

CNMI Public School System

STUDENTS FIRST

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April 2022

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Solar Energy for all Public Schools in NMI

Marianas High School, Oleai Elementary School Are Now Using 100-Percent Solar Panels for Their Energy Needs

www.cnmipss.org

PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE CLEAN ENERGY HUBS

MARIANAS High School and Oleai Elementary School were the two public school campuses in the CNMI to pioneer the implementation of the sustainable energy program of the Public School System.

These two schools, beginning in May this year, will now use 100-percent solar energy for its power needs.

The PSS is the first school system in the region to

utilize large-scale green energy technology.

The Public School System in partnership with Micronesia Renewable Energy (MRE) launched the solar energy system initiative six months ago. PSS, with the support of the CNMI Board of Education, has entered into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with MRE in March 2020. In January 2020, the school district put out a request for proposal with 6 companies responding to the RFP on its solar power system initiative.



The BOE, the policy and governing body of PSS, approved the solar energy project in July 2020.

“We are about to achieve our long-term goal of reducing our dependency on fossil fuel, which is very beneficial for all of us,” Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada told *Students First*.

Associate Commissioner for Administrative Services Eric Magofna described MHS and OES’ transition into 100-percent solar energy as “a milestone resulting from our collective hard work”.

PSS Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh, who was among the key leaders that initiated the plan, is projecting that within the “next 2 to 3 months” the entire school district will be using solar energy to operate all campuses and facilities.

“With MHS and OES, we are now projecting that within the next three months all our facilities will be operating on solar power,” Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh told *Students First* separately.

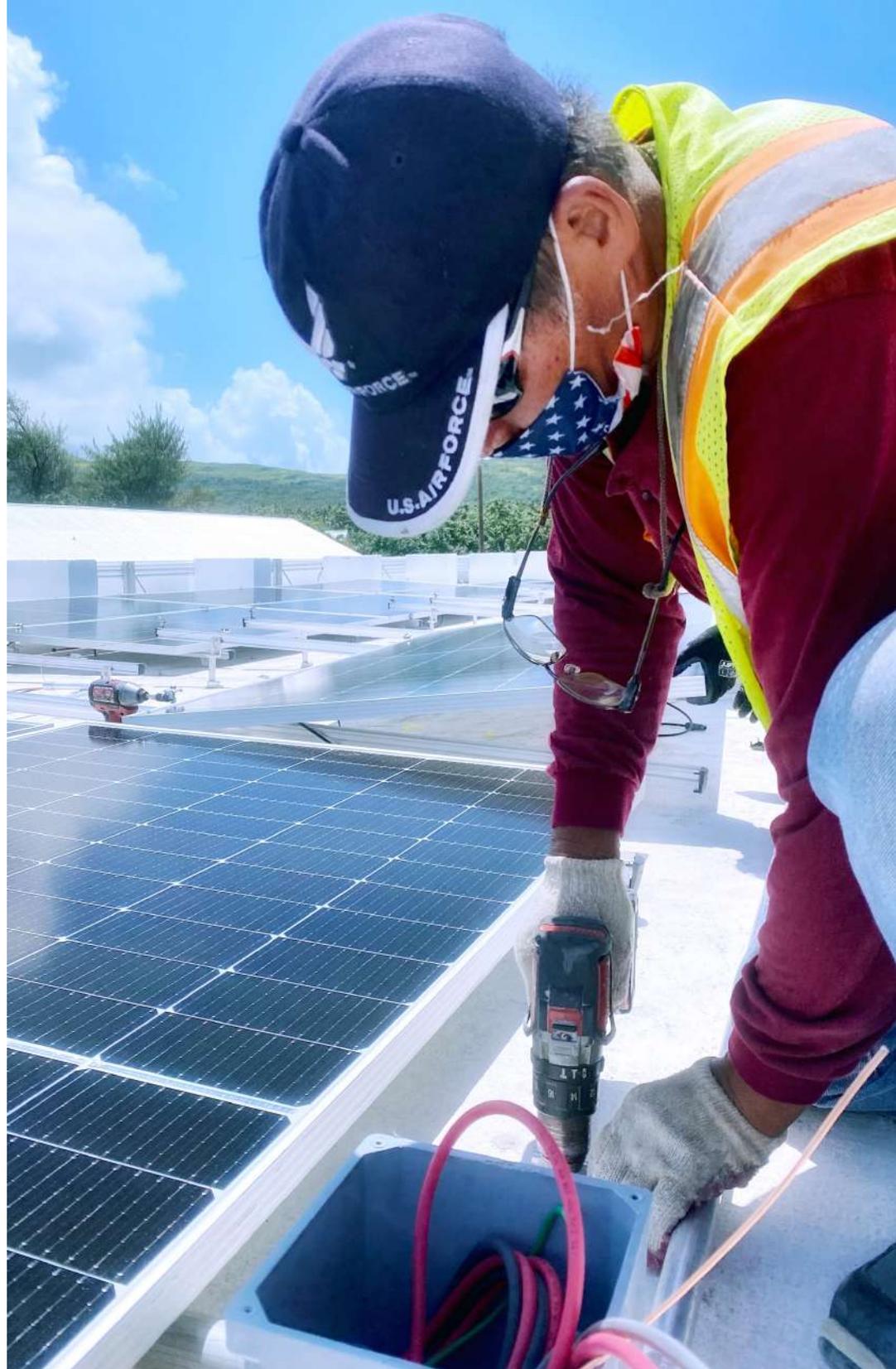
Thornburgh said all 20 schools and 10 central offices in Capital Hill will use the solar panels that MRE will install for energy use—entirely transitioning the entire school district into 100-percent renewable energy/solar power.

“This is our long-term goal and we will be achieving that soon; will be operating on solar power,” he added.

With solar panels, PSS is expected to generate “significant savings. With solar energy, MRE is estimating that PSS will only consume approximately 12 cents per kilowatt-hour as compared to the current 38 cents per kwh-rate with the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, according to Thornburgh.

PSS and CUC have entered into a net metering agreement last year.

At the same time, this will also be educational for all public school students. Each school will have a kiosk wherein students, by a press of a button, are able to monitor how much their school’s solar energy consumption, on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, Thornburgh explains.



The establishment – or transition of PSS into 100-percent renewable energy – was virtue of Public Law 18-75 signed by Governor Ralph DLG. Torres.

Governor Torres described PSS’ 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 during the October 2021- launching of the PSS solar energy initiative.

Cooperative Education Honors Partners of Students Job-Training Program



THE Public School System's Cooperative Education Program continues to successfully afford students with training and apprenticeship—and thanks to the growing partners in the local business community.

"Our Company appreciation event was last held in Fall 2019 prior to the pandemic. With this event, we are able to recognize the importance of our community partnerships that make training possible," said Brandon S. Nicolas, program coordinator Cooperative Education.

Recently, Cooperative Education feted 26 companies for their continued support in the work shadowing and apprenticeship to PSS students or trainees on Saipan.

The students-trainers are from Marianas High School, Saipan, Southern high School and Da'ok Academy.

Tinian and Rota are scheduled in the coming days.

"We didn't think we would be able to have on the job training this semester because of the pandemic, much more an appreciation event. The program is glad that the students and companies enjoyed, and we look forward to doing this again next year," Nicolas added.

Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' Marianas Village Pride Project

Students, Schools Creative Campaigns Recognized

35 Students, 4 Elementary schools,
6 middle & high schools are honored

THE Governor's Council of Economic Advisers honored thirty-five public school students, and various public elementary, middle and high schools in the CNMI as winners of various competitions of the pioneering 2021 Marianas Village Pride Project. The MVP is an innovative initiative that tapped into the creativity of students and schools, effectively transforming them as advocates in promoting the islands with beautification and environmental protection campaigns

The Public School System was a principal partner with the four key competition-initiatives: school-based and-led competitions MVP Christmas Decorating Contest, MVP Village Flag Art Contest, MVP Bus Stop Beautification Contest, and the Adopt-A-Median Program.

The GCEA led by Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres and his co-chairman, businessman and philanthropist Jerry Tan, who is chief executive officer of Tan Holdings Corporation, presented the awards and over \$40,000 in cash prizes on April 21, 2022.

The ceremony was held at the Sugar King Park amphitheater.

It was in 2021 when GCEA launched the MVP as a means to "inspire students and residents to show pride in where they live by taking part in fun beautification activities."

For the Christmas Decorating Contest, Kagman Elementary School won "Most Festive School," and was awarded sports equipment valued at \$1,000.

Laila Macaranas of Tinian won "Most Festive Home," receiving a \$1,000 ACE Hardware gift card.

Savory Bistro Café in Garapan won "Most Festive Business," and was awarded a \$1,000 Pacific Rainbow gift certificate.

The Tinian mayor's office won "Most Festive Village," winning a \$1,000 ACE Hardware gift card for improvements to its village basketball court.



For the Bus Stop Beautification Contest, Marianas High School was named the top school, winning \$1,000 in sports equipment.

Bistro Boyz, Tyler's Gelatte Stone, and Smoked Out won "Top Business," receiving a \$1,000 ACE Hardware gift card.

The Village Flag Art winners are:

Saipan

As Lito – Taylor John Hally, MHS
As Matuis – Randy Rabago, TMS
As Perdido – Sarim Omar, MHS
As Teo – Arsynl Tagabuel, MHS
Capital Hill – Da-Hee Clair Kim, MHS
Chalan Kanoa – Rev Doca, MHS
Chalan Kiya – Eric Mahinan, MHS
Chalan Laulau – Bwilitomwar Elias Rangamar, MHS
Chalan Piao – Julie Ann Capayas, MHS
Dandan – Maria Isabelle Achas, MHS
Finasisu – Melina Mae Faimaw, MHS
Garapan – Charlie Wang, MHS
Gualo Rai – Isaac Y. Han, MHS
Kagman – Rosemarie Faisao, MHS
Kannat Tabla – Kristina Adnas, MHS
Koblerville – Destiny Camacho, MHS
Marpi – Japhet J. Dino, TMS
Navy Hill – Jemma A. Corpuz, MHS
Oleai – Hope Odoshi, MHS
Papago – Justin Weaver, MHS
Puerto Rico – Marvin Cabrera, TMS
Sadog Tasi – Jozel Sanchez, TMS
San Antonio – Christanelle Mercado, MHS
San Roque – Andrei Arellano, TMS
San Vicente – Mikayela Arriola, MHS
Tanapag – Sherry Zhu, MHS
Tapochau – Kalista Klaver, MHS
Wireless – Allen Tambiga, MHS

Tinian

Carolina Heights – Pevika Dela Cruz, TJSHS
Marpo Valley – Miyako San Nicolas, TJSHS
San Jose – Lloyd Rivera, TJSHS

Rota

I Chenchon – Princess C. Bato-On, SES
Sinapalo – Sayema A. Sidur, SES
Songsong – Mikayla P. Manga, SES

Sinapalo Elementary School garnered 380 points and was named the top elementary school, winning \$5,000 from the E-Land Group.

Tinian Elementary School came in second place with 105 points, winning \$5,000 from the E-Land Group.

Oleai Elementary School placed third with 70 points, earning \$1,500 from the Century Insurance Company.

Kagman Elementary School, with 50 points, placed fourth, receiving \$1,000 from the Century Insurance Company.

Of all of the middle and high schools throughout the CNMI, Marianas High School came in first place

with a total of 22,205 points, winning \$15,000 from D&Q International Distributors, POI Aviation, and Crowne Plaza Saipan.

Tanapag Middle School came in second place with 2,960 points, winning \$7,000 from Saipan Marine Corporation.

Coming in third place was Francisco M. Sablan Middle School with 350 points, earning \$5,000 from the Gemkell Corporation.

Tinian Jr. Sr. High School, with 180 points, came in fourth place, receiving \$1,000 from Saipan Marine Corporation.

In fifth place was Hopwood Middle School with 49 points, also receiving \$1,000 from Saipan Marine Corporation.

Kagman High School came in sixth place, with 35 points, earning \$1,000 from Hao's Air Conditioning and CMI.

Participants of the Adopt-a-Median Program were also recognized during the awards ceremony.

They are the Kanoa Football Club and Beach Road Tourism Development, Inc. for the adoption of the Garapan core highway medians; the Office of the 22nd House Minority for the Isa Drive/San Vicente median and San Vicente Parish parking lot; LJ's Lawncare, LLC for the Garapan sidewalk curbs; the Saipan mayor's office for the Toyota Intersection and Quartermaster Road medians; Shirley's Coffee Shop and the Shirley's Football Club for the Middle Road/Garapan intersection and medians; the Tan Holdings Football Club for the Guma Sakman medians; the Saipan Marianas Lions Club for the Chalan Kiya medians; Team Chalan Piao for the Chalan Piao medians; Century Tours, Inc., Century Hotel, Sea Touch, iShop, and POI Aviation for the Mobil Kagman intersection medians; D&Q International Distributors for the Sadog Tasi intersection median; Life in the Son Christian Fellowship-Saipan for the Gualo Rai medians; the Northern Marianas College for the Chalan Monsignor Guerrero medians; the Northern Marianas Sports Association for the Oleai Sports Complex parking lot and curbs; Marianas High School for the Marianas Visitors Authority sidewalks and the Dandan Children's Park parking lot; Joeten-Kiyu Public Library and Pacifica Insurance Underwriters for the Susupe medians across World Resort and for the JKPL parking lot; Saint Trading Company, the Saipan Magalahi Eagles Club, and the Mt. Carmel Choir for the Mt. Carmel Church sidewalks and parking lot; Hopwood Middle School for their school curbs; the Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs for the Commonwealth Economic Development Authority parking lot, and the Tinian Elementary School Student Government and Youth Advisory Panel for the school's sidewalks across the public library and health center.



THE Marianas Village Pride Project (MVP) is a unique platform that gave public school students meaningful experience and motivation. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic last year, students and parents saw it as a support system of the pandemic-driven learning environment.

Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said this during the April 21- ceremony of the MVP, one of the flagship initiatives of the private-government sector partnership ,Governor's Council of Economic Advisers (GCEA).

"When my office was advised last year, as we were working towards ensuring our students continue to learn in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I saw this as a perfect addition to the Public School System's daunting challenge of continuously affording our Kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school students optimum opportunities for them to learn and grow more," Commissioner Ada said in his remarks.

GCEA's MVP Project gave public school students meaningful and engaging opportunity to experience taking care for the islands, and bringing the experiences into the classroom.

"(T)he MVP Project served as a support system, a platform that gave our students and their parents that needed boost to manage and handle the challenges of classroom learning... GCEA's direction, in particular, the (MVP), is an additional motivation for

Commissioner of Education Ada: 'MVP is a unique support system for our students, parents'



us, in the school district, and has complemented our ongoing work in finding newer opportunities that will provide optimum learning exposures to our children.”

‘Commitment’

The school district’s Family Engagement Program Manager Liela Yumul took the lead in ensuring the pioneering MVP initiative will be successful.

It was launched in October 2021 and immediately thereafter, PSS became the principal partner of the initiative under Yumul’s leadership.

During the April 21 ceremony, GCEA’s chairperson, Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres and co-chairperson, businessman and philanthropist Jerry Tan, praised PSS support and its successful implementation and participation.

Yumul credited the MVP’s goals as key in driving the overwhelming success of GCEA’s initiative.

It was on October 9, 2021 when GCEA presented the initiative during state Parent Summit, which was attended by all 20 school PTSAs on Saipan, Tinian and Rota.

“The outcome of the presentation was amazing. School leaders, students and parents from all of our three islands were encouraged and motivated to participate in this historic initiative through various competitions-activities that our students and parents – all our stakeholders – can participate in,” Yumul said in an interview with **Students First**.

Yumul said GCEA’s MVP initiative both allowed PSS students to be creative and develop a sense of ownership and pride.

“We, at the school district, saw the importance of this campaign that it would require commitment from us and our stakeholders. And we were committed to make it successful and we will continue to support the future success of GCEA’s initiatives that will bring our entire community together through meaningful initiatives,” Yumul notes.

She added, “As a school system, I am so proud of all our children who volunteered their time, energy and efforts to beautify our villages through the MVP Flag Art Competition, Bus Stop Beautification, Adopt a Median, and/ or share the joys of Christmas by participating in the Christmas Decorating contest.”



Commissioner of Education Alfred B. Ada, center, and his Guam counterpart, Jon J.P. Fernandez, left, of the Guam Department of Education and PSS Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh, right, during the March 30 Council of Chief State School Superintendent conference in Washington, D.C.



US Dept. of Education Praise PSS \$164 million Federal Spending Plan; Clean Audit

THE Public School System’s American Rescue Plan spending plan “was most comprehensive and one of the first plan to be received, approved and awarded by the US Department of Education,” according to the US Department of Education which was disclosed by PSS Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh.

The federal education department recommended that school districts in all US territories should “model” PSS’ approach”.

This transpired during the March 30-30 meeting of Council of Chief State School Officer (CCSSO) that Commissioner of Education Alfred Ada and Federal Programs Officer Thornburgh attended in the nation’s capital. CCSSO is the organization for all of the nation’s education leaders, including territories.

The CCSSO conference discussed on the post-COVID-19 pandemic plans of the nation’s public schools and school districts, among others.

“We received one of the biggest validation of our work. Essentially, Commissioner of Education (Alfred) Ada and I had the chance to meet at the Department of Education with three of our key funders (among others, led by) Dr. Tiffany Forrester who is in charge of Insular areas grants, and essentially, the (department) commended us first of all for being one of the first grantees to have an approved American Rescue Plan and for the comprehensive nature of our plan: that they recognized how we executing our ARP plans actually planned,” said Federal Programs Officer Tim Thornburgh in an interview with Marianas Variety.

Of the \$850 million 2021 American Rescue Plan for Outlying Areas’ State Educational Agencies Fund, PSS received about \$160 million. These funds, according

to PSS plan, will support safely reopening and sustaining safe operations of schools while meeting the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of students resulting from the pandemic.

PSS was “number 24 of the 50 states and number 1 in all territories to submit timely” its 2021 ARP spending plan and it was “one of the most comprehensive” that was ever received by the US Dept. of Education,” Thornburgh said quoting the federal officials.

“The other piece is our quarterly federal funds report to the auditing team of the US Dept. of Education... they review, crosschecked that with G5 (the grant management system of US DOE) and they are pleased with our progress,” Thornburgh said. “Overall, we are (ahead with the other half of our nation’s school districts and insular areas). We submitted our ARP spending plan timely and comprehensively.”

PSS submitted its ARP spending plan early August 2021 and was approved by US DOE by end of August that same year.

“(They) believe in our plan that it is easy to execute,” adds Thornburgh.

Of the \$160 million PSS received by the US DOE, \$70 million will be spent for the next four years “to backfill the hole in the local budget” to pay for the salaries of teachers and staff that were previously locally funded. Another \$75 million for programs and projects, including laptops and technology acquisition, buses and vans purchase, health and sanitation on all public elementary, middle and high school.

And \$10 million will go to support all of the 13 private schools in the CNMI. Private schools have their own plans how to spend their federal funding from PSS.

OVERHEAD DOOR

PSS Turns Over 16 Brand New Vans to Saipan, Tinian and Rota Schools





AT around 1 pm on April 5, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada and the Public School System's Office of Pupil Transportation Program Manager Shawn San Nicholas led school district officials in the formal turnover of sixteen brand new school vans to Saipan, Tinian and Rota public schools.

Saipan school principals led by middle schools representative and Chacha Oceanview Middle School Principal Martha Kintol and elementary schools representative and Kagman Elementary School Principal Dr. Ignacia Demapan received the official turn over of the brand new white vans.

On April 6, Tinian Elementary School Principal Lou Connie Manglona and Rota's Sinapalo Elementary School Principal Daisy M. Quitugua received their school's respective vans.

The 16 vans form part of the total of 22 vans procured by PSS. The investment will further support and expand PSS' current transportation fleet, primarily providing transportation needs of all public elementary, middle and high schools in the CNMI, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada said.

This will also to support daily school operation, the education chief added.

These newly acquired 10-seater white vans are federally funded. In total, the 22 vans cost \$1.5 million.

"It's a long-awaited and this is something that all our schools need for their daily operation," said PSS-OPT Program Manager San Nicolas separately said.

The delivery of the remaining six vans is will be in a couple of months, it was learned.

USDOE cites PSS' 'tremendous progress' in meeting grant goals

THE CNMI Public School System "has made tremendous progress" toward the goals of the State Longitudinal Data System or SLDS grant project, according to U.S. Department of Education grant program manager Nancy Sharkey.

Sharkey, along with SLDS program analyst Amanda Musick, state support team point of contact Corey Chatis and Privacy Technical Assistance Center or PTAC student privacy analyst Brittani Fairchild visited CNMI public schools in October 2021.

While in the CNMI, they assessed the school system's implementation of the SLDS grant project, "Advance CNMI: Leveraging Data Power for Greater Success." Its goal is to establish a highly effective SLDS infrastructure, and shift the use of data from compliance to accountability and strategic instructional usage.

Sharkey said CNMI PSS has made tremendous progress toward the grant goals and is changing "business as usual" in education.

For his part, PTAC Director Ross Lemke said of all the districts where he has presented, the CNMI is the only entity with 100% Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act training for its district staff.

Annette Pladevega Sablan, project director of CNMI PSS SLDS, said the visiting federal officials noted the following key accomplishments:

1) The launch of a pilot Early Warning System or EWS in reading through an early learning workgroup, which was implemented from October 2020 to June 2021.

2) The prioritization of EWS needs and indicators to flag students who show signs of needing intervention. This was accomplished in July 2020.

3) The establishment of the scope of work and yearly deliverables for an SLDS infrastructure vendor, and a review of policies and processes related to data governance from July 2020 to April 2021.

4) The development of a stakeholder engagement plan to involve users in guiding, improving, and sustaining the SLDS. This was done in October 2020.

5) PSS' acceptance into the highly competitive Strategic Data Project at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, from June 2020 to August 2022.

6) The SLDS project director's acceptance as a Strategic Data Project agency fellow from June 2020 to August 2022.

7) Continued participation in highly engaging modules that support the development of SLDS data dashboards for educators and by educators from September 2020 to August 2022.

In fiscal year 2021-2022, PSS was provided with \$688,881 in federal funds for a data management and central data intake storage project.

According to Education Commissioner Alfred B. Ada, this project "links the data systems of Head Start, PSS and Northern Marianas College into one seamless education data storage system with central intake and cloud-based storage."

Of the total amount received by PSS for the project, \$212,305 has been spent and \$301,623 encumbered. There is still a \$174,953 fund balance for the SLDS, PSS said.





Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr. Sr. High School Students Sweep Law Day Essay contests

ROTA'S Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr. Sr. High School students took the three top honors of the essay contests to mark Law Month in the CNMI. The theme of the essay competition was "Toward A More Perfect Union: The Constitution in Times of Change".

In the poster making competition, Grace Christian Academy of Saipan swept the first, second and third spots.

The presentation of award was held on April 20 at the CNMI courthouse (Guma' Hustisia) following the proclamation declaring the month of May as Law Month and Drug Court Month.

For the essay contest, Dr. Rita H. Inos Jr.

High School students swept the middle school essay contest, winning first, second and third places.

The first-place winner was Aden Chonne H. Calvo, who was received the "Chief Justice Award". Lovelee Zhene B. Jingco was second place and received the "Associate Justice Award", while Eianne Ladao was third-place winner and recipient of the "Supreme Court Award". All of the winners are eight grade students.

In the elementary poster-making contest Grade Christian Academy students took the first, second and third places. Minato Takahashi, 5th grade, was won third place; Breanna May M. Lopez (5th grade), second place, and Victoria En Mei Huang, fourth grade, was first place.

Only from the CNMI

PSS' Jacqueline Che Named as New Obama Foundation Asia-Pacific Leader



THE Public School System's Jacqueline Che is among the 35 emerging leaders selected to join the Obama Foundation Leaders Asia-Pacific program. The program will train participants in leadership development and community and civic engagement to help build their skills and scale their work across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Che is the school district's Director of Internal Control and Evaluation of the Federal Program's Office.

This year's cohort represents 23 nations and territories across the region.

Of the 35 participants in this year's cohort, 12 are from the Pacific: 1 from the CNMI, 1 from Palau, 1 from Kiribati, 1 from Papua New Guinea, 1 from Solomon Islands, 2 from Fiji, 2 from Hawaii, 3 from New Zealand.

The inaugural cohort in 2019 comprised of 200 selected leaders that included NMI residents Representative Sheila Babauta and Samantha Birmingham-Babauta.

Jacqueline is the Director of Internal Control & Evaluation for Federal Programs at the CNMI Public School System.

She is also the founder of "Full Belly, Full Hearts", a volunteer-led initiative that: provides free hot meals from Majesty Restaurant and family grocery bag distribution from partnering wholesale distributors (4,000+ meals, 1,000 family grocery bags); referrals to social services; assist with internet-based job searches, applications, resume writing, connecting to other employment-related resources, placement assistance, and assistance to small businesses owners and farmers access federal grants to support their livelihood

She is a long-time board member of the CNMI Women's Association whose mission is to

empower women for political, economic, and social leadership. The CWA's focus is to assist women achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency by providing job-skills training, placement services, etc.

She was one of the founding members of a Research Practitioner Partnership, supported by REL Pacific. This Partnership is the first of its kind in the Pacific region, which brings together representatives from CNMI PSS, NMC, and the Department of Labor to collaborate on a shared issue of college and career readiness and success. Jackie continuous to be an active leader in the alliance, working to grow the K-20 partnership, helping to bridge the divide that exists between the educational levels, and advocating within the institutional structures for the work to proceed and succeed.

She is working with the Lumina Foundation Impact Ventures on a start-up "InvestED Marianas" whose aim is to boost college and workforce preparation by 1) encouraging high-need, low-income students find the college or technical school and the funds to finance it,

2) help adult learners with skills and training to navigate the college and job search and placement process.

Obama leaders tackle a broad range of issues. Jackie will be focused on education and economic access, job creation, entrepreneurship, and poverty alleviation.

As part of the six-month, non-residential program, these dedicated changemakers will convene virtually each week for interactive sessions designed to help them drive change by honing their leadership skills, building deep relationships with their peers, and engaging with thought leaders and members of the Obama Foundation community. They will also have an opportunity to participate in various virtual experiences and special events, including one-on-one conversations with experienced mentors in the Foundation's global network.

President Obama's familial ties to the region, his time in Indonesia as a young man, and his upbringing in Hawai'i have informed his values and his faith in the passion of this generation of changemakers across the Asia-Pacific. Launched in 2019, the program is creating a network of leaders who drive positive, innovative change in their communities throughout the continent and across the globe. The 2022 class of Asia-Pacific Leaders are working across a broad range of issues and focus areas, including climate change, indigenous rights, education, and more.

The Obama Foundation Leaders program is designed to further inspire, empower, and connect emerging leaders from Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Europe to change their respective communities and the world. To learn more, visit obama.org/leaders.

Upon graduation, Che returned to Saipan to serve as the CNMI Scholarship administrator where she worked to increase opportunities for college access and representation of Asian American-Pacific Islander students in higher education. She then took a position at Northern Marianas College, serving as its Director of Institutional Effectiveness, before landing her current position at CNMI PSS as its Director of Internal Control & Evaluation.

Jackie Che received the following awards and accolades throughout the years: 2020 Young Professional of the Year, Saipan Chamber of Commerce, 2020 Millennium Falcon of the Year, Mt. Carmel School, 2014 Member of the inaugural class of Pacific Century Fellows - Marianas Chapter, 2010 Woman of Impact, University of San Diego, and 2005 Governor's Leadership Award.

She is also a founding member of the Marianas Young Professionals (MYPros), Director-Member, Mt. Carmel School Board of Directors, and Director-Member, CNMI Women's Association Board of Directors.

She is an MBA/Doctoral Candidate at Boston University.



NMI Public School Students Consume More Fruit by Enjoying Smoothies at Breakfast

By Mary Kay Gominger, Public Affairs Director,
FNS Western Regional Office

IT'S the age-old question – how to get children to eat more fruit? We all know the benefits of a diet that's rich in fruit. At least adults do. Convincing children to add more fruit to their diet is another challenge. The food nutrition experts at the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands enticed their school children to eat more fruit by serving fruit smoothies.

Last year, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands received a USDA School Breakfast Expansion Grant in the amount of \$199,920. The CNMI Public School System is using the funds to purchase blenders and other needed equipment for all their schools so they can add fruit smoothies as a breakfast menu item. They are also providing training to staff and developing culturally appropriate smoothie recipes. Their goal is to increase breakfast participation, increase fruit consumption at breakfast, and ultimately make fruit a regular part of the students' breakfast routines at school and at home.

"This USDA School Breakfast Expansion Grant allows us to add fruit smoothies to our breakfast menu and so far, we've gotten a good response," said Dale Roberts, CNMI's Child Nutrition Program Director. "The grant funding is for two years and though we've had a slow start rolling it out, due to supply chain issues, we will soon offer fresh fruit smoothies at all of our schools."

Earlier this month, USDA announced the opening of this year's School Breakfast Expansion Grants for U.S. Territories. Nearly \$2.8 million is available for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and American Samoa.

Information about the grant and how to apply can be found on the Grants.gov website. Applications are due July 13, 2022.





Agape Christian School



Agape Christian School



Eucon International School

PSS Provides over 1.2K laptops, iPads for Private Schools Students in NMI

PRIVATE school students in the CNMI have received over 1,200 laptops, including charging stations this month from the Public School System. These are replacements and renewals for previously issued learning tools.

The Public School System was the first school district in the Pacific region to invest in classroom technology. It was in 2010 when the One Laptop Initiative was launched.

To date, PSS has provided private elementary and middle schools in the CNMI over 1,700 of these technology learning tools.

For this current school year, the PSS had acquired over 5,000 laptops as part of its investment in technology to support student learning. The federal government through the Education Stabilization Fund. .

Of the learning tools that private schools received, 749 were brand new Lenovo laptops and 537 were iPads, according to Private School Program Director of PSS Melisha San Nicholas.



Green Meadows School



Green Meadows School



Northern Marianas International School



Mount Carmel School

Explaining the Process Before Laptops, iPads are distributed

THE State Infrastructure Technology Director, Jesse Tenorio, explained that they have to ensure that these technology-learning tools efficiently works and supports student learning.

Tenorio's team, the CNMI PSS SIT Department, had to begin the process by working with the winning vendor "to image all 5000 laptops before it was shipped to the CNMI PSS Warehouse."

"The main purpose of imaging the laptops was to eliminate the additional steps required to set up a brand-new laptop. If we were to set them up right out of the box, the process would take us at least an hour to clear these cumbersome steps," Director Tenorio told Students First.

"With the imaging process, the setup time takes 5-10 mins. Thus, allowing the schools to quickly distribute the much-needed devices to the students."

Imaging process:

- CNMI PSS SIT Department received a setup unit from the manufacture
- IT staff performed all the updates and patches for the operating system
- IT staff installed basic software and applications for student and teacher use
- IT staff created the necessary accounts for students and teachers
- an image of the configured devices is created and uploaded to the manufacturer's portal for processing
- the manufacturer images all devices and ships them out when completed

Receiving and distribution:

- PSS procurement warehouse receives the devices. Documents and tags the devices accordingly.
- Distribution list is provided by the FPO office and the devices are delivered to their respected schools.

The process when schools receive the devices:

- Activate Windows 10
 - Teacher signs in to the device with the teacher account provided by the SIT department.
 - Connect the device to the school Wi-Fi
 - Search: Activation settings
 - Click troubleshoot and wait for the confirmation screen that says, "Windows 10 is activated"
- Rename the Laptop to the name of the school and classroom that the device is assigned to
 - Right-click "Start"
 - Go to systems
 - Rename this PC (Ex. WSR-G6-TP01)
- Once these 2 steps are completed then the device is ready to distribute to the students



Golden Harvest International School

RHI GSA Inclusivity & Allyship Workshop

PSS Mental Health hosted an Inclusivity & Allyship Workshop and a planning session for year-wide pride activities for the GSA Skittles Pride Club and their allies for Dr. Rita Hocog Inos Jr./Sr. High School stakeholders.

This was held on April 9.

Allies are defined as classmates, friends, and family members who stand up for, support, and encourage their peers who identify in the community.

The day-long workshop, held at Rota Resort, was for close to 30 participants. This was facilitated by LEA Community Manager for Rota, Marvin Tamangided; Clinical Services Supervisor Dr. Jennifer Maratita, and Behavioral Health Specialist Vannah Hocog.

The workshop is to raise awareness of LGBTQIA+ youth issues, highlight the importance of inclusion and supporting braver, safer spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth, and increase positive relationships of students and their schools.

Students and advisors have worked alongside with the trainers, that led to the successful staging of the workshop.

Tamangided and Hocog led in welcoming the students with an outdoor team building. This was followed by a presentation on Inclusivity & Allyship by Dr. Maratita.

Students also watched educational videos, discussed issues faced by the LGBTQIA+ youth in the CNMI, and discussed ways they could increase positive relationships with their peers and reduce incidents of bullying, harassment, and name calling.

The students expressed familiarity of traditional roles, responsibilities, and behaviors each gender typically carried. They also learned about Allyship and, even as members of the LGBTQIA+ community, they can all be allies.

This workshop allowed the students to address their



Dr. Jennifer Maratita
Clinical Service Supervisor
PSS Mental Health/ Project HALIGI AWARE
- Leading the Inclusivity & Allyship Workshop



Mr. Marvin Tamangided
LEA Community Manager of Rota
PSS Mental Health/ Project HALIGI AWARE
- Leading the outdoor painting activity with the students

questions, increased awareness on diversity, gender identities and orientations and the value of inclusion and allyship.

“(I) truly appreciate the information presented and were not aware of some issues the LGBTQIA+ youth in the CNMI were going through,” said a student.

Dr. Maratita noted: “what an amazing group of allies! It was truly an honor to participate with these youth leaders today. They had so many questions and you could see they truly cared about their school community that continues to ensure that every student member is valued and respected”

Dr. Maratita also commended the leadership of Dr. Rita h Inos Jr. Sr. High School. “It was exciting to see that so many activities were already in motion fostering positive relationships and affirming learning environments that all youth deserve.”

Tamangided added, “the workshop was a huge success in bringing the students together to promote inclusivity and diversity. Our main goal for the event is to create safe spaces for all students regardless of differences.

For more information please contact the Mental Health Program of PSS at mentalhealth@cnmipss.org.



RHI GSA Skittles Pride Club & their Allies



THE Public School System continues to promote various activities to increase student learning through creative forms of learning engagement. One proven approach is reading-aloud.

Recently, Commissioner of Education Dr. Alfred B. Ada visited a Kindergarten class and the Kindergarten Immersion Program class at Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School. Since the resumption of in-person learning following the COVID-19 pandemic, the education commissioner had been making rounds in all elementary, middle and high school campuses in the CNMI.

At GTC, Dr. Ada engaged the Kindergarten classes, among others, doing a reading aloud. He read the book, “*Leo The Late Bloomer*”, a children’s book about a young tiger named Leo, who just can seem to do anything right. He can’t write, read, draw, eat, or even talk like the rest of the animals.

“Our students were very happy to have our commissioner of education talk and read to them. Dr. Ada had visited us many times, but in his most recent visit he engaged with our Kindergarten students directly,” GTC Principal Raena Camacho said.

Principal Camacho added, “And for me, personally, this is a very effective approach in driving and engaging student learning. We have to be reminded that as part of our leadership responsibility is visibility. This is exactly he is doing.”

Engaging Students through Reading **Education Chief Ada spearheads reading initiative**