– Riel Kamille V. Nera

FICOBank Corporate Office and Northeast Luzon Area Office's Modest 2013 Christmas Celebration



FICOBankers from the Corporate Office and the Northeast Luzon Area Office modestly, yet meaningfully, celebrated their joint Christmas Party on December 14, 2013 at the Mom Sabina's Resort in Minante II, Cauayan City, Isabela.

Though it was a much simple way of celebration, as compared with the previous years' all-out Christmas parties, it was indeed a more significant one, as the FICOBank family had expressed its deep sympathy to the victims of the super typhoon Yolanda. The Bank, instead of holding a grand celebration, opted to share a part of its material wealth and, of course, a lot of prayers to the typhoon-stricken families. With this, FICOBank has, once again, showed its caring spirit during this Yuletide season, fulfilling its corporate social responsibility to those who have less in life and are even victims of calamity.

The event started officially at nine o'clock in the morning, with an opening prayer led by Mr. Vivencio Paquito S. Domingo, Manager of FICOBank Aurora. This was followed by the singing of the Philippine national anthem by the Pagasa ng Buhay Association. Afterward, the Bank's SVP for Treasury & Corporate Services, Atty. Hubert E. Molina, warmly welcomed everybody with his *let's-make-life-light*-natured, yet noteworthy, opening remarks. He said, "Despite the tragic event that had happened to the people in Samar and Leyte, Christmas should still be celebrated, for it is the birth of our Savior." And he wished, "May the reason of celebrating Christmas inspire these Yolanda victims to stand up and move forward." Meanwhile, the Psalm of David Harmonic filled the air with its lively Christmas carols. The Chairman of the Board, Atty. Estalder A. Argonza, on his part, gave an inspirational message. He emphasized that perseverance is part of one's life, as what Mother Mary showed in giving birth to God's only begotten Son. Vice-Chairman Wilfredo DC. Antonio wrapped up the program by highlighting sharing, loving and forgiving as the true spirit of Christmas. A sumptuous buffet lunch was served and enjoyed by everybody afterward.

Truly, everything that is done with a passionate heart, and being able to share to others the true spirit of Christmas, always ends up amazingly great. This once-a-year merry-making and get-together activity of FICOBank ended up in a plain and simple way. But it never failed to leave an overflowing joy in the hearts of all FICOBankers in attendance. In showing the spirit of giving, FICOBank offered its sincerest appreciation and adoration to the sole reason for such celebration—Jesus Christ.

– Kevin Marc M. Sinagub

On FICOBank's Radar: Jones Branch

FICOBank Jones team has markedly improved its banking operation in 2013, reflecting further developments in its financial performance—greater loan volume and portfolio, better loan quality, more deposits (with improved deposit mix), and higher net income.

With the team's production efforts, it was able to generate a Php235.41-million loan releases for the year and post a Php48.72-million loan portfolio at year-end. The former is up by Php10.01 million, compared to the 2012's record of Php225.40 million, while the latter is Php1.26 million higher than that of the year-ago level of Php47.46 million. Aside from generating huge loan volume, the branch also ensures not to compromise the quality of its loan portfolio. At year-end, it was able to record a 1.40-percent past due rate, which is slightly lower than the 1.50-percent target.

On the same manner, the FICOBank Jones' power of building trust and confidence among its clients resulted to a higher deposit level. The branch posted a two-digit growth of 18 percent, or Php14.80 million, on its ADB-based deposits, making the year-end's ADB-deposit balance to Php98.15 million. Moreover, FICOBank Jones was able to beat its full-year ADB-based deposit target of Php88 million, as it recorded a 112-percent accomplishment for the year. Also, an improved deposit mix of 60-percent low-cost deposit and 40-percent high-cost deposit was also recorded by the branch in 2013. This is far better than the year-ago record and year-end target of 56:44 and 58:42 deposit mix, respectively.

As the team's financial and operational goals keep them going toward a greater banking performance, it was able to produce a net income of Php6.93 million for the year in review. This shows a 26-percent growth, as compared to its previous year's record of Php5.49 million. Furthermore, this higher finishing point of the branch registered a 108-percent accomplishment, as compared to its year-end budget of Php6.40 million.

FICOBank Jones team, as led by Ms. Benilda R. Labauza, is indeed continuously proving its commitment in making more outstanding feats on its banking activities and in outperforming its peer banks in its area of operation.

— Fae Esteban

Central and Northwest Luzon Area Celebrates Its Christmas Party with Merriment

By Kathleen D. Gonzales

Indeed, Christmas is the only day that we commemorate the nativity of our savior Jesus Christ. It is also considered as one of the perfect days to be united as one according to His will.

Undeniably, Christmas is a wonderful time to express our heartfelt appreciation, love, forgiveness and respect not only to our families and friends but also to all of the people we live daily, particularly in our work sphere. As we all know, there are so many ways by which we can express our best wishes to our friends, families and officemates on Christmas. Just for instance, we can merely make it through sharing or giving what we can simply offer for others, writing Christmas letters to someone we love most, or even to take it just into a simple, yet happy, celebration.

Definitely, December 14, 2013 is one of the most important days for every FICOBanker from Northwest and Central Luzon Area. This awaited annual event was attended by the Area's branch managers and other officers, together with their respective office staff, and with the special presence of our President & CEO, Mr. Herminio G. Ocampo, and our Senior Vice President for Operation & Banking Services, Mr. Emilio U. Rico, Jr. This event took place at the Daddy's Music Bar, Burgos Crossing, Maharlika Highway, Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija. The delightful experiences and memories, which will always be remembered and felt by heart, started here.

It has truly been an exciting day that everyone wishes for to come. Why? It's because diverse and absolutely bizarre experiences and muddled-up emotions only come once in a year, and precisely, the smiles depicted on each FICOBankers' faces are priceless and special. The aim of this Christmas celebration was not only to have fun but also to sense altogether the spirit of a true Christmas. It is indeed important for all FICOBankers to be united in celebrating and commemorating the essence of a perfect Christmas.

The celebration formally started through an opening prayer led by Ms. Genelene R. Linaza (BM-Trainee of Gapan Branch). It was followed by the singing of the Philippine national anthem and the FICOBank theme song by the Area Office personnel. Then, everyone was welcomed by SVP Rico through his warmest opening remarks. Afterward, the most anticipated part of the event, which was the Christmas message of President Herminio G. Ocampo—the man who has been described as one of the driving forces behind the success of FICOBank through the years and the person who knows the complete story of how FICOBank got to where it is today—was delivered with gusto. To end the preliminary activity of the program, Mr. Angelo T. Salvador (BM of Urdaneta Branch) gave his impressive closing remarks.

The second part of the program was enjoyed by everyone. Different intermission numbers were rendered by chosen FICOBankers. This was followed by the Videoke Singing Contest, which was participated by 18 candidates coming from the different branches. The contest was fairly judged by the Branch Managers. Seven were declared as winners, and one of them was declared as the champion. A raffle draw was also done, as an act of sharing one's blessings to everyone. Most importantly, food and drinks were made bounteous, since anything could be freely ordered in the counter.

The Christmas celebration ended very well, as smiles and joys can be seen in the faces of each and every one.

We should remember that Christmas has the power to bring all the best in our hearts, such as, love, hope, respect, friendship and best intentions. In a nutshell, we can simply feel happiness—an emotion that can never be stolen by anyone else.





From Rhem's Collections

Let's Make Life Light

Let's Live on Love

A couple decides to get married despite the fact that the woman doesn't know how to cook at all. After all, he says, they can live on love. After the honeymoon is over, the man goes back to work. One day, he calls from work and asks if his new wife could make some dinner. Knowing fully well that she doesn't cook, she asks if they can make love instead. The man agrees, and soon arrives home to find his wife sliding repeatedly down the banisters. "What are you doing?" he asks, concerned. "Oh, silly," she says. "I'm warming up your dinner!" www.jokes.com

Code for Love

There was a couple who did not want their children to know when they were going to have sex, so they decided on a code of "writing a letter."

One day, Daddy said to his daughter, "Tell your Mommy that Daddy wants to write a letter." The girl went and told her Mommy and the mom said, "The red ribbon is coming out, not now." The girl went back to her Daddy and told him.

One day, Mommy told her daughter to tell her Daddy that she wanted to write a letter. Daddy replied, "Not now. Daddy already wrote the letter by hand." www.jokes.com

Fence of Love

A couple celebrates their 30th anniversary by re-walking their first walk together. They come to the fence against which they first made love.

The husband says, "Come on, for old time's sake." The wife agrees and they both undress.

Afterward, the husband says, "You're even better than you were 30 years ago" and his wife replies, "That fence wasn't electrified 30 years ago!" www.jokes.com

Praying for 10 Pesos

Sa loob ng simbahan ng Quiapo, isang batang pulubi ang mataimtim na nanalangin sa Diyos.

Pulubi: "Panginoon, kung maaari po sana ay bigyan Ninyo ako ng sampung piso dahil gutom na gutom na po ako." Narinig siya ng isang pulis na kasalukuyan ding nagsisimba at bumilib siya sa katatagan ng bata sa pananampalataya sa Diyos. Sa kanyang habag ay dumukot siya ng limang piso at iniabot sa bata na ang sabi: "Amang, narinig ng Diyos ang panalangin mo at heto tanggapin mo ang perang ito at ibili mo ng pagkain."

Tumingala ang bata sa pulis, kinuha nya ang limang pisong iniabot at muling yumuko para manalangin: "Panginoon, salamat po sa pagdinig Ninyo sa aking panalangin, pero sana naman po sa uli-uli 'wag na ninyong pararaanin pa sa pulis, kasi malaki na ang bawas." <http://www.pinoythinking.com>



On Becoming a Successful Entrepreneur The Story of Orlando E. Dulay



"Believe that you can, aim higher and love what you are doing; and, surely, success will be the one that will knock on your door." This is the principle in life of Mr. Orlando E. Dulay. Aside from having an eye for business opportunities, his desire for success, together with hard work, innovation and discipline, also plays an important role on what he is today. No wonder that from his humble beginnings of selling *halo-halo*, fresh *buko* juice and barbecue, he is now known as one of the finest *buko* pie manufacturers and a provider of delicious *pasalubong* delights

in Nueva Vizcaya.

Personal Background

Mr. Orlando E. Dulay is a 47-year-old businessman and a native of Pangasinan, but, presently, a permanent resident of Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya. His lifetime commitment to his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Dulay, was blessed with three beautiful children, namely: Sophia, a nine-year-old Grade-III pupil at Saint Mary's University (SMU); Abby Mhel, an eight-year-old Grade-II pupil at SMU; and Charmellane, a one-year-old toddler.

Mr. Dulay finished a degree on Bachelor of Science in Chemistry at the Saint Mary's University in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya. After he graduated, his *alma mater* offered him to teach in its college department. However, he chose not to accept the same, since teaching is not his forte. Instead, he pursued to seek a job in Manila. In 1991, he was able to be employed at Sta. Lucia Realty, which only lasted for two months. Though a chemistry graduate, he couldn't find a job that suits him because of his disability. He contracted polio at a young age that caused him to walk around with a crutch. But this didn't stop him from achieving his dream.

On Becoming a...

from page 21

Their house is located along the national highway, and he noticed that there were many truck drivers who stay in their area to take a rest or nap. So he decided to put up a small *buko* juice business in 1993. He and his wife also sell barbecue and *halo-halo* at that time. These provided them with a steady income.

Business Milieu

Before putting up his fresh *buko* juice business, Mr. Dulay wanted to be unique over his competitors, since during that time, there were 21 *buko* juice vendors in their area. Usually, the business names of his competitors were named after their respective names. So, instead of using Orlando's Buko Juice, as his business name, he opted to use the acronym G&B—G stands for Gabby, his nickname, and B for Beth, his wife's nickname.

He started his *buko* juice business in 1993 with an initial capital of Php494.00, selling an average of 100 coconuts in a day. He and his wife managed their simple business. Their *suki* (customers) were those truck drivers and passengers of public and private vehicles.

It was in 1998 when the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) conducted a livelihood program on *buko* pie making in their community. He joined the same, together with other entrepreneurs. Afterward, he started to venture in *buko* pie making, with an initial capital of Php5,000.00. With only one small oven, he was able to produce and sell an average of 23 *buko* pies every day. Since Mr. Dulay is a BS-Chemistry graduate, this became an edge for him over his competitors in improving and making his *buko* pies more delicious. He also didn't stop in researching and reading magazines in baking to improve more his product. After a year, he felt that it's time for them to hire staff for their business.

Until one time, Ms. Gerlie Lopez, Manager of FICOBank Solano at that time, took her snack at G&B Buko Pie. She used that opportunity to offer Mr. Dulay the Bank's Microfinance. Since the latter really needed an additional capital for his growing business, he was convinced and applied for a loan. On February 12, 2004, he was granted with an initial loan of Php30,000.00, which he used in procuring a big oven, additional pie plates and kettles.

One of the business problems that Mr. Dulay encountered was when one of his bakers had been pirated by one of his business rivals. He was worried at that point because their technique in making their *buko* pies was known well by the said baker. Nonetheless, he managed to deal with it by improving more his *buko* pies and by adding new products made out of *buko*, like *buko* tarts and macaroons. Since then, Mr. Dulay became more cautious. In spite of having a lot of bakers, he makes sure that he is still in full hands-on in making his winning *buko* pie products. Also, occurrence of typhoons really affects their business operation, since most of their customers are travelers. Due to such calamity, travels of both public and private vehicles are limited and supply of *buko* is at shortage.

In 2004, Mr. Dulay was able to manage his business properly and productively because of his skills and determination. He was recognized, under the *Maunlad* Category, as the regional winner for Luzon by the Citi Microentrepreneur of the Year (MOTY) Awards (now Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards or CMA).

After winning such award, his business undertakings continuously grow and expanded even more. At present, aside from his main branch in Tuao North, Bagabag, Nueva Vizcaya, Mr. Dulay has three more business ventures—the G&B Buko Products also in Tuao North, the G&B Buko Products in Solano and the G&B Restaurant in Tuao

South, Bagabag, all in Nueva Vizcaya. He even ventured into a water refilling station, the G&B Purified Water Refilling Station, situated beside one of his outlets. Moreover, his main branch has now a noodles station, the G&B Special Buko Pie and Noodles Station, which offers noodles, *pansit*, *lumpiang shanghai*, *siomai*, fresh *buko* juice, *buko* tarts and, of course, his best-seller *buko* pie.

Nowadays, G&B Special Buko Pie is indeed one of the best *pasalubong* delights that travelers won't miss to buy along the way. The popularity of Mr. Dulay's *buko* pie is, in fact, well known not only in Nueva Vizcaya but even in its neighboring provinces.

Because of his inspiring success story, Mr. Orlando Dulay was already featured in the *Kumikitang Kabuhayan* of ABS-CBN, the *Good Life* of Cory Quirino at Studio 23 and the "Micro Entrepreneur" column of the *Manila Times* in 2004. In addition, just last November 25, 2013, he attended and participated in the CMA's first Alumni Network event, together with other former CMA winners, held at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas in Manila.

Business Plans

Aside from business expansion, more outlets, varieties of other *buko* products and attending seminars, Mr. Dulay also plans to engage in exporting his products. In fact, he already asked for the assistance of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) on how to export his products, considering the fact that their shelf life could only last for two to three days. Upon learning that *buko* pie manufacturers in Los Baños, Laguna are already exporting their products across countries, he, together with the DOST, visited these *buko* pie manufacturers. They found out that one way of preserving the shelf life of the said product is through the use of a certain freezer that can preserve *buko* pies up to one year. Though the said freezer really costs too much, Mr. Dulay is determined to have one, for him to trade his *buko* products not only in the Philippines but also in other countries.

Success Factors

Mr. Orlando Dulay doesn't believe in destiny. He said that the success of a person relies on hard work, dedication, patience, positive thinking, respect to one's self and to others, loving what you are doing, and, foremost, faith in God.

He also shares that entrepreneurs like him must continue to innovate, improve and develop their products; otherwise, customers will get tired of same old products and will search for another one, where they can try something new. More varieties of products should be offered to customers for them to have more options to choose from.

Social Responsibility

Mr. Orlando E. Dulay is indeed an inspiration to the younger generation, especially for those who want to start a business venture. He is also able to help a lot of people, particularly in terms of generating employment, and further contributes to the enhancement of the local economy by sourcing his supply of *buko* from coconut farmers residing in nearby villages. He is also very active in their community by sponsoring sports activities and the like.

At present, he is still a very good client of FICOBank, under the Bank's Kabayan Enterprise Loan facility. Since 2004 up to present, the credit dealings of Mr. Dulay with the Bank have proven its creditworthiness, having an unblemished credit record.

– Ferdimar A. Peralta



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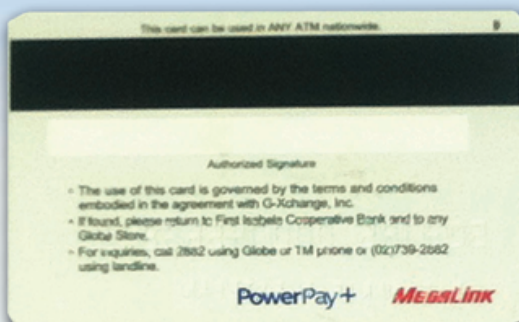
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