

# Kalinga

THE PNACOC NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025

5<sup>TH</sup> ISSUE



## When visions become reality

Great things often start with a simple idea—a quiet spark of inspiration. Whether born from a moment or a humble goal, visions grow through passion, persistence, and hard work. They don't come to life overnight; they require time, faith, and steady effort. But when they do, they remind us that even the smallest beginnings can lead to something truly extraordinary.

This season's issue of Kalinga explores how visions serve as the stepping stones to success—turning passion into purpose, and purpose into lasting impact. Manifesting resilience, one personal story at a time...



**Celebrating  
PNACOC's  
7 years of Service  
and Outreach**

*Featuring*

**Giselle Abellera  
DNP, MSN-Ed, RN, CHEP**

**PNACOC  
Founding President**

# WHAT'S INSIDE

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**REFLECTION AND REPORT**

46TH PNAA NATIONAL CONVENTION

**FROM VISION TO LEGACY**

STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS

**YOU ARE A P.R.O.**

HEALTH AND HERITAGE

**BREAKING THE SILENCE**

STAY GROUNDED

**A JOURNEY BACK TO SELF**

BURNED OUT OR MISALIGNED

**ALZHEIMER'S SECTION**

MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

**MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS**



## *KALINGA* 5th Issue

The 5th issue of KALINGA, the PNACOC Newsletter, a **proud recipient of the 2025 Inside PNAA Outstanding Newsletter Award**, is more than just pages—it is our shared story. It celebrates our chapter's achievements, activities, and steadfast unity, capturing the pride, inspiration, and connection that bind us. Each article reflects our members' strength, dedication, and passion as we continue moving forward together, with purpose and determination, **towards greater resilience.**

*Vin*  
Editor





# *President's Message*

It has been a year since I humbly accepted the role of President, and what a year it has been. We've spent the past months strengthening our chapter — building upon the legacy of the past presidents by working towards becoming a registered non-profit organization in California, participating in community activities and outreach, creating meaningful partnerships with community organizations, and enhancing our communication within and beyond our chapter.

All these efforts have been grounded in trust, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose.

I am filled with gratitude for all of you who supported our journey—whether by showing up, volunteering your time, or simply believing in what we do. Your participation and encouragement have kept us moving forward.

As we look to the year ahead, we shift our focus toward expanding educational opportunities for our members, growing our membership numbers, and formally establishing ourselves as a full 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization—an exciting new chapter.

As September rolls in, may the crisp fall air remind us of the beauty of change and the courage it takes to stand tall through seasons of transformation.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Let's keep moving forward—together  
Towards Greater Resilience.

Daghang Salamat!



*Karol Ronie Bunao*  
RN, MSN, PMHNP-BC  
PRESIDENT, PNACOC



# PNA COC

## Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County



We are a non-profit 501(c)(3) professional nursing organization that was established in 2018 as a California-Orange County Chapter of Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc. (PNAA).

We embrace all healthcare professionals regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, age, sex, sexual orientation, religion and/or disability. Embedded in our core values are lifelong learning, caring, empowerment, diversity, holism, innovation, inspiration, respect, service, and teamwork.

Our goals are to empower Filipino-American nurses, advocate for global health; foster professional growth, collaborate with community organization's initiatives; and advance professional nursing through education and research.

Our mission is to uphold and foster the positive image and welfare of Filipino-American nurses, and our activities are geared towards promoting professional excellence, and contributing to significant outcomes to healthcare and society through education, research, and improvement of clinical practice. Our activities are focused on:

- ✓ Continuing Education
- ✓ Leadership Development
- ✓ Health and Wellness Promotion
- ✓ Collaborations with community organizations
- ✓ Community outreach
- ✓ Environmental Stewardship
- ✓ Networking with fellow nurses





# *PNA*COC

## Executive Board

### 2024-2026



Karol Ronie Bunao, MSN,  
RN, PMHNP-BC  
President



Maribeth McKinney, DNP,  
MSN-FNP-C, PHN, RN  
President-Elect



Victor Gallardo, BSN, RN  
Vice-President



Annabelle Faeldan, BSN,  
RN-BC  
Secretary



Mary Ann Dee, BSN, RN  
Treasurer & Auditor



Melanie Severino, BSN, MBA, RN  
Public Relations Officer



Giselle Abellera, DNP,  
MSN-Ed, RN  
Advisor &  
Founding President



Sherwin Imperio, DNP,  
MBA, PMHNP-BC, RN-BC, PHN  
Advisor &  
Past President



Michelle Paysan-Modina,  
DNP, MBA, MSN, NP-C, RN, PHN  
Advisor &  
Immediate Past President

# Towards Greater Resilience



## The President's Reflection and Report

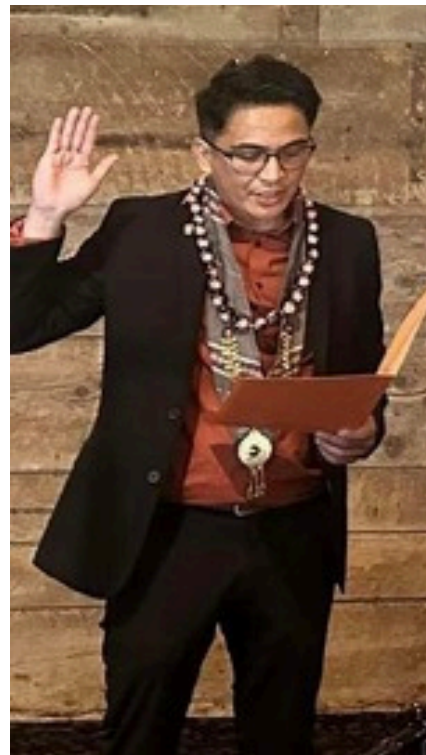
— A YEAR IN THE PRESIDENCY —

BY KAROL RONIE BUNAO, RN, MSN, PMHNP-BC

It feels like only yesterday that I stood before you, newly inaugurated as President of the Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County Chapter, alongside our new dedicated officers. That August day in 2024, with the scenic Orange County Mining Company as our backdrop, we celebrated our chapter's achievements and looked ahead to the journey before us.

From that moment, I embraced the mantra "Towards Greater Resilience"—a pledge to uphold our perseverance through challenges, strengthen our unity as a community, and drive our determination to thrive in a post-pandemic world. Guided by this vision, I applied a SOAR analysis—Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results—to chart our path, in alignment with the 2024–2026 Strategic Plan. Today, I invite you to look back with me and see just how far we have come.

As we reflect, let us revisit the goals we set a year ago—celebrating our milestones, learning from our challenges, and reaffirming our shared vision to ensure we remain firmly on track toward greater resilience.





## THE 2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



### 1. Becoming a Nonprofit Organization

One of our top priorities was to secure our nonprofit status—an effort that required nearly a year of consultations, research, and collaboration with sister PNAA chapters.

- February 2025: Officially incorporated by the State of California.
- June 2025: Recognized by the California Department of Justice as a nonprofit charity.
- July 2025: Approved by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

This milestone opens doors to greater funding opportunities, allowing us to expand our programs, strengthen our community presence, and serve more effectively.

---

# The President's Reflection and Report

## 2. Membership Growth and Retention

Recruitment and retention are challenges for any organization, but your continued membership and renewal inspire us to press on.



This year, PNACOC was recognized at the PNAA National Convention as a “Rising Star” chapter—achieving a 15% annual membership growth. While we celebrate this success, we also recognize the need to streamline our renewal process.

To address member concerns, we:

- Created a step-by-step renewal guide on our website.
- Designated “Super Users” to assist with the PNAA renewal portal.

Your voices matter, and together, we are building a stronger, more engaged membership base.



2025 Rising Star Award



Step-by-step Membership Process



# The President's Reflection and Report

## 3. Engagement and Activities

From local outreach to national representation, PNACOC has made its presence felt through various activities:



- Environmental Stewardship: Beach clean-up at Newport Beach.
- Wellness Programs: Weekend Zumba sessions.
- Educational Initiatives: Pharma-sponsored learning events.
- Cultural Participation: Joined the 3rd Philippine Independence Day celebration in Orange County.
- Community Partnership: Supported the Alzheimer's Association Annual Gala.
- Regional Impact: Represented PNACOC at the 22nd PNAA Western Region Conference, winning Most Outstanding Performer for our traditional tribal dance.
- Communication & Visibility: Upgraded our website and launched the PNACOC Kalinga Newsletter—earning PNAA's Most Outstanding Newsletter Award among 58 chapters nationwide.

These achievements are not just accolades—they're proof of the dedication, teamwork, and heart that define PNACOC.



## The President's Reflection and Report



### Looking Ahead

As I shared in my induction speech, my vision is for PNACOC to be more than a social group. We are:

- A professional organization helping Filipino nurses thrive and grow.
- A community advocate championing volunteerism.
- A voice for environmental consciousness in healthcare and beyond.

With the support of our members, advisors, and executive board, I am confident that we will continue to give back to the community that shaped us. Challenges may come, but as Filipino nurses, resilience is in our DNA.

A bright future lies ahead for PNACOC—one filled with purpose, growth, and service. I invite you to stand with us, join our upcoming activities, and be part of this journey.

Daghang Salamat,

*Karol Ronie Bunao*  
RN, MSN, PMHNP-BC  
PRESIDENT, PNACOC

---



# PHILIPPINE NURSES ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA, INC. (PNAA) 46<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Karol Ronie Bunao, RN, MSN, PMHNP-BC



I had the distinct honor of attending several events during the 46th Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) National Convention held in Detroit, Michigan from July 17 to 20, 2025. This year's theme, "Nurses Gearing Up: Driving Impact and Influence in Healthcare," truly came alive throughout the convention's activities and celebrations.

On July 17, I participated in the Leadership Institute and witnessed the graduation of the PNAA Innovation Leadership Program (iLDP) fellows, held at the historic Henry Ford Museum. It was incredibly inspiring to be surrounded by esteemed Filipino nurse leaders who exemplify innovation, excellence, and impact within their respective fields. I also had the opportunity to meet Nurse Alice, a prominent social media personality proud of her Filipino heritage. She continues to elevate the nursing profession by using both traditional and social media platforms to advocate for change and awareness.

## A CELEBRATION OF IMPACT, INNOVATION, AND INFLUENCE



It was a proud moment to witness the conferring of awards for the top project management plans and the distribution of certificates to the iLDP graduates. As a former iLDP fellow myself, I deeply empathized with their pride and sense of accomplishment. I sincerely hope they will harness their leadership training to empower their professional practices and PNAA chapters. Against the backdrop of such a historic venue, it felt like we were not just honoring history—we were making it.

Later that day, we gathered at the Westin Cadillac Hotel for Networking Night. It was an evening filled with camaraderie and entertainment, themed after the legendary Motown era. No one brings energy to a party quite like nurses! Each region showcased its best Motown artists and dancers, performing unforgettable hits from the likes of Aretha Franklin and The Four Tops. It was a delightful throwback to the vibrant sounds and steps of the '60s and '70s.



Of course, the night wasn't just about fun. It was also a celebration of excellence. Awards and recognition were given to chapters and individuals who exemplify the convention's mantra of impact and influence. I'm proud to share that our chapter was recognized as a Rising Star for achieving a 15% average membership growth. One of the evening's most memorable highlights was when PNACOC received the coveted award for "Outstanding Chapter Newsletter." Out of 58 PNAA member chapters, we were chosen—what an honor! I am immensely proud of our members' contributions and especially grateful to our dedicated editorial team for their hard work and creativity.



## A CELEBRATION OF IMPACT, INNOVATION, AND INFLUENCE

After a brief respite on Friday, we kicked off Saturday bright and early with the PNAAF 5K Wellness Challenge at Detroit Riverwalk Park. At 5 a.m., participants gathered to welcome the sunrise and join in the challenge—not just for fitness, but for a purpose. This fundraiser supports the PNAAF, the foundation arm of PNAA, which has funded many vital initiatives including iLDP, Camp Aruga, KEWP (Kabalikat Emotional Wellness Program), scholarships, and disaster relief programs. This year's 5K challenge raised over \$100,000—an incredible testament to our members' generosity and commitment to the cause.



As part of PNAA's responsibilities as a professional organization, the convention also hosted the General Assembly, where leadership provided updates and organizational milestones. Delegates also cast their votes for the host of the 48th PNAA National Convention in 2027. With vibrant and passionate presentations from both PNA Hawaii and PNA Houston, the competition was fierce. Ultimately, PNA Hawaii won, and the celebration was pure ALOHA spirit!



The convention culminated with the elegant Gala Night. We enjoyed an evening of music, delicious food, and meaningful connections with fellow PNAA leaders and members. The pinnacle of the event was the ceremonial passing of the baton from PNA Michigan to PNA Colorado—the host of next year's 47th PNAA National Convention.



Reflecting on this incredible experience, I can truly say: PNAA has come a long way. I am honored to represent our chapter and remain hopeful for an even brighter, more meaningful future for all PNAA members. Shine PNAA, shine!



A MILESTONE OF MEANING

# FROM VISION TO LEGACY

CELEBRATING PNACOC'S 7 YEARS OF SERVICE

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. GISELLE ABELLERA, DNP, MSN-ED, RN, CHP



We sat down with our Founding President to reflect on the beginnings of the Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County (PNACOC), which has now grown into a vibrant and resilient organization. As we celebrate seven years of service, we look on challenges, victories, and the community spirit that laid the foundation for what PNACOC is today. In this special Q&A feature, we explore the early days, the vision that brought members together, and the legacy that continues to inspire the next generation of Filipino-American nurses. Here's what she had to share about our remarkable journey.

## Inspiration and Vision

### *WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO ESTABLISH PNACOC?*

PNACOC didn't start as a standalone chapter—we began as a subchapter of PNA Southern California (PNASC). During that time, we were actively involved in their mission, showing up for outreach, supporting fundraising efforts, and working hand in hand with their leadership. That experience gave us a strong foundation and a deep respect for the larger organization.

Because we were so engaged and consistently delivered excellent outcomes, Dr. Maribeth McKinney, who was the President of our subchapter, introduced the idea that we could transition into a full-fledged chapter and stand independently. At the time, we were still acclimating to the structure and responsibilities of being a subchapter. But the idea sparked something in us.



## A MILESTONE OF MEANING

# FROM VISION TO LEGACY



**Dr. Giselle Abellera, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN, CHP**  
**PNAOC Founding President**  
**2018-2020**

To become a full chapter under PNAA, we needed at least 30 members. Instead of seeing that as a hurdle, we saw it as an opportunity. We mobilized—inviting others in, strengthening our leadership, and casting a vision for what PNACOC could become. That journey from subchapter to full chapter was fueled by commitment, perseverance, resilience and, pride in our community, and the belief that Filipino-American nurses in Orange County deserved to have their own voice and home.

### *CAN YOU WALK US THROUGH HOW THE IDEA FIRST CAME TO LIFE?*

It started from a place of service. Because we were so active, participatory, and intentional about the work we were doing as a subchapter, the idea of becoming an independent chapter felt like a natural next step. We were already leading, organizing events, and creating outcomes that showed our readiness.

With encouragement from leaders like Mindy Ofiana, Dr. Merlie Ramira, and Dr. Maria Gonzales, we started learning the process, one step at a time. From bylaws to membership rosters to communications with PNAA, it was a true team effort. There was a lot of back-and-forth, a lot of reading fine print, and a lot of rallying people to believe in the vision. And it all came together with heart and determination.

### *WHAT WAS YOUR VISION FOR THE CHAPTER WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED IT?*

I envisioned a chapter that was rooted in community and powered by meaningful purpose. PNACOC wasn't meant to be just another group; it was meant to be a hub for connection, networking, leadership, and cultural pride. A home base for Filipino-American nurses in Orange County.

Since many of our current members come from academia, our foundation naturally reflected that: "We are lifelong learners." We're not just committed to learning, we're committed to leading. As educators, we see it as part of our mission to empower the next generation of Filipino-American nurses and create a pipeline for leadership, mentorship, and advocacy.



**Lifelong Learners**

**"We are lifelong learners. We're not just committed to learning, we're committed to leading"**

## A MILESTONE OF MEANING FROM VISION TO LEGACY

### Challenges and Milestones

*WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES DURING THE FOUNDING PHASE?*

Everything was a first. Drafting bylaws, meeting charter requirements, and recruiting members, we had to build plane while flying it. One of the biggest challenges was getting people to believe this could work. Not because they didn't want it, but because starting something new takes courage, perseverance, and trust.

*HOW DID YOU OVERCOME THOSE OBSTACLES?*

I didn't do it alone. This was a community project, from the inside out. I was surrounded by mentors and leaders who guided me every step of the way.

Dr. Maria Gonzales's, PNACOC Advisor (RIP), shared wisdom, tenacity, and had a strong convictions continue to guide me to this day.

Dr. Merlie Ramira (PNASD), Western Region RVP (2016–2018), helped us stay aligned with national goals. She was a steady and supportive mentor whose guidance gave me the confidence to keep pushing.

Vickie Berbano (PNASD), as part of the By-Laws Committee (2016–2018), provided the structural clarity we needed.

Mindy Ofiana, PNASC Past President, offered her insights and encouragement freely.

*WAS THERE A DEFINING MOMENT WHEN YOU THOUGHT, "THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING"?*

Yes, and I remember it clearly. On June 13, 2018, at 1:44 p.m., I received the official approval from Dr. Merlie Ramira and Ms. Jeanette Livelo, PNAA Chair, Bylaws. I still have the email. As I sat reading through the long chain of messages between PNAA and our team, I had this quiet moment of reflection: "Did I really do that?" It was a humbling and powerful confirmation that all the effort had led to something real.



### Community and Impact

*HOW DID THE FILIPINO-AMERICAN NURSING COMMUNITY IN OC RESPOND TO THE IDEA?*

PNA San Diego, Riverside, and Central Region were incredibly supportive. There was excitement, curiosity, and this feeling of "finally!" People wanted to be a part of something that reflected their identity and amplified their voices. That response energized us even more.

**"It was a humbling and powerful confirmation that all the effort had led to something real"**



## A MILESTONE OF MEANING FROM VISION TO LEGACY

*WHAT ROLE DID PARTNERSHIPS OR OTHER FILIPINO ORGANIZATIONS PLAY?*

Partnerships were essential. PNA San Diego and Dr. Gonzales walked us through every step of the chapter application process. Mindy Ofiana (PNASC) continued to be a generous supporter. It wasn't just about creating a chapter; it was about staying connected to the larger Filipino-American community.

*WHAT WAS THE VERY FIRST EVENT PNACOC HELD?*

Our Inauguration on June 23, 2018, was our first official event. We were sworn in by PNAA President Dino Doliente (2016-2018), and it marked the formal beginning of our chapter. That moment was more than symbolic—it was the start of our journey as leaders of PNACOC.

Later that year, we held our first “Meet and Greet” on November 3, 2018, which brought in nursing students from West Coast University. That event set the tone for our approach: community-focused, student-friendly, and rooted in professional growth.

## Legacy and Reflections

*LOOKING BACK,  
WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?*

I'm proud that we created something lasting. PNACOC is still here, growing, evolving, and serving the community. It wasn't just an idea or a temporary project. We built something with roots.

*HOW DO YOU FEEL SEEING WHERE PNACOC IS TODAY?*

Blessed, grateful, and amazed. Watching new leaders bring their unique vision and leadership, seeing the community grow, and knowing that the work we started is continuing, it fills me with pride and humility. It's evolved, and that's a good thing.



**“It wasn’t just an idea or a temporary project.  
We built something with roots”**

A MILESTONE OF MEANING  
**FROM VISION TO LEGACY**

## Personal Touch

*WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE FUTURE LEADERS OF PNACOC?*

**L**ead with emotional intelligence, empathy. Be open to learning. Stay rooted in why we exist—to uplift, connect, and lead as Filipino-American nurses. Surround yourself with people who will challenge and support you. You don't have to know everything; just stay committed to growth and trust the process. We are, after all, lifelong learners.

*WHAT DID BEING THE FOUNDING PRESIDENT MEAN TO YOU PERSONALLY?*

It was a deeply personal and transformative experience. It challenged my emotional intelligence and gave me a stronger and meaningful sense of purpose. It's something I'll always carry with me.

*WERE THERE MENTORS, COLLEAGUES, OR FAMILY WHO SUPPORTED YOU?*

Absolutely. My mentors were lifelines. Colleagues stepped up when I needed help. And my family supported me through late nights and endless meetings. As the saying goes, "I couldn't have done it without them."

*IS THERE A MEMORY THAT STILL WARMS YOUR HEART?*

Absolutely! There are many. Our Induction in June 2018; how Dr. Sherwin Imperio phenomenally led our chapter during the initial stages of COVID-19, Dr. Michelle Paysan-Modina's commitment and continued leadership also during COVID-19 by maintaining our membership, and Ronnie Bunao's vision of attaining 501 (c)(3) and developing the PNACOC newsletter, which you have brought to winning the PNAA Award.

During the Western Regional Conference held in San Diego, hosted by PNA Riverside, I met with the former President of PNAAF and former West Coast University Dean of the School of Nursing, Nancy Hoff, and she said, "Orange County has done and continues to do great things and I am proud of what you've become." That one sentence reminded me why we started this chapter. For service. For connection. For the community. For each other.

**"PNACOC has done and continues to do great things"**

*~END OF INTERVIEW~*

***Seven years forged with passion and purpose—resilient, strong, and rising higher.***

***PNACOC stands at the edge of a brighter future, fueled by bold partnerships, empowered by education, and driven by unwavering service and professionalism. We are not just looking ahead—we are leading the way.***

***The future isn't just bright—it's ours.***



A MILESTONE OF MEANING

# STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS

CELEBRATING PNACOC'S 7 YEARS OF SERVICE



*CHALLENGES,  
LANDMARKS AND  
VISIONS FROM THE  
LEADERS THAT  
FOLLOWED*

By Irvin Bagongon, BSN, RN, CNCC(C)



As the Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County (PNACOC) celebrates its 7th anniversary, We stand at a meaningful crossroads of reflection and vision. What began as a small community of nurses united by heritage and a shared profession has grown into a dynamic, resilient organization—one that continues to embody compassion, leadership, and service.

Anniversaries are not merely dates on a calendar. They are milestones of meaning, markers of strength, and reminders of the leaders who helped shape the journey. To honor this milestone, we look back through the lens of two past presidents, Sherwin Imperio, DNP, MBA, PMHNP-BC, RN-BC, PHN (President in the years of 2020-2022) and Michelle Paysan-Modina, DNP, MBA, NP-C, RN, PHN (President in the years of 2022-2024), who carried PNACOC forward during times of both challenge and growth. Their stories remind us of the trials we overcame, the triumphs we celebrated, and the visions that still guide us.

## Challenges and Milestones

For Sherwin, stepping into the presidency in 2020 coincided with one of the most difficult moments in modern history—the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. “What was meant to be a season of vision-building and program expansion quickly became a call to serve in the face of fear, grief, and collective trauma,” he recalls. The chapter’s members, many of them frontliners, faced not only physical exhaustion but also emotional strain, moral injury, and isolation. “Our chapter needed more than programs—we needed presence, compassion, and leadership that prioritized human connection over agendas.”

## A MILESTONE OF MEANING

# STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS



**Sherwin Imperio,**  
DNP, MBA, PMHNP-BC, RN-BC, PHN  
PNACOC President 2020-2022

**T**he challenge was formidable: how do you preserve the heartbeat of an organization when in-person gatherings are no longer safe, and when members are stretched beyond their limits?

Under Sherwin's Leadership, PNACOC pivoted swiftly to virtual platforms, launching online events that focused on wellness, cultural pride, and advocacy. The transition was not easy—Zoom fatigue and engagement hurdles were real—but the chapter pressed on, choosing unity and connection as guiding values.

Amidst these difficulties, Sherwin counts among his proudest accomplishments are the creation of meaningful mental health initiatives, alongside his role in the Kabalikat Emotional Wellness Program (KEWP) under PNAA. As part of a national task force, he helped deliver emotional support programs, debriefings, and wellness trainings to nurses during the pandemic's darkest days. What began as crisis response has since grown into a national program that continues to uplift members today.

For Michelle, challenges came in different forms. Retention of members, balancing diverse interests, and ensuring long-term growth required deliberate strategy and steady leadership. "Guiding the team through periods of uncertainty and fostering an inclusive environment demanded patience, adaptability, and collaboration," she shares.

Yet in those challenges, she found opportunities to build. Under her tenure, PNACOC achieved a 50% increase in membership retention, a 15% annual rise in recruitment, and expanded opportunities for mentorship and networking. Continuing education through conferences became a cornerstone, while partnerships and outreach efforts elevated the chapter's presence in the broader community.

"These collective achievements reflect the unwavering dedication of our members," Michelle says. "They demonstrate the positive impact we can have as a cohesive organization." Her proudest accomplishment, however, was not just the numbers, but seeing PNACOC's members evolve into leaders themselves—nurses stepping forward with courage and confidence to carry the mission forward.



**Michelle Paysan-Modina,**  
DNP, MBA, NP-C, RN, PHN  
PNACOC President 2022-2024



# A MILESTONE OF MEANING STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS

## Community and Impact

Across these different chapters of leadership, one theme stands out: growth was never just about numbers, but about people. Both leaders witnessed PNACOC not just survive challenges, but evolve into a more resilient and empowered community.

For Sherwin, the transformation was about presence and heart. The pandemic forced the chapter to rethink its very identity—how to connect, how to support, and how to remain visible in a time of isolation. Virtual wellness programs and cultural celebrations became not just events, but lifelines. And behind those efforts was a commitment to succession planning, ensuring that the organization would remain sustainable beyond his tenure.

Michelle highlights growth in visibility, engagement, and leadership development. “PNACOC truly evolved into a stronger and more united voice,” she reflects. The rise of new leaders stepping into roles with confidence and vision was, for her, the most rewarding evolution. The organization was not only retaining members but also nurturing the next generation of nurse leaders.



A MILESTONE OF MEANING

# STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS

## Legacy and Reflections

Anniversaries prompt us to look back with gratitude and forward with hope. For Michelle, PNACOC's 7th anniversary symbolizes "resilience, unity, and shared purpose." It reflects the dedication of past and present members and demonstrates how an original vision has blossomed into a meaningful legacy.

Sherwin echoes this sentiment through the lens of lived experience. The resilience forged during the pandemic years, the compassion that held members together, and the initiatives that emerged from hardship all serve as lasting reminders that leadership is not about titles, but about showing up when it matters most.

The 7th anniversary is thus more than a celebration of time passed. It is a tribute to the unwavering spirit of a community that has faced storms together and come out stronger.

## Personal Touch: Messages for Today and the Future

Leadership is not just about navigating the present—it is about leaving guidance for those who will follow. Both past presidents offered heartfelt words for PNACOC's current executive board, members, and future leaders.

Sherwin's message is one of gratitude and encouragement: "To every PNACOC member who served, showed up, or simply held on during those trying years—thank you. You are the reason we made it through. And you are the reason PNACOC continues to shine." His reminder underscores that the strength of the organization lies not only in leaders but in the collective resilience of its members.

Michelle's message emphasizes purpose and vision: "To the Executive Board: thank you for carrying the torch forward with vision and dedication. To the members: remember that your involvement and support are the heart of this organization. And to the future leaders: lead with courage, humility, and purpose. Always remember why PNACOC exists—not just to gather, but to serve, empower, and inspire."

*"To every PNACOC member who served, showed up, or simply held on during those trying years—thank you. You are the reason we made it through. And you are the reason PNACOC continues to shine"*

*-Sherwin Imperio*



A MILESTONE OF MEANING  
**STRENGTH OVER THE YEARS**

## Closing Reflections

As PNACOC marks its 7th year, the voices of its past leaders remind us of the challenges faced, the milestones achieved, and the visions cast for the future. From navigating the upheaval of a global pandemic to strengthening visibility, expanding membership, and cultivating new leaders, PNACOC has shown that resilience is not just about enduring—it is about adapting, growing, and thriving.

Today, that spirit of resilience continues under the leadership of current president Karol Ronie Bunao, MSN, RN, PMHNP-BC, whose guiding mantra, **“Towards Greater Resilience,”** carries the chapter forward. It is a vision rooted in the experiences of the past but aimed firmly at the future. Resilience here is not just survival; it is about building strength through unity, empowering members to lead, and creating a legacy that will endure for generations of Filipino nurses in California and beyond.

The road ahead will hold new challenges and new opportunities, but the foundation is strong. As PNACOC celebrates this milestone, it does so not only with gratitude for the past but also with confidence in the future. Seven years on, the chapter stands as a living testament to what can be achieved when compassion guides leadership and resilience shapes the journey.

Indeed, this anniversary is not just about looking back—it is about moving forward. And as PNACOC moves forward, it does so with strength, purpose, and resilience at its core.



*“The 7th anniversary signifies not only longevity but also resilience, unity, and shared purpose... Always remember why PNACOC exists—not just to gather, but to serve, empower, and inspire”*

*-Michelle Paysan-Modina*

# We are Nurses

Anonymous

We were there when you drew your first breath,  
Guiding you gently through life of health.  
A whisper of hope, a soft, steady hand—  
The first to hold you, the first to stand.

We fought for your safety, your care, and your choice,  
When pain left you silent, we made sure we are your voice.  
We stood as your shield, both fearless and kind,  
With science in hands and compassion in mind.

In your darkest of hours, when thoughts went astray,  
We helped calm the storm and light up the way.  
We listened, we stayed, when others walked past,  
We knew that your healing could start at last.

When the time came to speak your last prayer,  
We sat by your side, we stayed right there.  
We held your hand as you let go,  
Wrapped in peace and candle glow.

We comforted those with questions and fears,  
We offered our strength, and sometimes our tears.  
Through sleepless nights and endless days,  
We showed up still—in countless ways.

From bedside care to leading the team,  
We are the heart behind every dream.  
Providers, teachers, voices strong—  
We've carried this mission all along.

We stitch together a nation's health,  
Not just with skills—but with silent wealth:  
Of empathy, wisdom, grit, and grace,  
A quiet fire in every place.

We are nurses—steadfast and true,  
In every hall, in every hue.  
The angels with you, caring in your sickroom,  
Proud to serve through joy and gloom.





Melanie Severino's



# You are a

# PRO

*rofessional* *esilient* *utstanding*

Featuring

## KAREN RETARDO

MA, BSN, RN

At twenty, Karen arrived in Los Angeles with little more than two suitcases and a dream. What began as uncertainty—and even reluctance—grew into a remarkable journey of purpose. Today, she stands as a nurse, entrepreneur, and professional coach whose story resonates with courage, resilience, and heart. Through her work and service, she uplifts others to see their own strength and embrace their power.

This is the story of a woman who embodies what it means to be a P.R.O.—Professional, Resilient, and Outstanding. Karen is a Nurse, a Professional Coach, and a proud PNACOC member.

"Do it scared. Confidence doesn't arrive like an Amazon package. It's built in the messy, imperfect act of speaking up while you're still afraid."

—Karen Retardo

You are a  
**PRO**

When she first stepped off the plane in Los Angeles at age twenty, she had nothing more than two suitcases and the unshakable confidence of youth. No carefully mapped-out plan. No assurance of how the story would unfold. Just courage—and maybe a little stubbornness.

Her dream at the time wasn't to be a nurse. In fact, she resisted the very path that would later become her life's calling. "I wanted to be a doctor," she recalls. "But my lola and mom convinced me that nursing could be my pre-med track. Honestly, I felt tricked."

At first, nursing didn't feel like home. She didn't love the clinical grind or the expectations placed upon her. Yet something began to shift. The qualities she once dismissed—empathy, compassion, and a heart she thought was "too soft"—became her strongest assets. Slowly, the profession she never sought found her. And in that discovery, she unearthed her true life's work.



## Rising Through the Ranks: From Restlessness to Renewal

Her first nursing job felt like an achievement, the finish line after years of training. But it wasn't long before a deeper restlessness stirred. "Within months, I realized the 'dream' wasn't enough. Something inside me was restless," she admits.

That restlessness sparked a lifelong journey of growth. In 1997, she attended her first personal development seminar, where she was introduced to mindset work, limiting beliefs, and the power of reframing stories she had unconsciously carried for years. A few years later, in 2001, she began formal training as a professional coach.

"Every step forward wasn't about climbing a ladder," she explains. "It was about digging inward—into self-doubt, into silence, into the belief that I wasn't enough. The deeper I dug, the more light I found."

Her career path became less about titles and more about transformation—not just for herself, but for others.



"Nursing found me when I wasn't looking for it, and it has shaped everything since."

—Karen Retardo



You are a

**PRO**

## Moments That Defined Her

In her early twenties, a single comment cut deeply: someone called her a “doormat.” As painful as it was, the sting of that insult became a turning point.

“I had been so eager to keep the peace that I had erased myself,” she reflects. “That day, I decided kindness would no longer mean ‘walk all over me.’ It would mean courage—the courage to say no, to hold boundaries, to speak even when my voice shook.”

That moment of humiliation transformed into the foundation of her leadership style. It was proof that the very experiences that hurt us most can become the catalysts for resilience, power, and authenticity.

### The Entrepreneurial Nurse

Nursing was fulfilling, but eventually, she felt the confines of traditional roles. She vividly remembers a staff meeting under buzzing fluorescent lights,

surrounded by stale coffee and half-listening colleagues. She was nodding along, but inside she was screaming: There’s more to me than this room.

That night, she scribbled in her journal: What if my gifts don’t fit inside four walls? What if my voice could help others find theirs? That messy, late-night journal entry became the seed of her coaching practice. Not because she felt fearless—far from it—but because she was tired of shrinking.

“Coaching became my way of saying: I refuse to stay small. And neither should you,” she says. “At the end of the day, people just want to be seen, heard, and valued.”

### Giving back with a heart

Her commitment to service has always extended beyond career and business. For her, the most meaningful work has been holding space for others to rediscover their worth. She recalls a poignant moment during one of her #IAmRemarkable workshops. A participant unmuted herself on Zoom, her voice trembling: “This is the first time I’ve said out loud that I’m proud of myself.”

The virtual room fell silent. Then came applause, laughter, tears, and cheers.

“That’s when I thought—this is why I’m here,” she shares. “Not to hand out worksheets or teach skills, but to remind people that they were never unremarkable. They just needed witnesses to remind them of their own brilliance.”



You are a  
**PRO**

## Empowering Through Organizations

Beyond personal coaching, she has poured her energy into professional nursing organizations such as the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) and the Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County (PNACOC).

“These organizations are more than associations—they’re communities of belonging,” she explains. “They give us visibility, mentorship, and a network that reminds us we are not alone. They empower us to step into leadership, advocate for our communities, and break barriers that many of us, as immigrants, never imagined crossing.”



In her eyes, these groups ensure that Filipino-American nurses don’t just participate in the future of nursing—they lead it, carrying their heritage with

## Words to inspire

Her advice to the next generation of nurses is both simple and profound: do it scared.

“I used to wait for my voice to stop shaking before I spoke,” she admits. “Well, it never did. My hands still sweat. My heart still races. But people don’t remember the trembling—they remember the courage.”

Confidence, she reminds us, doesn’t magically arrive like a neatly wrapped Amazon package. It is forged in the messy, imperfect act of showing up despite fear. “It’s built by speaking up while you’re still afraid.”

For young nurses, especially those dreaming of breaking barriers beyond the clinical setting, her words offer both comfort and challenge: embrace fear, but don’t let it silence you.

*“people don’t remember the trembling—they remember the courage.”*

You are a  
**PRO**



<https://www.karenretardo.com>

## Personal Legacy

As she reflects on her journey, she sometimes wonders how she will be remembered.

"I hope people don't say, 'She had potential,'" she says with a smile. "I hope they say, 'She made people feel confident and powerful when they had forgotten they were.'"

For her, legacy isn't about accolades, titles, or even accomplishments. It's about the quiet yet profound impact on individuals—especially quietly ambitious immigrant women and men—who often feel they must apologize for existing.

"If I can help even a handful of them stop apologizing for their presence, that will be enough. More than enough."

## The Essence of a P.R.O.

Karen's story is not one of a straight path or easy victories. It is a story of detours, of learning to stand firm after being knocked down, of embracing fear rather than waiting for it to disappear. It is the journey of a nurse who became a coach, a leader, and an entrepreneur—not because she had it all figured out, but because she refused to stop searching for meaning.

Professional. Resilient. Outstanding.

She is all three. And in sharing her story, she reminds every nurse, every dreamer, every immigrant striving to belong, that they too can be a P.R.O.

"I hope people say, 'She made others feel confident and powerful when they had forgotten they were.'"

-Karen Retardo





# PNACOC



## PROMOTES HEALTH AND HERITAGE

AT THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ORANGE COUNTY  
PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION

WRITTEN BY KAROL RONIE BUNAO, RN, MSN, PMHNP-BC



On June 14, 2025, the Philippine Nurses Association of California, Orange County Chapter (PNACOC) proudly took part in the 3rd Philippine Independence Day Celebration in Orange County—a day filled with culture, community, and connection.

The event brought together Filipino-American families, local businesses, and cultural groups in a lively celebration of heritage. PNACOC set up an interactive booth offering free health assessments, including blood pressure and blood sugar checks. We also provided health education materials and shared valuable information about Alzheimer's disease—an issue that affects many in our community but is often left undiscussed.





PNACOC PROMOTES

# HEALTH AND HERITAGE



Visitors were encouraged to join our team for this fall's Walk to End Alzheimer's, as part of our ongoing commitment to advocacy and community wellness. Our booth became a space not only for learning but for engaging in meaningful conversations about health and prevention.

We were thrilled to see around 10 of our members show up and volunteer their time and expertise. Their presence and energy truly embodied the PNACOC spirit of service and unity.

The day was also a feast for the senses, with mouthwatering Filipino food, music, and dance performances that brought pride and joy to everyone in attendance. Amid the fun, our presence helped shine a light on the vital role Filipino-American nurses play in promoting public health.

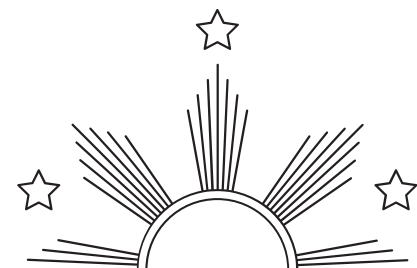
Events like these allow us to strengthen connections, share resources, and raise awareness—while proudly waving both our Filipino and nursing pride. We're already looking forward to participating again next year and continuing our mission of serving through knowledge, compassion, and cultural pride.



with Los Angeles Philippine Consul General  
Adelio Angelito S. Cruz



**"I am a Filipino Nurse - shaped  
by the strength of my ancestors,  
guided by the wisdom of my  
culture, and driven by the heart  
to serve. My roots ground me,  
my purpose lifts me"**



# Breaking *The Silence*

By Sherwin Imperio, DNP, MBA, PMHNP-BC, RN-BC, PHN

## WHY MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS Especially for Filipino American Men

Let's be honest—  
men don't always talk about what's going on inside.

We'll talk about sports. We'll talk about work. We'll even talk  
about car repairs in great detail. But our feelings?  
Our stress? Our anxiety? That often stays locked away.

And for many Filipino American men, that lock is reinforced  
by layers of cultural expectation, family pride, and a deep  
belief that we must be the strong ones no matter what.

I see this every day in my work as a psychiatric nurse  
practitioner. I meet men who have been carrying silent  
battles for years—sometimes decades—without ever  
reaching out for help.

When they finally walk into my office,  
it's often because things have reached a breaking point.  
The truth is, we can and should be talking about  
these things before it gets that far.



Sherwin Imperio,  
DNP, MBA, PMHNP-BC, RN-BC, PHN  
PNACOC Past-President 2020-22  
Chair, PNAA Scholarship Committee 2024-26



### The Silence We Grow Up With

From a young age, many Filipino boys are told to “toughen up.” We hear phrases like “Lalaki ka—wag ka umiyak” (“You’re a man—don’t cry”). We learn that showing sadness or asking for help can be seen as weakness. Add to that *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (keeping the peace), and suddenly, opening up about your mental health feels like you’re breaking a cultural rule. Even worse, some fear being labeled *baliw* (crazy), so it feels safer to keep things inside, even when the weight becomes unbearable. The result? Many men bottle up stress, depression, and anxiety until it spills over—affecting relationships, work, and even physical health.



## The Hidden Costs of Staying Quiet

Staying quiet doesn't make the pain go away—it just makes it heavier. When emotional struggles are bottled up, they start leaking into every corner of life.

**Relationships suffer.** Partners, children, and friends can feel the distance when a man withdraws or becomes irritable. Unspoken emotions can turn into arguments, misunderstandings, or complete emotional shutdown. Many men I've treated have shared that they "just didn't feel like themselves" anymore, leading to broken connections with the people they love most.

**Work performance declines.** Mental health impacts focus, motivation, and decision-making. For men balancing high-pressure jobs or multiple responsibilities, this can mean missed opportunities, declining productivity, or even job loss—adding financial stress to the emotional strain.

**Physical health takes a hit.** Stress and untreated mental illness can lead to headaches, chronic pain, sleep problems, high blood pressure, and a weakened immune system. Some men turn to alcohol, smoking, or overeating as coping mechanisms, which can create long-term health problems.

**The risk of crisis increases.** Without healthy outlets, emotional pain can build to dangerous levels, sometimes leading to panic attacks, breakdowns, or suicidal thoughts. Men are less likely to seek help early but are far more likely to die by suicide—a devastating consequence of our collective silence.

**Generational patterns repeat.** When men model emotional suppression, younger generations often follow. Sons, nephews, and younger brothers learn the same patterns—continuing a cycle where vulnerability is seen as weakness instead of a path to healing.

The truth is, silence doesn't protect us. It isolates us. And the longer we wait to speak up, the harder it becomes to untangle the damage.

## **Why Culturally Sensitive Care Matters**

Here's the thing: healing isn't just about getting a diagnosis or a prescription. It's about being understood—not just as a patient, but as a whole person.

When I work with Filipino American men, I consider the weight of family expectations, the pressures of living between two cultures, and the personal pride that often keeps us from asking for help. I understand that it's not easy to open up, especially if it feels like you're risking your reputation or your family's trust.

Culturally sensitive care means meeting people where they are—acknowledging their values while helping them see that seeking help is not betraying their culture or their family. It's actually an act of love, because when you take care of yourself, you show up better for the people who matter most.

## **Changing the Story for the Next Generation**

If we want things to change, we need to model something different for our sons, nephews, and younger brothers. We need to show them that strength includes honesty, vulnerability, and knowing when to ask for help.

That starts with small conversations—checking in on friends, talking openly about stress, and making it normal to say, “I’m not doing okay right now.” It’s about creating spaces where men can be real without being judged.

## **Your Next Step**

If you're reading this and something resonates—if you've been feeling down, anxious, or just not yourself for a while—please don't wait until things hit a crisis point.

Talk to someone you trust. Make an appointment with a mental health provider. Send a message to a friend and say, “Hey, I’m struggling.”

You don't have to carry it alone. You don't have to “man up” your way through pain.

Your mental health matters as much as your physical health. And taking care of it isn't weakness—it's one of the bravest things you can do.

Let's break the silence. Let's support each other. And let's make sure no man—Filipino American or otherwise—ever feels like he has to suffer in silence again.

---



# STAY GROUNDED

An article by Maribeth McKinney, DNP, MSN-FNP-C, PHN, RN



As I've gotten older, I started to notice a few unwelcomed guests settling into my body — Mr. Aches and Mrs. Pains. It began in my right shoulder, then crept into my left knee. Soon, it was affecting my daily activities. Long hours sitting at a desk, hunched over a computer, only made things worse. By the end of the day, I could feel every inch of it.

At night, I'd pop a Tylenol hoping for better sleep, but ironically, not feeling the pain meant I wouldn't shift positions. I'd wake up with even more stiffness, especially in my lower back. The cold winter months? They made everything worse. I figured it was just part of aging—and maybe the beginning of becoming dependent on pain medications.

That was three years ago.

Then I discovered something simple yet transformative: **GROUNDING.**



## What is Grounding?

Grounding, also known as earthing, is the practice of making direct contact with the Earth's surface—walking barefoot on grass, sand, or soil. This connection is believed to regulate the body's electrical state and reduce inflammation. Scientific studies reveal that when we physically connect to the Earth, we become part of the planet's natural DC energy field. Our bodies, being conductive, literally in-sync with the Earth's charge, promoting physiological balance.

For me, the biggest benefit of grounding has been its anti-inflammatory effects. I like to explain it in simple terms: When God made us, we were barefoot and connected to the Earth.



The Earth carries a natural negative charge, while the atmosphere holds a positive one. When we wear rubber-soled shoes and live in insulated homes, we cut ourselves off from that grounding energy—causing an imbalance that can promote inflammation and discomfort.

So I decided to reconnect—literally. I started walking barefoot at a nearby park, sandals in hand. People looked at me strangely at first, but I didn't care—because by the end of the day, my aches were gone. That led me to grounding mats, which let me stay grounded even while relaxing at home.

Then I discovered that the beach—sand and seawater—has even greater grounding effects. It felt natural. No one stares at you when you're barefoot on the beach. It just makes sense.



Then, two years ago, we at PNACOC began incorporating grounding into our community wellness efforts. We launched a Saturday morning beach cleanup and grounding activity at Newport Beach Pier, every 6:30 AM. It's our way of promoting both environmental and personal healing for members and our families.

## Reported Benefits of Grounding

### Reduces Inflammation

Grounding is believed to neutralize free radicals, reducing systemic inflammation—a key contributor to chronic diseases.

### Improves Mood

Studies suggest grounding may help reduce stress, anxiety, and promote a sense of calm and emotional well-being.

### Improves Sleep

Grounding appears to normalize the day-night cortisol cycle, supporting better circadian rhythm and restful sleep. In fact, research involving test subjects shielded from the Earth's natural energy showed disrupted circadian rhythms and poor sleep patterns.

### Reduces Pain

Grounding may relieve stiffness, joint pain, and chronic discomfort by decreasing inflammation and boosting tissue repair.

### Supports Cardiovascular Health

Grounding may improve blood flow and decrease blood viscosity, potentially lowering blood pressure and supporting heart health.

### Accelerates Wound Healing

Some clinical studies indicate that grounding can speed the healing of injuries and wounds by enhancing circulation and reducing oxidative stress.

### Boosts Energy

Many individuals report feeling more energized and less fatigued after consistent grounding practices.

### Modulates the Nervous System

Grounding helps shift the body's autonomic nervous system into a parasympathetic ("rest and digest") state, reducing stress and promoting whole-body recovery.

### Supports Immune Function

Grounding may enhance immune responses by lowering inflammation, supporting white blood cell function, and increasing resilience to illness.

In conclusion, grounding is a low-cost, natural, and accessible tool for improving physical and mental well-being. Whether you're walking barefoot on the beach, gardening with your hands in the soil, or using a grounding mat at home, it's a way of plugging back into the Earth—our original source of balance and healing. After all, our bodies evolved in constant connection with the planet's electrical rhythms. Isn't it time we return to that harmony?





September marks **#SuicidePreventionMonth** – a time to remember the lives lost to suicide, the millions who have struggled with suicidal thoughts & the individuals, families, and communities that have been impacted

Create hope in your family and your community by educating yourself about suicide prevention. Learn the warning signs and risk factors for suicide, how to support someone considering suicide, and familiarize yourself with **988 Lifeline**

### Suicide Warning Signs for Adults

*Risk is greater if a behavior is new or has increased, and if it seems related to a painful event, loss, or change*

- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live
- Sleeping too little or too much.
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain.
- Displaying extreme mood swings.
- Talking about or making plans for suicide.
- Acting anxious or agitated; behaving recklessly.
- Talking about being a burden to others.
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated.
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs.
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge.



---

# A JOURNEY BACK TO SELF.



a short story  
by Irvin Bagongon

For years, Anna had given her all to nursing. Twelve-hour shifts that often stretched into fourteen. Endless beeping monitors, urgent calls, and families searching her eyes for hope. She loved her work, but somewhere along the way, she had forgotten how to breathe for herself.

One night after a particularly heavy shift in the ICU, Anna sat in her car and stared at her reflection in the rearview mirror. The woman staring back was tired—shoulders heavy, eyes dull, spirit drained. She whispered softly to herself, “When was the last time you felt free?”

That question became the spark. For the first time in years, she decided to choose herself. She packed a small bag, called a friend, and together they rented two camper vans, chasing the horizon with no agenda other than to be alive.

On the second morning of their journey, they found themselves in a wide, open field surrounded by mountains. The air was crisp, the sky endless, and the world felt impossibly vast. On impulse, Anna climbed onto the roof of her van. Her friend joined her, and together they stretched their arms wide, as if daring the world to remind them of its beauty. They danced, laughed, and let the sunrise bathe them in gold.

In that moment, Anna felt something she hadn’t felt in years—weightlessness. There were no call lights, no codes, no crushing responsibility. Just the sound of laughter echoing across an open plain. She remembered that she was not just a nurse. She was a human being, a soul meant for joy as much as for service.

As she stood on that rooftop, wind tangling her hair, she realized self-care wasn’t selfish—it was survival. Nurses give so much of themselves that it is easy to forget their own hearts need tending too. Rest, adventure, laughter—these are not luxuries, they are lifelines.

When she returned home, Anna stepped back into the hospital with the same uniform and badge, but something was different. She carried with her the sunrise on the mountaintops, the laughter shared on van rooftops, and the promise she made to herself: I will not lose me in the caring of others.

She knew the work would always be demanding. The world would always need nurses who show up with courage and compassion. But now she also knew—behind every strong nurse must be a strong sense of self. Nurses are healers, but they are also human. And the best care they can give starts with the care they give themselves.



# **BURNED OUT OR MISALIGNED?**

## How to Tell the Difference — and What to Do Next

By Karen Retardo, MA, BSN, RN

You used to love being a nurse.

Maybe not every shift, but there was something sacred in it.  
The small victories. The connection. The purpose.

But lately?

You've been counting down the hours. You dread Mondays.  
You fantasize about quitting—or escaping to a remote island with  
no pager, no charting, and no one asking,  
“Can I bother you for just a second?”

***Is it burnout?***

***Or is it something deeper—misalignment?***

Let's talk about the difference.

Because knowing what you're really feeling can change everything.



## BURNED OUT OR MISALIGNED?

### 1. Burnout is about depletion.

#### Misalignment is about disconnection.

**Burnout** shows up in your body:

Fatigue, brain fog, irritability, sleep problems.

You're running on empty, pouring from a cup that hasn't been refilled in months.

**Misalignment**, on the other hand, shows up in your soul.

You're going through the motions, doing the "right" things, but something feels... off.

Like you've outgrown your role, or like you're living someone else's dream.

If burnout whispers "I'm exhausted,"

misalignment whispers "I don't belong here anymore."

### 2. Burnout can be fixed with rest.

#### Misalignment asks for reconnection.

If a vacation, a mental health day, or even just a weekend nap gives you relief—**burnout** may be the culprit.

Your nervous system is waving a red flag.

You need rest. Restoration. Boundaries.

But if you rest and *still* feel restless?

If you come back from time off and feel dread creeping in again?

That's **misalignment**.

And misalignment doesn't go away with sleep.

It softens when you start listening.

To the desires you've buried.

To the dreams you've shelved.

To the parts of you that long for something more meaningful, more aligned, more you.







## BURNED OUT OR MISALIGNED?

### 3. Burnout feels like “too much.”

#### Misalignment feels like “not enough.”

When you're **burned out**, everything is too much.  
Too many patients. Too many demands. Too many expectations.  
You need less.

But when you're **misaligned**, everything feels like not enough.  
Not enough meaning.  
Not enough growth.  
Not enough joy.

You need something deeper.



### So What Do You Do?

Here's a gentle path forward—no drastic changes, no pressure to figure it all out:

#### Start by asking, “What am I craving?”

Not what's expected. Not what's logical.  
But what your heart is quietly aching for.

More creative expression? More autonomy? A different kind of service?

#### Let yourself want what you want.

Desire isn't selfish—it's sacred information.  
A compass pointing you toward what's next.

#### Try micro-alignment.

You don't need to quit your job to honor your alignment.

You can start with:

- A boundary you finally hold.
- A project that excites you.
- A conversation you've been avoiding—but need to have.
- A small step toward that dream you keep postponing.





## BURNED OUT OR MISALIGNED?

**You're Not Lazy.**

**You're Not Ungrateful.**

**You're Waking Up.**

***And that is beautiful.***

Because underneath the exhaustion...

***Is someone ready to live with more truth,  
more alignment, more meaning.***

You don't need to have all the answers today.

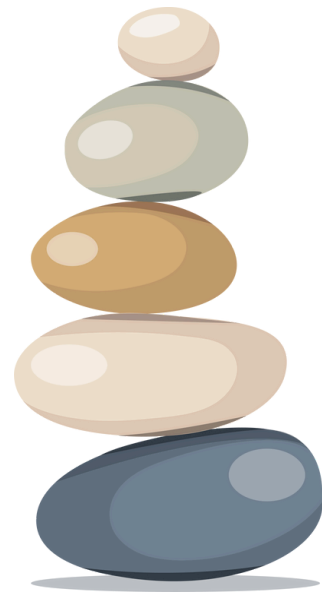
But you do deserve to ask better questions.

So ask gently:

***What if this isn't burnout?***

***What if it's my soul asking for more?***

***And what would happen if you said yes?***



# 10 EARLY SIGNS of ALZHEIMER'S

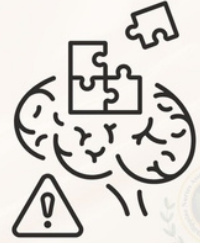


## MEMORY LOSS

THAT DISRUPTS DAILY LIFE



## CHALLENGES IN PLANNING OR SOLVING PROBLEMS



## DIFFICULTY COMPLETING FAMILIAR TASKS



## CONFUSION WITH TIME OR PLACE



## TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING VISUAL IMAGES & SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS



## NEW PROBLEMS WITH WORDS IN SPEAKING OR WRITING



## MISPLACING THINGS

AND LOSING THE ABILITY TO RETRACE STEPS



## DECREASED OR POOR JUDGEMENT



## WITHDRAWAL FROM WORK OR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES



## CHANGES IN MOOD AND PERSONALITY



IF YOU OR ANYONE YOU KNOW EXPERIENCES ANY OF THESE SIGNS, PLEASE SEE A DOCTOR/PROVIDER

24/7 HELPLINE  
1-800-272-3900





# Walking with purpose...

By Irvin Bagongon, BSN, RN, CNCC(C)



Every step counts—especially when you're walking for a future without Alzheimer's. This year, the Philippine Nurses Association of California Orange County (PNACOC) is proud to join the **Walk to End Alzheimer's**, joining thousands of advocates across the nation in raising awareness and support for those affected by this devastating disease.

Alzheimer's is more than just memory loss. It is a progressive and fatal disease that affects over 6.7 million Americans today, a number expected to double by 2050 if no cure is found. Behind every statistic is a loved one—a grandparent who no longer recognizes their family, a parent struggling to remember how to get home, or a friend who forgets the names of those closest to them. And among those affected are members of our Filipino-American community, who often face unique challenges due to cultural stigmas, language barriers, and limited access to culturally competent care.

In Filipino culture, family is everything. Many of us are raised with deep respect for our elders, and caregiving is often seen as a familial duty. This sense of obligation, while beautiful, can also become overwhelming when Alzheimer's strikes. Caregivers in Filipino households may delay seeking help, attributing symptoms to normal aging or feeling ashamed to speak openly about mental health issues. This is why awareness is so critical—not only to reduce stigma, but to ensure early diagnosis and better support systems for both patients and caregivers.





The Walk to End Alzheimer's is not just a fundraiser—it is a movement. Funds raised go directly toward Alzheimer's research, public education, community outreach, and support services through the **Alzheimer's Association**. These funds help accelerate scientific breakthroughs, promote early detection, and advocate for policy change at the national level. They also support vital programs like the 24/7 Helpline, caregiver training, and local support groups—resources that are often lifelines for families in crisis. This year, PNACOC will proudly walk in three Orange County events:

*Mission Viejo on September 20, 2025*

*Irvine on October 4, 2025*

*Huntington Beach on November 8, 2025*

We walk not only as nurses, but as daughters and sons, as caregivers and advocates, and as a community united by compassion. Our participation is more than symbolic—it reflects our core mission to promote health and empower communities. We invite our members, their families, and the public to join us, donate, or simply walk beside us to show solidarity and support.

The fight against Alzheimer's needs all of us—because no one should face this disease alone. Together, we can be the voice for those who can no longer speak for themselves. Together, we can make memories matter.

To join PNACOC at the **Walk to End Alzheimer's** or to make a donation, click or scan the following QR-codes:



*Mission Viejo*



*Greater  
Irvine*



*Huntington  
Beach*



# WALK <sup>TO</sup> END ALZHEIMER'S

ALZHEIMER'S  ASSOCIATION



Lifelong Learners

**CLICK!**

**THE QR CODES**



## Mission Viejo

September 20, 2025 (Saturday)  
at 29201 Ortega Hwy,  
Mission Viejo, CA



## Greater Irvine

October 4, 2025 (Saturday)  
Orange Coast College  
2701 Fairview Road  
Costa Mesa, CA



## Huntington Beach

November 8, 2025 (Saturday)  
at Bolsa Chica State Beach  
17851 Pacific Coast Highway,  
Huntington Beach, CA



**CLICK THE QR-CODE TO LEARN MORE**







# Membership process



**Click the QR-  
Code or Scan**



**Register/Renew Now**



**on the PNAA Renewal  
Page Click this**



**\* Membership level**

- ☐ Active Member (1 year) - \$50.00 (USD)
- ☐ Active Member (2 Years) - \$100.00 (USD)
- ☐ Associate Member (1 Year) - \$50.00 (USD)
- ☐ Associate Member (2 Years) - \$100.00 (USD)
- ☐ Member-at-Large (1 year) - \$50.00 (USD)
- ☐ Undergrad Student

**Select your Membership Level**



**On the  
"Additional  
Membership Fee"  
Section, please select**

PNAA Region: **WESTERN**  
Chapter: **PNA California  
Orange County**  
SubChapter: **NONE**



**Enter Your E-mail Address  
click next then enter your  
Personal Information:**

**Name**                      **Contact Info**  
**Education**              **Work Info**



**Other Information,  
Choose which applies  
New Member  
or  
Renewal**



**REVIEW and  
CONFIRM  
INFORMATION**



**PAYMENT**



**CONGRATS!**



**You are now a  
PNACOC ACTIVE MEMBER**

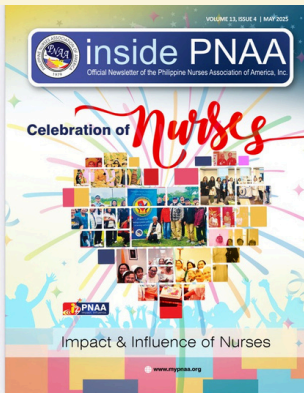
Now that I'm a Member,

## WHAT BENEFITS DO I GET?



Click the Images for direct access

## Member Exclusive DEALS & Discounts



Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc.  
JOURNAL OF NURSING PRACTICE APPLICATIONS  
& REVIEWS OF RESEARCH

The official, international & peer-reviewed academic journal of the PNAA that focuses on Nursing Practice, Education, Administration, & Research

ISSN 2329-4760 (PRINT) • ISSN 2329-4779 (ONLINE)

Volume 15 Number 1 January 2025

Table of Contents	
The Essential Role of Self-Care in Nursing	1
Amidst the Noise: Our Mission Makes Us Who We Are	3
Health Priorities Among Filipino Americans in New Jersey: Generational Perspectives	4
The Association Between Low Birth Weight and Postpartum Depression: A Cross-sectional Multisite Study Among Women Within Six Months of Postpartum	12
Diaphragmatic Deep Breathing Exercise Effectiveness in Management of Generalized Anxiety Disorder: A Scoping Review	22
Implementation of a Depression and Quality of Life Screening Protocol for Patients Aged 11-30 Years with Inflammatory Bowel Disease	31
Creating an Anthogram for Urinary Tract Infection Treatment in a Federally Qualified Health Center	37
The Experiences of ABSN-Nursing Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic	47

Access to PNAA  
Clinical Journals

DR. EILEEN O'GRADY  
COACH

DR. RIZA V. MAURICIO  
KEWP DIRECTOR

(Kabalikat Emotional Wellness Program)



(Grounding, Beach Clean-up and Zumba)

Health and Wellness Activities

May 2025

WHERE COMPASSION MEETS EXPERTISE

Celebrating Nurses Week

Nurses are the heartbeat of healthcare—combining clinical expertise with deep compassion. This Nurses Week, we celebrate the strength, resilience, and dedication of those who care, comfort, and advocate every single day. Their commitment shapes lives and uplifts communities, making a difference where it matters most: at the bedside and beyond.

The PNACOC Newsletter

Volume 1 Issue 4

PNACOC Kalinga Newsletter Access  
and Participation





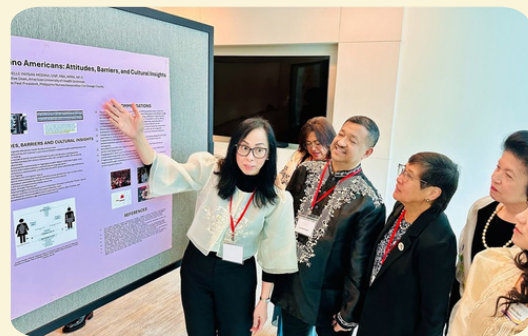
Participation in  
PNACOC Events



PNACOC Committee  
Involvement



Engagement with  
Community Partners



Clinical Ladder  
Enhancement and Leadership  
Opportunities



Community Outreach  
Activities



PNACOC EDUCATION  
CEU Days

### **other Benefits such as:**

Strengthen our sense of community and cultural pride

Stay connected with a growing network of Filipino nursing professionals here in Orange County

Be part of a National Alliance of Nurses through our connection with PNAA

Access to exclusive educational events, workshops, and leadership opportunities