

P/ 8-9

## TIMELESS STORY

The CNMI-PSS Head Start Program has served more than 17,000 children. Its establishment as primary provider of a comprehensive early childhood education is celebrated.



CNMI Public School System

# STUDENTS' FIRST

• Accountability • Responsibility • Transparency



New Schools Antigen Testing Schedule

P6

## WHEN PARENTS TAKE CHARGE

Parents' support of the school district's initiative will help ensure the safest possible learning environment for all public school students.

They also believe its about time to "step up" and "take responsibility".

SUCCESS

### RIYA NATHRANI

2022 Teacher of the Year

PSS is region's solar energy hub

New Student Representative is from Rota

PARTNERSHIP



Beyond sports: Promoting unity and school pride

Support for Cooperative Education students

Special Education Program gets support from partner



Parents and students, joined by education leaders, successfully gathered on October 9 for the largest Public School System Parent Summit. The Office of PSS Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and the Family and Community Engagement Program initiated the summit in partnership with the school district's Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

## When Parents Take Charge

# PSS holds largest summit for Saipan, Tinian and Rota parent-leaders

**P**ARENT leaders from all of Saipan, Tinian and Rota public elementary, middle, high schools, Head Start/Early Head Start Centers and students with special needs gathered for the first-ever state-level Public School System Parent Summit.

The October 9-summit was attended by close to 200 newly elected Parent-Teacher-Student Association officers from all 20 elementary, middle and high schools, Head Start/Early Head Start and parents of students with special needs. The pandemic has prevented in-person engagement and participation of parents as a precaution to ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of the school community.

The summit was held at Kensington Hotel.

The Office of PSS Commissioner of Education, Dr. Alfred B. Ada and the Family and Community Engagement Program through interim Manager Liela C. Yumul initiated the summit. This was done in partnership with the school district's Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

The theme of the summit was "Empowering Families One Student at a Time".

"This is the biggest summit ever since prior to COVID-19," said PAC President Rob Harrell.

PAC, the main organization of all of PSS' PTAs, serves as an advisory council to the Office of the Commissioner of Education, primarily assisting on policy-related matters involving parents and their children's learning.

During his remarks, PAC President Harrell encouraged his fellow parents to support PSS' initiative promoting active parent-school engagement, adding that PSS has been working hard to assist parents in learning about digital learning, online and technology-based applications.

### Valuable role

In his virtual message, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada hailed the partnership between PSS and parents.

"I want you to know that as Mrs. Liela Yumul, our program manager, was planning for (the) event with parent leaders, she envisioned to make this summit a worthwhile conference, and making your time valuable," Commissioner of Education Ada said.

Yumul also served as emcee and moderator of the summit.

"Today's theme...means that we, as PSS, are reaching out to you to share the resources and the skills that every families need at their home front," Dr. Ada said.

He added, "Empowering families means helping families to register their child online. Empowering families means providing one-laptop per child so that they can logged in to virtual remote learning, through our (Blackboard Ultra) so they

can access their lessons virtually."

Empowering families is also providing mental services for each and every child's emotional needs, especially in this pandemic, the education chief added.

As partners in education, parents "determine your child's academic achievement and success."

Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini and Vice Chairman Herman Atalig have both recognized the role of all parents in the overall work and success of students and PSS.

"We recognize all of you, our PAC President Harrell, PTSA leaders and all of our parents for helping our educators and (PSS) empower our schools through your commitment and passion...to work with your child's success," Chairman Orsini said.

Vice Chairman Atalig separately said, that recognizing the role of our parents is also recognizing that PSS "needs support and assistance to be able to provide optimum educational opportunities".

"We encourage you to continue working with us, with your schools because we are one PSS community and it is our commitment to give you child the best possible education", adds Chairman Orsini.

BOE Secretary/Treasurer and Saipan Board Member Maisie B. Tenorio also joined parent-leaders on their summit.

Several programs and initiatives were presented during the summit.

They include "Parenting in the Digital World", SY2020-2021 State Assessments & Infinite Campus Overview for Parents, Updates with Hopwood Middle School and FEMA Projects, PSS School Mental Health Program, Governor's Council on Economic Advisers: Village Pride Campaign Project, Presidential Awards of Excellence in Mathematics & Science Teaching, Updates on PSS Student Vaccination Information, and PSS Strategic Priorities Management Goals Overview.

The summit was capped with all of the 20 PTAs officers and school administrators goal planning and work session for the newly opened school year.

**Empowering families means helping families to register their child online... means providing one-laptop per child so that they can logged in to virtual remote learning**

**— Commissioner of Education Ada**

# Parents support antigen testing

## ‘We should take responsibility for the education of our children’

- PAC President Robert Harrell

**T**HE Public School System is conducting more COVID-19 antigen testing and parents' support will continue to help ensure the safest possible learning environment for all public school students.

This will also alleviate concerns of some parents that are supporting the on-going transition back into full in-person classroom learning.

“Now that we are moving away from hybrid (learning) and focusing more on face-to-face learning, it is really all now on us parents: parents should step up and take responsibility for the education (of our children) and not solely rely on PSS,” said Rob Harrell, president of the PSS Parent Advisory Council (PAC).

PAC, the main organization of all of PSS' PTAs, was created in early 2010 by the school district as an advisory council to the Office of the Commissioner of Education, primarily assisting on policy-related matters involving parents and their children's learning.

Harrell, the elected president representing all

schools' PTAs, said that it is the responsibility of every parent to be involved in their child's education. For the past (six) years, student learning suffered resulting from disasters/typhoon and pandemic.

“It is our first responsibility as parents leaders to get more parents involved. I appeal to every parents of every child attending our public schools to be involved and participate in the PTA, go visit your schools and talk to teachers. We are all partners,” the PAC president said.

“Our children are the ones that are suffering as a result of the several typhoons and now with COVID-19. It got to be us parents that should take responsibility... it is our first role in partnering with our teachers to get our children back to where they need to be,” PAC President Harrell said.

He added, “In every school, every parent must take responsibility. If you have a child, it is your responsible to step up and ask: How can we be of help?”



PAC President Rob Harrell extolls parents to step up and support PSS.



GTC Elementary School second grade student Kaelynn Camacho gets her antigen screening from the Governor's Office COVID-19 Task Force/CHCC.



Isabella Cabrera, a fifth grade student, receives her antigen screening from Jesse Tudela, CHCC's chief of ancillary services,



Special Education classroom teacher Hannah Palacios took her turn.



Siah Casil, a 5th grade student of GTC Elementary School, wasn't scared at all from getting his antigen screening.



Garapan Elementary School staff Lauran Matsunaga was among the first of her peers to get the test. Chief Tudela administered it personally.

### School Year Opens Smoothly

When the new school year opened last August, public school successfully initiated antigen testing. PSS staff and personnel also supported the mandated testing.

School principals and vice principals worked with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation's team in ensuring a smooth and organized antigen testing.

Long lines of masked-wearing and socially distanced school children were excited in getting the antigen test.

"It wasn't scary at all," exclaims a second grade Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School student.

Another student said it was "kind of a tickle".

"My mom said that I can take it (the antigen screening) and so I did because I want to be safe," said a Garapan Elementary School pupil.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada, Associate Commissioner Eric Magofna, Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, and all of PSS key management team visited all various campuses to assist school leaders in welcoming the students back to school.

Laura Matsunaga, a staff of Garapan Elementary School, was among the first in line to take the antigen test.

Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School Special Education teacher Hannah Palacios supported the school district's mandated antigen testing by submitting herself to the testing.

CHCC's Chief of Ancillary Services Jesse Tudela led his team in the antigen testing for GTC Elementary School and Garapan Elementary School.

Tanapag Middle School opened with blended learning.

"We opened our school year with blended learning and it was fairly smooth," said Principal Hilda Rios. "We have some bumps but it was nothing that we cannot overcome."

She added, "Our parents were very supportive with our work to reopen our schools and the work of our classroom teachers in ensuring a smooth blended learning for our students."

Garapan Elementary School Principal Derwin Johnson led his leadership team in ensuring a smooth reopening of the largest elementary school in the CNMI. Antigens testing for his students were held at the GES school library.

Dandan Middle School Principal James Sablan said while there was last-minute student registrations by parents otherwise it was "smooth as always."

"Our parents have always followed our directions and protocols (during) this pandemic-driven learning environment," Principal Sablan said.

Dandan Middle School began the school year with blended learning. "They (parents) also understand the reasoning behind that we cannot be on full face-to-face until we reach 80 percent of vaccinated student population."



# Important Dates

Second quarter antigen testing will begin in October. Register online and receive your child's confidential results within 24 hours. Let's all do our part to keep our schools safe!

1. Antigen testing is free for all PSS staff and students.
2. The swab is not invasive and takes only seconds.
3. Results are ready in less than 24 hours and sent to the email on file when registering.

For more information call the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation at 234-8950.

## NEW ANTIGEN SCREENING SCHEDULE

### October 26

**GTC Elementary & Koblerville Elementary**

8:00 am - 10:30 am

**Tanapag Middle (Cohort 1) & Daok Academy**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm

**Tinian Elem. & Sinapalo Elem.**

8:00 am - 10:00 am

### October 27

**Tanapag Middle (Cohort 2) & FMS Middle (Cohort 1)**

8:00 am - 10:00 am

**Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr./Sr. High School**

8:00 - 10:00 am

**Chacha Oceanview Middle (Cohort 1)**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm

**Hopwood Middle (Cohort 1)**

10:30 am - 2:30 pm

**Tinian Jr./Sr. High School**

1:00 - 4:00 pm

### October 28

**FMS Middle School (Cohort 2)**

8:00 am - 10:00 am

**Kagman Elementary School**

8:00 - 10:30 am

**Chacha Oceanview Middle School (Cohort 2)**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm

**Hopwood Middle School (Cohort 2)**

10:30 am - 2:30 pm

### October 29

**SSHS (Cohort 1) & SVS Elementary**

8:00 am - 10:30 am

**Dandan Middle & Kagman High School (Cohort 1)**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm

### November 2

**Saipan Southern (Cohort 2) & Marianas High School**

8:00 am - 10:30 am

**Dandan Middle & Kagman High School (Cohort 2)**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm

### November 3

**Oleai & WSR Elementary School**

8:00 am - 10:30 am

**Garapan Elementary & Marianas High School**

11:00 am - 1:30 pm



Register at <https://covidtesting.chcc.health>

Hopwood Middle School educator Dr. Riya Nathrani is joined by her parents after being named winner of the coveted 2022 PSS Teacher of the Year. She is joined in this photo by acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, Board of Education officials comprised of Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, Board members Antonio L. Borja and Gregory Borja, Teacher Rep. Phyllis Ain, and House Committee on Education Chairwoman Rep. Leila Staffler, Hopwood Middle School Principal Vic Borja, and Vice Principals Karen Manuel and Ben Seman.



# Hopwood Middle School's Riya Nathrani is 2022 PSS Teacher of the Year



Five finalists were honored on October 1. They were Jennifer Villagomez of Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, Victoria Aldan of San Vicente Elementary School, Michael Mercado of Saipan Southern High School, and Koniko Nakazato of Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, and Dr. Riya Nathrani of Hopwood Middle School. 2021 Teacher of the Year Bonny Lynn Cruz, and PSS and BOE officials joined them.

**H**OPWOOD Middle School educator Dr. Riya Nathrani is the recipient of the prestigious 2022 Public School System Teacher of the Year.

This year the Public School System will celebrate 33 years of its establishment as an independent and autonomous government entity, responsible in providing primary and secondary public education in the Commonwealth.

It's a big win for the 27-year-old Nathrani. Her parents and her Hopwood Middle School family joined her during the October 1 announcement at the Kagman Elementary School cafeteria during a Special Board of Education meeting.

Education officials led by acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna and BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini jointly announced the top teaching plum.

"This is the first time for me (to be nominated) and this is such a huge honor," Nathrani said in an interview with Students First.

"While I appreciate being acknowledged (what is important is) the value that I have in my classroom...and it is really towards my students. It is because of the impact that teachers make everyday is something that I look forward to doing when I enter the class," she added.

Nathrani has been with the Public School System for six years now, four years of which as a seventh grade Computer Literacy and Automation & Robotics Teacher at Hopwood Middle School.

She graduated class valedictorian from the Northern Marianas College with a degree in education. She has a master of education degree in international teaching from Framingham State University. And completed her doctorate in education degree in digital transformation from Capella University.

"I hope that the skills that I instill in them will last a lifetime," Nathrani added.

Nathrani's mother could not hide her joy of her daughter's success: "She really deserves this. She is really hardworking."

### Five finalists

Acting Commissioner of Education Magofna disclosed that the selection process is always tough and rigorous.

All of twenty public elementary, middle and high schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota each sent their respective

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Head Start 'friends' or students make their way to the proclamation signing which was held inside the sprawling campus in Sinapalo's Head Start Center.

**T**HE Public School System and the Board of Education has joined the rest of the commonwealth in celebrating fifty-six years of Head Start Program's establishment as the primary provider for a comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and families.

On October 1, the Board of Education, joined by the CNMI-PSS Head Start/Early Head Start Program and Rota education stakeholders, proclaimed October as Head Start Awareness Month.

President Lyndon B. Johnson launched the federal Head Start Program in 1965.

The Head Start Program was established in the CNMI in the fall of 1984.

President Ronald Reagan signed the first Head Start Awareness Month Proclamation on October 22, 1982. Since then, the CNMI community has been celebrating October in honor of the life-changing impact of the early childhood program.

The proclamation was held at Rota's Sinapalo Head Start Center and it was signed by BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini and Vice Chairman Atalig, and witnessed by acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director Lathania Angui, and acting Rota mayor and municipal council member Jonovan Lizama. Lizama is also the current Head Start Policy Council Representative.

"Ever since, October has been a month for our community to celebrate the life changing impact of Head Start," said CNMI-PSS Head Start Program Director Lathania Santos during the proclamation on Rota.

As a comprehensive early learning education program, Head Start helps children at risk of behind left behind build abilities they need to be ready for kindergarten and life.

# NMI joins nation in celebrating 56 years of Head Start's life-changing impact



The program was held at sprawling Sinapalo Head Start campus, with the program's students as main guests of the proclamation signing.





Head Start/Early Head Start Program Director Lathania Angui welcomed Rota stakeholders who came to celebrate with the program last Friday.

Director Angui said that for the past 56 years “the Head Start model has been built on evidenced-based practices and is constantly adapting.”

“Every child has the ability to succeed, and, together, we’re supporting more children, families and communities on their path to success,” Director Angui said.

Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna particularly noted the hard work of all of the Head Start/Early Head Start staff and personnel.

“We all know the importance of Head Start/Early Head Start. This program prepares these ‘young friends’ (how Head Start students call each other) for school. And with this, it helps build their social skills...their transition into the next level,” acting education chief Magofna said.

“They’re better equipped to handle what is forthcoming for them because of how effective our CNMI-PSS Head Start/Early Head Program is,” he added.

Acting Commissioner Magofna also praised the parents of Head Start students for continually trusting the school district in the learning of their children.

He also thanked the BOE for its continuous support to the program. “This is the fruit of their labor and of their hard work (the program’s continued existence in the CNMI). We ask that you (BOE) to continue to support – but I know we don’t need to ask because we know you will continue to do it – this awesome program.”

### **Praised**

BOE Chairman Orsini honored all the men and women of Head Start/Early Head Start Program throughout Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

“I praise and honor all of our Head Start staff and parents on all of our schools/centers throughout Saipan, Tinian and Rota for supporting each other and giving our children the best training,” Chairman Orsini said.

Chairman Orsini reiterated that the school district and all education leaders would continue to stand on the “Students First” slogan in providing educational opportunities to all public school students in the CNMI, including Head Start/Early Head Start.

Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, left, addresses Rota Head Start/Early Head Start ‘young friends’ (students) during last Friday’s proclamation, as the program’s director Lathania Santos, acting Rota Mayor Jonovan Lizama, BOE Vice Chairman Herman Atalig and BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini looks on.

“We will always stand for that slogan: “Students First” and I always believe in that. We need to remind everyone that without the students, we – educators, leaders, policymakers, myself included – will not exist,” Chairman Orsini said. “We exist because of you- our students.”

He added, “We need to understand that Head start is a very important part of our educational system. Because this is where it all starts.”

He also reminded every education stakeholders “it is our very important duty to support the learning of our children.”

Vice Chairman Herman Atalig shares the BOE chairman’s support on the work of the program’s staff and personnel.

“Thank you to all of our Head Start teachers, teacher aides and support staff in supporting our parents trust in our (education system)...who continue to send their children to our schools, starting with Head Start/Early Head Start,” Vice Chairman Atalig said.

The program’s director, Lathania Angui, was also praised for her continued work in

“(battling) for Head Start/Early Head Start funding”.

“The engine behind this program is this woman behind here: Lathaia Angui... she will battle for you on funding. Without her, this whole thing here today will not happen. Thank you director,” Vice Chairman Atalig said.

### **17,000 and counting**

The CNMI-PSS Head Start/Early Head Start Program was established in the fall of 1984 through a first grant award to the then CNMI Dept. of Education.

For 37 years, it has served more than 17,000 children, according to Program Director Angui.

, the CNMI was awarded the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Grant—and seven years later, the CNMI-PSS Head Start/Early Head Start Program remains the lone grantee in the outer Pacific to receive the multi-year grant award.

The program serves children ages 6 weeks to 3 years old.

“I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thank you to our amazing stakeholders: the CNM State Board of Education, our Head Start Policy Council, PSS Key Management and many PSS departments and programs that assist us one way or another,” Director Angui said.

She added, “My sincere gratitude as well to the awesome Head Start and Early Head Start team and families... for their patience, hard work and dedication and for the quality care you provide each and every day.”





# PSS pioneers renewable

**T**HE Public School System unveiled on October 7 the region's first-ever large-scale solar energy initiative, geared towards transforming all public school campuses into renewable energy hubs.

By investing in this large-scale green energy technology, the school district is now considered to be first in the region that has embraced renewable energy.

"It marks PSS' journey toward a cleaner (energy) alternative," Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna said.

The solar energy system initiative of the school district is done in partnership with the Micronesia Renewable Energy (MRE). MRE will install the solar energy system under a power-purchase agreement.

"Now, here we are today, alongside Micronesia Renewable Energy, (launching) our solar energy project by installing our solar energy systems at all of our schools," acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna said in his remarks.

"I am glad that with this PPA it is now becoming reality," the acting education commissioner added during the unveiling ceremony held at the Marianas High School cafeteria.

BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini agrees: "This is a milestone for both PSS and the CNMI."

"We are showing the world that through solar power energy, we can use it for our schools and our students," said Chairman Orsini

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres described the PSS solar energy system "monumental".

"PSS and our BOE should be applauded for this great initiative. This is monumental in the sense that we are showing to the whole world that we can harness our solar energy power... for our public schools," Governor Torres said.

MRE Chief Operating Officer Jeffrey Voacolo, who attend-



BOE Chairman Orsini delivering his special remarks.



# Renewable energy in the Pacific

Public education leaders and students – led by acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Tinian Board Member Antonio Borja, along with former BOE Chairwoman Janice Marie A. Tenorio – were joined by Governor Ralph DLG. Torres, Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, Speaker Edmund Villagomez, Senate President Jude Hofschneider, MRE COO Jeffrey Voacolo, among others, in the formal unveiling of the solar energy system initiative of the Public School System.

At the unveiling, said the PSS solar energy system initiative would promote the CNMI as the solar energy hub in the world.

“This project will showcase not only throughout Micronesia but the world the power of the sun, utilizing this resource to produce the energy needed to run the Public School System, while consuming this energy throughout the day when our children are being educated,” MRE COO Voacolo said.

## Renewable energy hub

The school district is projected to generate annual savings of about \$1 million once schools transition from the electric power grid to solar energy.

All of PSS’ 20 elementary, middle and high school campuses



MRE COO Voacolo.



Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna delivers his welcoming remarks.

will become solar energy hubs.

PSS issued a request for proposals in January 2020. Of the six companies that responded, MRE’s proposal was selected. In March 2020, PSS entered into a power purchase agreement with MRE.

The BOE approved the project in July 2020.

The enactment of Public Law 18-75 paved the way for the school district to begin its decades-long plan of investing in sustainable energy. The statute was aimed at prioritizing the interconnection with net metering for health and education renewable energy capacity.



Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School senior student Jed Sta. Theresa, 4th right, is the new Student Representative to the Board of Education. In this photo that was taken shortly after his swearing on the evening of Sept. 30 at Sinapalo Elementary School, he is joined by, from left, acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, BOE Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, Board Member Gregory Borja, Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Non-Public School Rep. Dr. Ron Snyder, and Board Member Antonio Borja.

# New student rep. to Board of Education is from Rota

**S**ENIOR high school student Jed Sta. Theresa is the new Student Representative to the Board of Education. He took his oath September 30 on Rota.

The BOE held its regular at the Sinapalo Elementary School cafeteria. Rota stakeholders – students, teachers and staff, and parents – attended the meeting.

Sta. Theresa, a student of Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Junior Senior High School, will represent that more than 10,000 elementary, middle and high school students of the Public School System to the governing and policy making body of the school district.

BOE Chairman Andrew L. Orsini administered the oath of office and witnessed by Vice Chairman Herman Atalig (Rota), Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio (Saipan), Gregory Borja (Saipan), and Antonio Borja (Tinian), and Non-Public School Representative Dr. Ron Snyder.

Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna led the PSS leadership team in joining Rota education stakeholders – students, teachers and staff, and parents - in witnessing the swearing in ceremony of one of Rota's own. The board meeting was also witnessed throughout the entire school district through online live broadcast.

The new student representative's father, Edwin Sta. Theresa, was among the guests on the swearing in.

"Let me welcome you to your Board of Education family. Our board members are here with you to work with you in addressing, in the best we can, the needs of your (fellow) students, Chairman Orsini told the new student representative.

Vice Chairman Atalig said Sta. Theresa will bring to the body great insights and that the BOE will "continue to work and provide the needs of students." "Thank you for your willingness to accept (this nomination) to represent your fellow students."

Secretary/Treasurer Tenorio, who chairs the Student Issues & Community & Parental Programs (SICPP) Committee, is ready to work with Sta. Theresa.

"I look forward to working with you. The SICPP committee is where you can communicate with the board: by asking

questions and participating in our activities and meetings," Secretary/Treasurer Tenorio said.

She also extended her appreciation to RHI Principal D. Tanya King and Sinapalo Elementary School Principal Daisy Quitugua for hosting the PSS and BOE officials during the board meeting.

Acting Commissioner of Education Magofna expressed his office's readiness to work with the new student representative.

"I am extending welcome to our student leader, Jed Sta. Theresa, on behalf of your Public School System. We are here ready to work with you," acting Commissioner Magofna said.



Chairman Andrew Orsini administers Sta. Theresa's oath of office, as BOE officials – Secretary/Treasurer Maisie Tenorio, Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Board Members Antonio Borja and Gregory Borja, acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna and Non-Public School Rep. Dr. Ron Snyder look on. The ceremony was beamed live online.

# Chamorro Language Immersion Project

**K**INDERGARTEN, first grade and second grade students of Kagman Elementary School presented on September 16 the success of its ongoing Chamorro Language Immersion Project.

There are 5 Kindergarten, 8 first-grade and 5 second-grade students that are currently under the Chamorro Language Immersion Project. The Kagman Elementary School Chamorro Language Immersion Project is being spearhead by classroom teachers Lee Pangelinan and Mariama Nagatao.

In all, there are 13 students under the Kagman Elmen-

tary School's CLIP initiative. These students wowed the school district's principals and program managers when they presented a combination of poetry reading, counting of numbers and singing in the local Chamorro language

"I am just proud of our young students who really are excited to learn ... through our immersion program," Kagman Elementary School Principal Dr. Ignacia Demapan.

The CLIP is being taught at Kagman Elementary School, along with other public elementary schools at the start of the new school year.



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nominees to the state-level competition.

The selection committee whittled down the 20 school-level 2022 Teachers of the Year winners to five finalists.

The five finalists were also honored on October 1. They were Jennifer Villagoz of Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, Victoria Aldan of San Vicente Elementary School, Michael Mercado of Saipan Southern High School, and Koniko Nakazato of Francisco M. Sablan Middle School, and Nathrani of Hopwood Middle School.

The selection committee for this year's 2022 Teacher of the Year are: former Board of Education Chairman and representing the private sector, Herman T. Guerrero, Catherine Perry of the NMI Council for the Humanities, Mildred Sablan of the CNMI Scholarship Office, Roberta Guerrero of Mariana Islands Nature Alliance, and Dr. Beylul Solomon of the Northern Marianas College.

Human Resources Officer Lucretia B. Deleon Guerrero explained that the process begins at the school-level, with teachers, school administrators and Parent, Teachers and Student Associa-

tion (PTSA) officers consisting the selection committee.

"When the nomination is submitted for the state-level competition, the (Human Resources Office) takes the lead in ensuring that all the nominees are given the opportunity to submit for their entries," said Deleon Guerrero.

One of which is set of "hard and tough questions" provided directly by the National Teacher of the Year Committee.

"These are hard and tough questions that come directly from the National Teacher of the Year Committee that we give directly to the teachers," she said.

Nathrani was presented with the 2022 PSS Teacher of the Year customized plaque, gift basket and a perpetual trophy. She will have the opportunity to attend and participate in events and activities planned by the Chief State School Officers (CSSO).

"This is an opportunity for our PSS educators through Nathrani to shine at the national level," Acting Commissioner Magofna said.

The acting education chief also expressed his appreciation to the selection committee.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank our selection committee for wholeheartedly accepting this tough job of selecting the best among the best of our educators," acting education chief Magofna said.

Speaking on behalf of his BOE colleagues, Chairman Orsini congratulated Nathrani, the other four finalists, and all PSS educators/teachers.

"Congratulations to each and everyone of you. We all know you are all hard working and committed in what you all do. Continue what you are doing—giving our students the quality teaching," the BOE chairman said.

Also witnessing the announcement were BOE Vice Chairman Herman Atalig, Secretary/Treasurer Maisie B. Tenorio, and Board Members Antonio Borja and Gregory Borja, and Teacher Rep. Phyllis Ain. They were also joined virtually by Student Rep. to the BOE Jed Sta. Theresa, among others.

# Promoting unity and school pride through sports

**C**OACHES and officials of public schools that received the complete set of soccer uniforms from the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association see beyond the aesthetic benefit of the donation.

Kagman High School principal Ben Jones said having uniforms puts more prestige to the game and the league and signifies unity among the players.

The Ayuyus are one of the 19 public schools that received uniforms from the NMIFA and its sponsors, Japan Football Association and the family of the late Doc Altizer, last August 30 or just a couple of weeks before the CNMI Public School System and NMIFA kicked off the elementary and middle school competitions in the Interscholastic Soccer League.

The high school event will be held later this year.

This is by far the largest donation of sports uniforms that the Public School System received. This was done in coordination with the PSS Athletic Program through director Nick Gross.

PSS Athletic Coordinator Gross said the NMIFA-PSS partnership has strengthened every season as both parties share mutual goal of boosting the soccer program at the grassroots level and providing other opportunities for students.

“We will do our very best to bring as many students we can to the pitch. Take care of them and continue to develop their skills and character,” Gross said.

Koblerville Elementary School and Garapan Elementary School duke it out in this photo taken recently.



Francis Mendiola, who coaches the Koblerville Elementary School, said that his players are more motivated to play for their school with the support they are getting from PSS and NMIFA through the uniforms.

“They are motivated to join the team and play because they will be wearing uniform with our school name on it. They are proud to represent the KES Umangs,” said Mendiola.

Meanwhile, Education Commissioner Alfred B. Ada thanked NMIFA under the leadership of its president Jerry Tan for their continued commitment and support to interscholastic sports.

“I recall that more than a decade ago, Mr. Jerry Tan came to William S. Reyes Elementary School and donated soccer goals to encourage WSR students to play. That’s how he was

determined to promote soccer to students, and up to this day, Mr. Jerry Tan remains committed to that vision,” Ada said.

Tan commended PSS and its leadership for encouraging their students to join the program. He added that interscholastic sports is a critical component for the development and continued growth of NMI soccer. He also said that NMIFA, through the support of PSS, aims to raise the standard of interscholastic sports in the islands and help make players feel more honored in representing their schools.

Games in the elementary and middle school divisions in the ISL had been completed early this month with Hopwood Middle School claiming the championship and Koblerville placing runner-up.



Public elementary, middle and high school principals and members of the PSS leadership team poses with the Northern Mariana Islands Football Association with the donated sports uniforms.

# Oleai Elementary School students win big at Primary Grades Forensic Conference

It was an impressive performance for Oleai Elementary School students during this school year's first virtual monthly Primary Grades Forensic Conference (PGFC), placing in almost all of the events during the September-edition of the competition.

There was no competition last year due to the pandemic, which prevented the in-person competition.

PGFC was re-launched this year and for the first time, the competition was held virtually.

Principal Jasylene Parico said the OES Turtles started slowly but surely and ended placing in a variety of events.

Due to the Covid-19 situation, almost all of the events are pre-recorded video entries. The only live event for PGFC is Impromptu Speaking via Google Meet in which only the competitors and judges can enter the live meeting.

PGFC competition encourages public and private school from kindergarten to fifth grade students to participate in and become proficient in the forensic performing arts: reading, public speaking, and interpretations.

"OES family would like to thank especially all the OES competitors for doing the best they can in accomplishing their goals. Thank you to all the parents who helped in preparing their children at home as well as the teachers and judges for the support and help they have given in this competition," Principal Parico said.

She added, "The administration, faculty & staff, and parents of Oleai Elementary School would like to extend their congratulations to the following winners and everyone who participated in the first monthly qualifying competitions in September."



OES September PGFC participants pose for a souvenir photo inside their school campus with OES school principal Jasylene Parico and OES PGFC coordinator Esther Manzano.

## K-2 DIVISION

**Dramatic Interpretation**  
Hallie Marianne Padolina, 2nd Place

**Humorous Interpretation**  
Francisco Tudela, 2nd Place

**Impromptu Speaking**  
Hallie Marianne Padolina, 1st Place

**Reader's Forum**  
Julienne Rhyme Casuncad, 4th Place

## 3-5 DIVISION

**Dramatic Interpretation**  
Tianmei Jia, 1st Place  
Brent Villanueva, 2nd Place

**Humorous Interpretation**  
Amlesh David Jr. Jha, 1st Place  
Isabel Maximina Carreon, 2nd Place  
Eidrian Calibo, 3rd Place

**Duo Interpretation A**  
Jovanalyn Mettao, 1st Place  
Aleizah Kinarose Nepaial, 2nd Place

Marvic James Javaluyas, 2nd Place  
Hannah Gabrielle Ramos, 2nd Place

Zoe Ardieta, 3rd Place  
Chineinalyn Jones, 3rd Place

**Choral Speaking**  
Jovanalyn Mettao, 1st Place  
Aleizah Kinarose Nepaial, 1st Place  
Isabel Maximina Carreon, 1st Place  
Erricka Long, 1st Place  
Mario Jr. Sedanza, 1st Place  
Impromptu Speaking  
Hanna Marie Padolina, 1st Place  
Mario Jr. Sedanza, 2nd Place  
Alexander Joseph Salundaguit, 3rd Place  
Elaia Rhyme Tamayo, 4th Place

**Reader's Forum A**  
Eidrian Calibo, 4th Place

**Reader's Forum B**  
Alexander Joseph Salundaguit, 1st Place  
Hanna Marie Padolina, 2nd Place  
Leila Leightley, 4th Place

**Reader's Forum C**  
Tianmei Jia, 1st Place  
Marvic James Javaluyas, 4th Place

**Reader's Forum D**  
Zoe Ardieta, 2nd Place  
Brent Villanueva, 3rd Place

**Reader's Forum E**  
Enyan Tang, 3rd Place

**CCLHS**  
Chineinalyn Jones, 1st Place



The Public School System's Cooperative Education Program says 'Thank You' to COTA for the 300 transportation vouchers it received from the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA) to support the school district's Saipan co-op students for their ongoing on-the-job training program.

In this photo, Special Assistant for Public Transportation Alfreda Camacho Maratita, center, presents the vouchers to education officials that include Acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna, Board of Education Chairman Andrew L. Orsini, Senior Director for Student Support Services Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan, Co-op Program Coordinator Brandon Nicolas and PSS communications and media coordinator Randee-Jo Barcinas-Manglona. Joining them is Office of the Governor's TJ Manglona and COTA's Merrick Cabrera, Ernie Bell and Amalia M. Magofna.



Acting Commissioner Magofna, BOE Chairman Orsini, Co-op Program Coordinator Nicolas and Senior Director Dr. Pangelinan listen to Special Assistant for Public Transportation Maratita.

# PSS, COTA Partnership to support Cooperative Education Program students

**T**HE Public School System's Cooperative Education students continue to avail of the program's training and internship opportunities. Its partnership with the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority (COTA) will further assist the students' desire to succeed after-high school.

Currently, the PSS Cooperative Education Programs provides for training and internship opportunities for public high school students, as part of its goal to provide students with early work exposure while still in high school.

On September 28, acting Commissioner of Education Eric Magofna and Cooperative Education Program Coordinator Brandon Nicolas received 300 transportation vouchers from COTA, through Special Assistant for Public Transportation Alfreda Camacho Maratita.

Board of Education Chairman Andrew Orsini and Senior Director for Student Support Services Dr. Yvonne R. Pangelinan witnessed the donation of the transportation vouchers.

The 300 vouchers will support the school district's Saipan co-op students for their ongoing on-the-job training program.

"I'm very excited to partner with COTA to receive

these vouchers. This means that our students can search for training sites that are farther away than what they originally considered because traditionally what our students do is they choose training sites that are closer to home or school," said Brandon Nicolas, Program Coordinator for PSS Cooperative Education Program.

Nicolas added, "With these vouchers, our students are able to pursue training sites that they genuinely interested in."

Acting Commissioner of Education Magofna praised PSS' government partners for supporting the school district's initiatives to spur student learning.

"We are just very excited that our government partners, such as COTA, continue to assist us in our commitment to provide our public school students every opportunity that they can avail for them to succeed," acting Commissioner of Education Magofna said.

Cooperative education is provided as an elective class to all public high schools on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

"We are here as PSS partner willing and ready to assist the transportation needs of our students," said Special Assistant for Public Transportation Maratita.

# Special Education Program partners with CHCC's Family to Family Health Information Center



The foldable headsets were donated by CHCC's Family to Family Health Information Center.

**T**HE Public School System's Special Education Program and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation's (CHCC) Family to Family Health Information Center (F2F HIC) partnered to improve access to online therapy services by distributing 175 new headsets to children with special health care needs enrolled in the school district.

The headsets were made available through funding awarded to the CHCC from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The F2F HIC operates under the CHCC's Maternal, Infant, Child and Adolescent Health (MICAHA) Programs.

"Our partnership with our Public School System is very valuable. We have an existing interagency agreement through CHCC ... (and through this partnership) we believe that our children with special health care needs are receiving the needed specialty services through the Special Education Program and we are here to support and collaborate," said CHCC MICAHA Child Health Coordinator Danielle YJ Su.

"These headsets will directly benefit our students receiving online therapy services for children with special health care needs and the professionals who serve them," Su added.

"It's very timely for us here, especially in servicing the children in our program, particularly those receiving online therapy services since the transition into remote instruction last year," said PSS-SPED Program Director Donna Flores.

This year, the school district's Special Education Program is providing online therapy and support services to over 400 children with special needs. These online services provided particularly include speech pathology and occupational therapy. The new headsets will be distributed throughout Saipan, Tinian and Rota schools.

Through an ongoing collaboration, children identified by CHCC who have special health care needs or disability are referred to the PSS Early Intervention Program or Special Education Program for services. The headsets provided to children enrolled in PSS SPED services will improve access to online services and ultimately work to ensure improved health outcomes for this vulnerable population.

"We have a great partnership with CHCC MICAHA program and all of our interagency partners we call the Disability Network Partners (DNP)."

Director Flores also underscored the importance of PSS-SPED's ongoing partnership through the DNP: "This partnership is never ending. Our purpose is to advocate for all of our kids and provide them the support that they need to be able to access and benefit from the same education and opportunities that all of their non-disabled peers are afforded with, and as they transition into adulthood."



From left to right, CHCC MICAHA Child Health Coordinator Danielle YJ Su, PSS-Special Education Director Donna Flores, PSS-SPED Program Manager Nora Fujihira, PSS-SPED Online Coordinator Lucille Deleon Guerrero, and CHCC MICAHA Family Support Specialist Bridget Lizama with the donated headsets.



# With students taking lead, school district, government partner in beautification efforts

**T**HIS is a kind of partnership that affords every public school student with the unique opportunity to become stakeholders of a commonwealth-wide initiative that promotes beautification and advocates for conservation.

The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers has identified the CNMI Public School System as a key partner in its Marianas Village Pride campaign or MVP.

MVP is the latest initiative launched by the GCEA and is aimed at improving life in the Marianas by inspiring students and residents to show pride in where they live by taking part in fun beautification activities.

Jerry Tan, who co-chairs the GCEA with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and the GCEA PR Team presented the MVP campaign at the CNMI PSS State Level Parent Summit last October 9 and received great feedback and support from teachers, parents, and the CNMI PSS and Board of Education leadership.

Through GCEA and PSS collaboration, middle and high school students on Rota, Tinian, and Saipan are encouraged to join the MVP Village Flag Art Contest and illustrate what makes their villages special, unique, and wonderful places to live. For elementary school students, the GCEA will provide lessons and coloring pages that also promote village pride and environmental stewardship.

There are two other components of the MVP campaign—the Bus Stop Beautification and Christmas Decorating contests—where students' participation is highly encouraged. For both contests, high school students taking part in the beautification activities will earn service hours. At the end of the campaign period, schools will also earn points based on students' participation and have the chance to win cash prizes.

"We are grateful for our partnership with PSS, as the success of this program and the success of changing our communities lie within our youth and our students. They will provide the spark needed to ignite the shared vision of improving our homes, villages, and islands," Tan said.

Gov. Torres, meanwhile, acknowledged PSS and the PTA's key role in helping educate students about village pride.

"We thank PSS, teachers, and parents for partnering with us to help students understand the concept of village pride. We believe they are never too young to learn how they can take care of the environment, be good neighbors, and live well," Torres said.

# CAPTURING STUDENTS FIRST

## Tinian Elementary School's anti-bullying initiative: Be A Buddy, Not A Bully!



Tinian Elementary School's approach to combat bullying is about students imbibing the spirit of kindness by fostering friendship.



## Dandan Middle School's student leaders take oath

The Students Council Advisory Panel welcomed seven officers during its induction ceremony on October 19. Superior Court Judge Joseph Camacho administered the oath of office.



## Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School's induction of student leaders

The new student council officers of Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr. Sr. High School for School Year 2021-2022 are: President Chloe Yalung, Vice President Danny Kent King, Secretary Mark Charfauros, Treasurer Keoni Magnlona and Historian Frince Masga. Rota Mayor Efraim Atalig, RHI Principal D. Tanya King and BOE Vice Chairman Herman Atalig join the students.