



# WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE

A SAIPAN TRIBUNE ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT  
29 MARCH 2019



The men and women of TanHoldings Corp. working in harmony

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

# ‘Women play an important role in the world’

By **BEA CABRERA**  
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CORRESPONDENT

As the entire globe unites to celebrate International Women’s Month this March, TanHoldings Corp. rejoices with the rest of the world.

“I am glad to know that many countries in the world

are formally recognizing and celebrating women—their achievements and the important roles that they play in the world,” said TanHoldings Inc. CEO Jerry Tan.

“It is a reality that in many

countries and places, women are not given equal rights or protection as men. That is why today, women have come a long way in making a mark for themselves and thus being recognized

this month,” Tan said.

That sentiment runs through the veins of the company, which values the participation of women and their roles in the many subsidiaries. Their contributions are not underrepresented nor underestimated.

According to Tan, many women form part of the executive team of the company. “I think it is more than just equal protection in rights but it’s really about knowing that, in today’s world, women are just as qualified as men. In business, you will find more and more women becoming CEOs,” he said.

“In fact, many countries now have woman leaders, be

it a prime minister or president, so the contributions of women is not just in the corporate world but also in the political world,” he added.

This was echoed by senior vice president Eli Arago, who is also in charge of human resource matters at the corporation. “At TanHoldings, our female employees are not defined by their sex but by their commitment, leadership, and integrity. They are valued employees, for they show a strong work ethic, set good examples to their co-workers, are trustworthy, and worthy of the responsibilities given to them.”

He said that many of the company’s female employees strive for excellence in their field to contribute to the continued growth of the company. They also actively participate in TanHoldings’ outreach programs to give back to the CNMI community. And are active in company-sponsored sports activities, like volleyball and futsal.

“We are so proud of them,” Arago said.

One such executives is Merlie Tolentino, who is the executive director of the TSL Foundation, the charitable arm of TanHoldings. She has been with the company for almost 16 years now.

“My work is fulfilling as I get to be exposed to various charitable programs and activities,” she said. “I feel honored working alongside such dedicated and talented people. I’ve never encountered any problems regarding stereotypical gender roles in my workplace. I’m lucky enough to be working in a company that is not gender-biased but is focused on developing and enriching its employees’ skills.”

Tolentino said that TanHoldings sees no gender distinctions. “TanHoldings has always treated its employees equally and does not account contributions to the company based on gender. I’m lucky to be in a workplace where I can continuously grow and hone my potential professionally without having to experience gender boundaries. I consider myself a successful woman, person, and it wouldn’t be possible

without TanHoldings.”

She acknowledged that women are more empowered when signs of support and affirmation are given to them. “It is important that women stand up for each other to continue to fight for equal rights that is being fought by many women in the world,” she added.

Another female TanHoldings executive, Maria Luisa Ernest, who is the director for Human Resources for Asia Pacific Hotels, Inc., POI Aviation, Century Tours, Inc. and Gemkell, assured that the Human Resources Department does its best to ensure all anti-discrimination policies are cascaded through the company and applied fairly.

“...We partner with management to create an atmosphere where employees can focus on their work and know that they will be judged on their performance, and know that extraneous factors like gender or race won’t hold them back,” she said,

Ernest said she is inspired in working with strong female leaders at TanHoldings such as Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan general manager Wendi Her-ring and POI Aviation general manager Rella Kretzers.

“Both are hardworking, well respected, and considered experts in their respective industries. Above all, they are compassionate individuals who place importance on ‘connecting with employees,’” she said.


Ernest finds protecting employees from discrimination while helping them keep productivity at the highest level “personally enriching.”

“I think most people in the company feel that work is challenging but the trick is to make it rewarding and fulfilling as well,” she added.

Ernest, who has been with the company since 1999, assured that all female employees of TanHoldings are not defined by their sex but by their commitment, leadership, and integrity, and are valued employees.

“They strive for excellence in their field to contribute to the continued growth of the company and the community,” she added.

Here’s to strong women.  
May we know them. May we raise them.  
May we be them.



## CELEBRATING WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

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The **empowered woman**  
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Celebrating International Women's Month

From the management and staff of



By **BEA CABRERA**  
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 CORRESPONDENT

# Nurturers by nature

Grandmothers, mothers, daughters, aunts, nieces—whatever your role in life is, women are nurturers by heart. Whatever they do and wherever they are, this trait is always foremost.

This is true with Hyatt Regency Saipan's Christie Sablan-Keptot and Anthea Joy Baltazar-Capati, who have been dutifully taking care of tourists, guests, and island residents alike and making sure that Hyatt is everyone's home away from home.

Christie Sablan-Keptot, the housekeeping manager and department head at the Hyatt, has been with the hotel for almost 10 years now. In that time and in various capacities, she has always had a hand in taking care of co-employees and guests.

She started working at the Hyatt in 2010 as a Human Resources administrator, then went up to being an HR personnel officer, housekeeping management training, assistant housekeeping manager, and currently housekeeping manager.

"Women are definitely stronger and more patient in general and with that



Christie Sablan-Keptot is the housekeeping manager and department head at the Hyatt Regency Saipan. **DONNA RIVERA**

strength comes the ability to be more caring and compassionate of other people's needs. I am assertive and try to be confident in everything I do because I have to set an example to my children, colleagues and friends," she said.

Separately, as a member of the Hyatt family for 16 years dealing with guests as room service manager and part of the operations of Kili Café and Terrace, Anthea Joy Baltazar-Capati interacts with different people and adapts

to varying moods.

"In developing and maintaining successful relationship, I strongly believe that it has to start from building trust," she said. "With that trust, mutual respect follows. That results in meaningful connections [that] you will build along the way."

As nurturers, both women start their day with a set routine to see to it that everything is in order. That then gives them the means to be giving.

A typical hotel work day

begins as early as 6am, Sablan-Keptot said, with a briefing for a housekeeping team of seven or eight persons.

"We live in a society that is so competitive and overly eager to impress, but I try to be composed and level-headed because, if you are not strong emotionally, tensions can easily arise and even blow up. ...I speak with a normal tone so you are able to calm a situation down and reorganize properly and effectively," she said.

Similarly, Baltazar-Capati start her day preparing for operational concerns. She usually starts her day checking her emails and doing follow-ups on any related operations concerns, after which she proceeds to Kili and Room Service to check on food presentation, service standards, guest satisfaction, and managing restaurant reservations, and communicating the demands to the culinary team.

"I am very hands-on with my restaurant operations; I set clear goals and expectations. I do my coaching on the floor if there are correc-

tive trainings needed. I spend most of my time checking the quality of work while ensuring that my team is getting the full support from me and my management team," Baltazar-Capati said.

To be a nurturer also means to be brave and Sablan-Keptot has learned the art of combining both. "I know no one likes to do hard work but if you work hard and are committed, it will pay off not just financially but in everything you do in life," she said

"I believe if you possess

basic characters of integrity, honesty, loyalty, self-sacrifice, accountability, and self-control, that means you have a good head on your shoulders that will earn you great respect in life," she added.

Baltazar-Capati believes that giving care is not work if you are enjoying it. "A woman has this motherly touch and that factor is always present in our hearts. Yes, we get emotional on some things, but this also helps us to care for people around us," she said.



As room service manager and part of the operations of Kili Café and Terrace, Anthea Joy Baltazar-Capati interacts with different people and adapts to varying moods everyday. **DONNA RIVERA**

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# Women who make a great impact

By **BEA CABRERA**  
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CORRESPONDENT

Women in the CNMI have been breaking so many glass ceilings throughout the centuries that this patriarchal slice of the world has been showing the world by example how a community benefits when women are confident and act for the welfare of the community. The following sampling shows that women could also be game changers, that women cannot be limited and that making a positive impact is not a reward in itself but foreshadows what future generations of women can do for the CNMI.

## FIRST LADY DIANN TORRES

**First Lady Diann Torres Foundation**

First Lady Diann Torres created her namesake foundation after her husband, Ralph DLG Torres, became CNMI governor in 2015. The foundation's core mission is to make people's lives better and this is seen in the foundation's various activities in supporting fundraising events, promotion of literacy and the Chamorro and Carolinian languages, cultural exchanges, women empowerment, Christmas village, promotion of young authors and advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities.

The foundation has been doing relief operations for victims of Super Typhoon Yutu; just recently, it distributed clothes.

The first lady and governor have six children: Ralph Anthony, Vaniqa Marie, Deon Titus, Tristan Dane, Divannie, and Ryan.

## REP. TINA SABLAN

**Independent, District No. 2**

Rep. Tina Sablan is not new to public service. She was the outreach coordinator and deputy communications director for Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP); a member of the 16th House of Representatives; a reporter and anchor for KSPN2 News; program manager for the Commonwealth Cancer Association; and an environmental specialist at the Division of Environmental Quality.

Sablan's first journey to the Legislature was in 2007. Her campaign for office stood in stark contrast to the typical waving parties, colored T-shirts and expensive signs. Instead, she sat on a bench

along Beach Road and invited citizens to come, sit and share what they thought the government can do better.

Her recent campaign ran on similar terms, where conversations about building a safer, healthier, and more beautiful Marianas with her constituents meant more. "I believe in development that builds pride in our community and respects our island culture and environment, a government that is transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of our people," she said.

"I would like opportunities for all citizens to pursue an excellent education, gain meaningful work, and participate in civic life," she added.

## ESTHER MUÑA

**Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.**

As chief executive officer of the Commonwealth Health Center, Muña oversaw several improvements and completed projects at the sole hospital in the CNMI that encompassed public health services, behavioral health services and community health services.

She was responsible for removing Immediate Jeopardy findings and developing systems of care that met the standards of quality care, returning the hospital dialysis unit to 100-percent compliance with Medicare's Condition of Participation and the Hospital Laboratory to 100-percent compliance with certification, improving the financial status of the CHCC from a \$5-million operation to a \$55 million operation, improving and correcting audit findings from several years, and introducing a new revenue generating scheme by opening a hospital outpatient pharmacy that ensured the access to lower-priced drugs.

## REP. TERESITA APATANG SANTOS

**Independent, Rota**

As the only female senator in the 21st Legislature, Santos' mission, according to her webpage, states that she will continue to support legislation that seeks to improve our economy. Her issues involve improving utilities, transportation, and telecommunications because she believes those are important components of the economy. She also aims to enhance the health, education, welfare and safety of people to ensure overall prosperity.

## MARIANNE CONCEPCION-TEREGEYO

**Department of Public Lands**

During her tenure as DPL secretary, the department successfully completed the long-awaited Comprehensive Land Use Plan; the last plan was updated in 1989.

DPL also successfully received unqualified financial audits for fiscal years 2016 and 2017—the first ever for DPL

The department is a trustee for people of Northern Marianas descent, the collective owners of public lands. When negotiating land leases, DPL ensures that NMDs benefit by seeking the highest and best use of value as determined by independent appraisal reports, and ensure that public benefits are re-directed in homestead subdivisions where NMDs truly reside.

## REP. JANET ULLOA MARATITA

**Republican, District No.1**

According to her web-

page on [cnmileg.gov.mp](http://cnmileg.gov.mp): "I pledge to keep a true compass for the common good of all residents. Simply put, 'People before politics, people ahead of party.'

## VICKY BENAVENTE

**CNMI Labor Secretary**

Vicky Benavente was confirmed by the 20th Legislature and sworn into office as Labor secretary by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres in 2017. Prior to becoming labor chief, she was the special assistant for Project Development for the Office of the Governor since August

2016 and held the position of managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority from 2000 to 2006 where she developed marketing campaigns designed to improve the visibility of the Northern Mariana Islands in key travel markets in the Asia-Pacific region.

Benavente's wide experience in labor also comes from working in private companies, as executive manager of Pacific Islands Club Saipan from 2008 to 2016 and a manager at the Hyatt Regency Saipan from 2006 to 2008. She was also a deputy managing director for MVA from 1998 to 2000.



**Celebrating women's achievements**

Thank you to  
**Rose Soledad**  
IT&E General Manager  
and all women who empower others and work to make the world a better place.

EXPLORE YOUR WORLD

# Finding work-life balance

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Go watch a movie that features life inside an insurance company and you will see a picture of so many men occupying so many desks, with hardly a woman in sight.

Not so at Pacifica Insurance. For over 45 years, this company has managed to break many glass ceilings for its many female employees.

"Statistically, the insur-

ance industry is a male-dominated industry," said one employee, Keomi DLR Palacios. "However, Pacifica Insurance has managed to build and maintain a predominantly female work environment for over 45 years."

That does not surprise, however, considering that the company has a woman for a president and chief operating officer in the person of Shirley Sablan.

With a woman-centered ethos comes a need to

have a balanced work and home life.

Having a work-life balance is important to Palacios, who has three children while also working as an underwriter for the Automobile Department of Pacifica Insurance.

"I have been the in company for 10 years and being a professional at Pacifica Insurance does not limit my ability to have a happy family and pursue a better quality of life. I believe women should be able to

do whatever they want, with all the means that they have and to the best of their abilities," she said.

Palacios said that Pacifica Insurance recognizes the significance of women in the workplace. "Pacifica Insurance is unique in our priority to connect with our community members and making each client a family by providing them with reliable insurance coverage and solutions to life's unpredictability."

Just like Pacifica Insurance



DONNA RIVERA

Keomi DLR Palacios of Pacifica Insurance.

that prioritizes the interest of its clients and empowers them to pursue different life activities without worries, Palacios personally believes that is her goal as well. "Women should empower each other as we are the beacon of hope."

"G.D. Anderson once said, 'Feminism isn't about mak-

ing women strong. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world perceives that strength.' I believe we have to create a culture where our future women, our daughters, and our granddaughters can succeed alongside their male counterparts," she added.

## VOX POPULI

# Who is the woman you look up to?

Saipan Tribune asked 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students and a teacher at Marianas High School to name the women who inspires them or they look up to.

"The woman I look up to right now is Captain Mar-

the part in the movie where-in she was always being put down and told 'you're a girl' but then, in one part, no matter how many times she fell, she stood up and proved everyone wrong. To me that was empowering and she really represents the female population of today."

— Donna Galvez  
11<sup>th</sup> grade



vel. I like her because she is fearless and she broke the stereotypical princess-type woman in movies. I also like

"I look up to my sisters, Chelsea and Vanessa. Growing up, my mom and dad were usually busy and so I would always go to my sisters for help with schoolwork or money. They would put my needs first before theirs. I wish them the best and I would like to thank them for what they've done for me because they really made me for who I am today."

— Stephen Bartolo,  
11<sup>th</sup> grade

See WOMAN on Next Page

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FROM THE MANAGEMENT & STAFF OF KFC & TACO BELL SAIPAN

**WOMAN**

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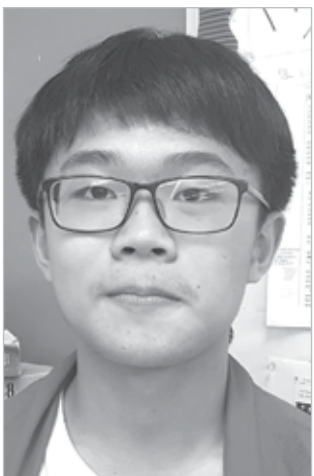
"My sister Grace because she cooks for me all the time. My favorite dish of hers is kimchi fried rice. Also, whenever I need to go



somewhere, sometimes she takes me there and she... keeps track of everything I do, especially when it comes to music. I play the violin while she plays the piano."

— **Joseph Zhang, 10<sup>th</sup> grade**

"My piano teacher, Mrs. Yoon. In piano, sometimes you want to give up but she helps me through. She



wouldn't force me to play and she gives me space to come around. Her encouragement built my passion for playing the piano and, overall, she is just the best teacher."

— **Nan Xie, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

"It's my good friend whom I shall call 'Ferrer.' She was the Art Club president at MHS when she was still here and she influenced me in many good ways on



how I interact and talk to people. She reached out to a lot of people in our club and made sure that everyone felt included. I wasn't really comfortable talking to people before. ...She encouraged and brought me out of my shell. Even now, though she's in college and far away, she still encourages the club and encouraged me to become the president which I am now."

— **Jed Pagcaliwagan, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

"I was really inspired by Oprah Winfrey when she won the Cecil B. DeMille



Award at the Golden Globes and that award is usually given to the most outstanding entertainer. I especially liked how she delivered her speech because, instead of shining light on herself, she included all women and spoke about the #MeToo movement. I thought that was very powerful that she used her spotlight to talk about other women and somehow embraced the movement, which is I think necessary in the present times."

— **Samila Semgan, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**



"I don't really have a favorite woman because I believe that every woman is powerful in their own way and an inspiration to many. In a world that is dominated by men, every woman is powerful because they can stand up in the workforce, business, politics and just anywhere in the whole world. Women have inspired many, led revolutions that men thought women are not capable of. ...I believe they lead governments better because they have a different level of care that touch people."

— **Trey Hocog, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

"I would say Mrs. Yoon be-



cause she really motivated me to 'crack' the piano a lot more and helps me to play the piano better and produce prettier music. She taught me perseverance,

how to relax through music and how to be competitive."

— **Grace Zhang, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

"My younger sister, Jia Xiang, inspires me because she always gives me encouragement. I am new here on island and sometimes I find myself not believing in myself but my sister picks me up and always tells me 'I am the best' and that I could do anything."


— **Jiani Wang, 11<sup>th</sup> grade**

"I'd say my grandmother. She took care of me when I was a child as she moved near my mother when I was born so that she could watch me. She had a really big impact on





my values system and the way that I see the world. She is no longer here with us but I will always remember and love her."







— **Ashley Beck, teacher MHS**




# SHE WAS SHE IS SHE WILL BE *Everything*




Miss Marianas Celine Cabrera  
Photo by D&R Visuals

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# Badges of excellence

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CORRESPONDENT

March is International Women's Month and the CNMI is blessed to have a circle of women in education, community outreach, corporate, judiciary and sports who not only make the community a better place but also inspire, empower, and help others to realize their dreams.

## An educator in school and in life

Visiting Hopwood Middle School after Super Typhoon Yutu in October last year and seeing the extent of the school's devastation was a heartbreaking sight for principal **Rizalina Liwag** as they had so many plans for student success.

"One thing was clear—the pursuit of education was the focus. Despite the things that needed to be done with infrastructure, we remained focused to ensure that we provide education for the students," she said.

Currently, Hopwood stands in a temporary campus in Kobleville. "Getting to where we are right now was not an easy journey. . . . There were times when I just felt like giving up, but then I think of my colleagues who depend on me. I have to be resilient to make sure I give them strength, as their strength is my strength and my strength is their strength," she added.



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## 'We see you, we believe you'

This is the message that Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence executive director **Maisei Tenorio** wants to tell survivors and victims of violence.

"Our mission here is to promote, nourish and sustain a collective movement against violence here in the CNMI as we want to create a CNMI where everybody feels safe," she said. "We see you and we believe you. . . . If there's anything that we can do to help you heal and move past the trauma, please let us know."

Her vision for the CNMI is where any one, male or female, who is a victim of abuse can come out and "we surround this person as a community and we lift them up."

## Excelling in a male-dominated workplace

**Rose Soledad**, who oversees the CNMI operations of IT&E as its general manager, finds solace in working alongside rather than competing with men.

Working at IT&E where she manages male network engineers or employees "has been good because I am always looking for efficiencies and, instead of competing with them, working with them creates far better results," she added.

"In our company, there a lot of high potential for highly productive men and women. I encourage the younger ones to go to school and finish their degree and, if your path is telecommunications or in whatever career, don't just do what you're asked to do but you also have to branch out and learn other things so you can maximize your full potential and, in the process, grow constantly," she said



## A black robe for an armor



Being a woman of many firsts in the CNMI means that U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge **Ramona Villagomez Mangiona** is paving the way for more women.

"We have a lot of talented women in the community that could possible serve in the same capacity. . . . Look at what's happening in Guam. They have a woman governor, woman chief justice, chief district judge. . . . Communities are. . . acknowledging that women are effective not just in the household," she said.



Kathy Pagapular Ruzsala and Robyn Spaeth

JOSEPH CHIN

## Women who lift each other up

Long-time friends **Kathy Pagapular Ruzsala** and **Robyn Spaeth** had their eyes set on conquering the half marathon of the 2019 Saipan Marathon last March 9. They both clocked in at the same hour, minute, and second at the finish line and they couldn't be any happier overcoming a mental, emotional, and physical feat than finishing alongside a best friend.

"I think women who lift each other up is empowering. We are fortunate to be living in a generation where women succeed and thrive in any area she chooses. As the former first lady, Michelle Obama, so eloquently spoke, 'There is no limit to what we as women can accomplish,'" Ruzsala said.

Spaeth agrees. "As a woman, we already have enough obstacles in our way that we really should focus on trying to build one another one. Lifting up other women is the greatest gift you can give," she said.

She is clothed in strength & dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future.  
 Proverbs 31:25

from the staff and management of

**Saipan Tribune**  
 CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER