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Far from home, Filipino nurses still give back

Members of the Philippine Nurses Association of Oregon and Washington are fund-raising for a medical mission

BY JENNIFER CLAMPET ✉
The Times, Nov 15, 2007

TUALATIN – Lucy Laeser lives and works in Oregon. But her heart, family and mind thrive in the Philippines.

Like 11 million overseas Filipinos, Laeser, of Tualatin, enjoys living in another country but still works to help support her family – her sister and nephews – back home. (Overseas Filipino is a phrase used to describe people of Philippine origin who live outside the Philippines.)

In a few months, Laeser and several other members of the Philippine Nurses Association of Oregon and Washington will travel to the Philippines to provide medical help to poverty-stricken residents in two mountain-region provinces.

“In the Philippines we help people out like families, even if we are not family,” Laeser said.



JENNIFER CLAMPET / THE TIMES
HIGHLAND TRADITIONS — Bogs Nabehet, Editha Clift and Marilyn Anderson practice parts of a traditional Philippine highland dance at the Tualatin Heritage Center.



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“I’ve learned from not living there that that’s who we are. We help others.”

The medical mission slated for February 2008 will be the second mission the local chapter has participated in. In January, the group traveled to the Bicol region of the Philippines to help render aid to residents who had lost their homes during a volcanic eruption and typhoon.

The second mission coincides with an international conference for Filipino nurses in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. After attending the conference, members of the PNAOW will travel to the Nueva Viscaya and Banaue provinces.

“To me it’s about giving back to our country,” said Laeser, a registered nurse who graduated from school in the Philippines and moved to the United States in 1978. In 1988 she became an active member of the Philippine Nurses Association of America. She now serves as president of the Oregon and Washington chapter.

The PNAOW plans to distribute supplies like toothbrushes, toothpaste and school and health supplies to about 200 mountain villagers. The group’s last fund-raiser for the mission will be held Saturday as part of A Taste of the Philippines event at the Tualatin Heritage Center, 8700 S.W. Sweek Drive.

A lunch of roast pig, lumpia, pancit and adobo will be served at the Tualatin Police Department from noon to 1:30 p.m. The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.

The rest of the event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. is free. World War II veterans will provide first-hand accounts of the country during the war. And artifacts and dance performances depicting the mountain cultures will also be shown. For more information on PNAOW, visit www.pnaow.org.

“This is the start of hopefully something big,” said Emily Rice, of Tigard, a volunteer at the heritage center.

Rice describes her native country as similar to Oregon with a bounty of green trees and a mountain landscape. She notes that the mountain regions are more removed from the influences of Western culture. The people are poor, Rice said.

“The Philippines is a third world country, and most people look for opportunities elsewhere,” Laeser said.

At a Glance

What: A Taste of the Philippines

When: Saturday, Nov. 17, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Where: Tualatin Heritage Center, 8700 S.W. Sweek Drive

The event is free, but lunch is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children.



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