



## Filipino American Veterans Association Awards Scholarships in Grand Filipiniana Celebration

July 12, 2025 | Jose Rizal Community Center, Sacramento, CA

BY DINNAH S. SAN PEDRO

Under the proud banner of cultural heritage and community empowerment, the Filipino American Veterans Association (FAVA) held its annual Scholarship Award Night on July 12, 2025, at the Jose Rizal Community Center in Sacramento, California. The event, led by FAVA President Ato Dela Cruz and his loving partner-in-service Yollie, brought together veterans, families, community leaders, and youth in a celebration steeped in the warmth of Filipino tradition and unity.

With Beth Velasco as the emcee of the program, the evening opened with a heartfelt invocation led by Lynn Cruz, setting a reflective and reverent tone before dinner was served. The patriotic spirit of the event soared with a stirring Color Guard presentation, led by Team Captain Jess Velasco, alongside fellow veterans Rudy Delizo, Elmer Dy, Magsaysay Cruz, and John Reyes. The Philippine National Anthem, powerfully performed by Dale Esperante, filled the room with pride and emotion. Equally moving was the rendition of the U.S. National Anthem, beautifully sung by one of the scholarship recipients, Eliza Velasco Yee, capturing the unity and dual heritage celebrated throughout the evening. This was followed by a warm welcome address from FAVA President Ato Dela Cruz, who spoke passionately about honoring the sacrifices of Filipino-American veterans while nurturing the dreams of the next generation.

Guests were treated to a sumptuous dinner catered by Roselie Crandall, made even more special by the gracious service of dedicated FAVA members, including Lynn Cruz, Monching Cruz, Yoly Cole, Melody Reyes, Bella Anderson, Malou Amper, John Reyes, Yollie Delacruz, Nora Mayo, Corazon Lozano, Leila Pereira, Dinnah San Pedro, Ida Alvarez, and Joe Alvarez. Their warm hospitality and attentive service reflected the genuine Filipino spirit of community and care.

A dazzling cultural dance presentation followed. The Diamond Stars—Laurence, Janet, Dina, and Anabel—mesmerized the audience with graceful choreography, while a second group composed of FAVA's own members—Beth Velasco, Yoly Cole, Nannette Nerona, Let Pangilinan, Elena Dy, and Melody Reyes—delivered a spirited Filipiniana dance performance under the artistic direction of Lynn Cruz, bringing the crowd to roaring applause.

The highlight of the evening was the Scholarship Award Ceremony, masterfully presented by Chairperson Marivic Sinlao, along with Let Pangilinan, Sonia Delizo, and Melody Reyes. The committee proudly recognized five exceptional high school students, awarding scholarships that acknowledged their academic excellence and potential to make a positive impact.



Photos by Sam Cole

Continued on next page



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From page 1

### The scholarship recipients and their awards

1. **Colin Fitzgerald Adreani**  
\$1,000 (First Place)
2. **Ronin Apalin Cordero**  
\$700 (Second Place)
3. **Eliza Jane Velasco Yee**  
\$500 (Third Place)
4. **Janessa Rae Velasco Garcia**  
\$200 (Fourth Place)
5. **Belle Briosos Nerona**  
\$200 (Fifth Place)

As each recipient accepted their award, surrounded by loved ones, they delivered heartfelt and inspiring messages, expressing gratitude for the honor and support. The ceremony was a truly uplifting experience, celebrating the achievements of these deserving students.

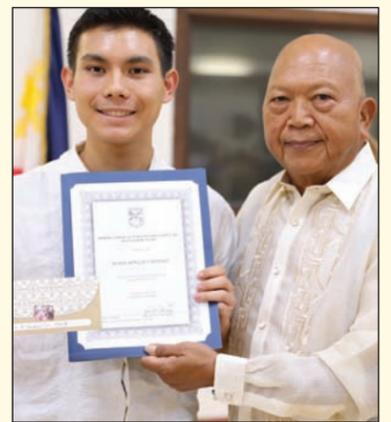
Adding a heartwarming touch to the evening, guests were delighted by a generous array of Filipino treats from a charming "Sari-Sari Store" setup. The selection included canned goods, bottled drinks, chocolates, and other beloved traditional snacks—all thoughtfully prepared, artfully arranged, and generously donated by Lynn Cruz, and her husband Magsaysay Cruz- whose creativity and kindness brought joy and nostalgia to everyone in attendance. At the program's ending, a thoughtful tradition in Filipino gatherings is recognizing community leaders and dignitaries in attendance, which Elena Dy eloquently embodied.

Entertainment continued into the night with High Tech Sounds as DJ Edward Cordero kept the dance floor alive. A lively card game led by Sam Cole offered cash prizes ranging from \$50 to \$150, much to the delight of lucky participants.

Another fun surprise came in the form of the Best Filipiniana Attire awards. The Best Filipiniana Dress honor went to Erlinda Aglubat, who turned heads in a stunning long golden satin Filipina gown, while the Best Barong Tagalog was awarded to John Huggard, who wore the traditional formal wear with pride and elegance.

The evening was more than a celebration—it was a vibrant reminder of community, culture, and continuity. Most importantly, the awarding of the scholarships stood as a beacon of hope and a symbol of FAVA's enduring commitment to the younger generation.

It was truly an evening to remember, filled with joy, tradition, and the shared pride of being part of the ever-thriving Filipino-American community in Sacramento.



Photos by Sam Cole