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McDonald's readies array of treats for anniversary shindig

By TERI M. FLORES
 CORRESPONDENT

It's definitely going to be a big shindig this Saturday at McDonald's main branch in Chalan Lau Lau, with special activities that are sure to delight the young and old who will take part in the 30th anniversary celebration of McDonald's of Saipan.

Jewel Cubangbang, marketing assistant for McDonald's of Saipan, said the anniversary event will last from

2pm until 8pm and will include activities such as kiddie games, cake tasting (courtesy of Herman's Bakery), and smoothie sampling featuring the Mango Pineapple smoothie, compliments of McDonald's.

A good bargain that will be available exclusively from 2pm until 8pm this Saturday is McDonald's specially prized six-piece chicken nuggets or a cheeseburger for only \$1.30—only at the store's Chalan Lau Lau branch.

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A good bargain that will be available exclusively from 2pm until 8pm this Saturday is McDonald's specially prized six-piece chicken nuggets or a cheeseburger for only \$1.30—only at the store's Chalan Lau Lau branch.

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Aside from a cultural performance by Te Ivi Maori, another highlight of the evening's event are the local performers featuring talents from nine Saipan schools. Cubangbang said McDonald's is happy to showcase the student performances, which the young participants will always remember with fondness.

The Ayuyu family, represented by Joe Ayuyu Jr., McDonald's of Guam and Saipan vice president, and his mother, Marcia Ayuyu, vice president of McDonald's of Saipan, are expected to deliver their messages of thanks for the support their family and their restaurants have received in the past 30 years from local vendors and the community.

Planning for this Saturday's anniversary event took three months and Cubangbang said they wanted to pay

homage to the CNMI children when they were planning this year's event. Part of McDonald's of Saipan team's goal was "to show appreciation to the local community, which has supported McDonald's for the 30 years that they have been a part of the local landscape.

Another big part of this year's anniversary is the fundraising event called "Raise the Race." Cubangbang said the 17-day fundraiser, which began on March 1 and will end on March 17, will benefit the CNMI Public School System elementary schools. This fundraiser, which was first offered in 2013 in time for McDonald's of Saipan's 20th anniversary, is being revived this year. McDonald's diners who spend \$15 minimum on their receipt are eligible to help support the school of their choice. The three schools that raise the most amount of money will get up to \$5,000.

McDonald's of Saipan
30th ANNIVERSARY
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McDonald's of Saipan

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At 24 years, Pagcu is longest serving crew member of McDonald's Chalan Lau Lau

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After more than 24 years, Myrna Pagcu is now the longest serving crew member of the McDonald's of Saipan's main store in Chalan Lau Lau.

A native of Pampanga, Philippines, she made her way to Saipan 25 years ago, starting as a crew member. After many years of experience under her belt, she is now one of the restaurant's crew trainers, spending her time training new crew members on the minutiae of giving service that pleases.

Her years with McDonald's Saipan has also honed her talent for spotting potential leaders and she has made her fair share of recommendations for some who have made their way up the ranks.

Pagcu's dedication to her job over the years has been



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so remarkable that she has not been absent nor late in her more than two decades of service.

One of the great things about working at McDonald's that she loves is that respect is always shown to each other in the workplace, in working with her coworkers, both young or old. She praises her bosses for being kind and helpful to her throughout her career—which is one factor why she has worked there for as long as she has.

With over 24 years of service, Pagcu is content with her career in McDonald's and looks forward to many more years of working at the restaurant until she's ready to retire—whenever that may be.

She thanks God, her managers, her general manager, and her crew members for the many years of opportunity of working for McDonald's.

McDonald's of Guam and Saipan, locally owned by Jose and Marcia Ayuyu, is the leading food service restaurant chain in the Mariana Islands. McDonald's of Guam and Saipan have served their communities for over 50 years in Guam and 30 years on Saipan and remains one of the island's largest employers.

Congratulations McDonald's Saipan on your 30 Year Anniversary

MC DONALD'S SAIPAN Celebrating 30 years of good food and outstanding customer service

By TERI M. FLORES
CORRESPONDENT

Thirty years and counting—that is how Jose “Joe” Ayuyu Sr. foresees the future of McDonald’s Guam and Saipan.

Ayuyu is not just referring to the longevity of their franchise, but his company is also on track to expand its business on both islands of Guam and Saipan so they can best serve their patrons the delicious selection of sandwiches, drinks, and specialty food products that McDonald’s is known for.

The owners of the McDonald’s franchise in Guam and Saipan—Ayuyu with his wife, Marcia, son, Joe Jr., and daughters, Mable and Ashley—are known for their shared determination, perseverance and drive to succeed. The Ayuyus made sure that, as their children grew up, all of them learned and practiced these character traits that Ayuyu considers the building blocks to success.



McDonald’s of Saipan vice president and owner/operator Marcia Ayuyu poses with the crew of the store’s Garapan branch during their 29th anniversary celebration. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Ayuyu also places a prime consideration on hard work and in understanding and learning about the industry where one’s business belongs to as key factors to ensuring the success of a business and

its owner. “In my case, I got the name McDonald’s, but to make it work, I hired our employees, trained them and I invested in the company,” said Ayuyu. As an entrepreneur, he had

always dreamed of becoming a McDonald’s franchise owner. Armed with guts and the single-mindedness to turn his dream into reality, he brought the famed golden arches to Saipan when he

opened its main branch in Chalan Lulau on March 18, 1993. Three years after, his second McDonald’s branch opened in Garapan, giving both tourists and members of the local community a taste of its very popular food offerings.

Ayuyu went into the business without any background nor experience in the food service retail business, much more about a company that is known as the leading global food service provider. Prior to opening McDonald’s of Saipan, Ayuyu was first a civil servant, a former acting director of the CNMI Department of Labor. He then transitioned to the private sector, starting off as a bank manager for Bank of Guam before joining the world of luxury and high-end retail by becoming the vice president and general manager of Hakubotan Saipan. And then came McDonald’s.

Describing his experience as a first-time business owner, Ayuyu said, “I had to learn the business from the ground up, so everything about McDonald’s I had to learn them on my own. It was really challenging because when we opened McDonald’s, we were still busy raising the kids while, at the same time, I was learning the ropes of running this franchise.”

It was Ayuyu’s previous experience both as a civil servant and in the private sector that prepared him for that moment when he decided to pursue the McDonald’s franchise. His involvement in different industries had given him the courage to pursue his longtime dream of becoming

a McDonald’s franchisee. “For these, I knew I had a chance of making this work.”

Ayuyu proudly credits his wife Marcia’s support as one of the main reasons behind his family’s success in owning the McDonald’s franchise. “The journey was very challenging, but we overcame it through perseverance and hard work. Together with my wife, Marcia, we managed to prevail over difficulties, and we were able to grow the business.”

Ayuyu also attributes the success of their franchise to the support they get from the McDonald’s corporate headquarters. “McDonald’s is a great company. They make sure they give the owners and operators of their franchises training and educational opportunities by making Hamburger University available for training.” This educational facility is where McDonald’s employees are schooled in restaurant management.

In addition, McDonald’s makes conveniently available and accessible to its franchisees access to new equipment, which helps ensure the quality of products McDonald’s customers enjoy, said Ayuyu.

Having open and constant communication with the corporate office has also ensured McDonald’s of Saipan’s compliance with the high standards the company sets for its franchisees. “They want to guarantee that we offer the best—not just the food we serve but that our customer service is the best. They also make sure that our patrons are comfortable while dining

Continued on Next Page

McDonald's of Saipan


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McDonald’s of Saipan team members show their pride as employees of the local franchise of this international brand known to live its mission of being “our customer’s favorite place and way to eat and drink.” CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Crew members of McDonald's main branch in Chalan Lau Lau pose for a picture during the company's 29th anniversary during the annual employee appreciation party. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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at our facilities."

Innovation, the use of technology to improve and enhance service and continuous improvement in all aspects of the business is how McDonald's of Saipan remains competitive while maintaining compliance with the strict standards of food and customer service McDonald's is known for.

"We recently made major renovations at our main store at Chalan Lau Lau. The kitchen and dining areas were revamped but the biggest impact to more efficient food service is the introduction of the double drive-thru." This new system has allowed McDonald's of Saipan to guarantee faster service by allowing the franchise to accommodate more customers, thus cutting down the wait time for customers to be served.

"As we step into the future, I know there's more work to be done to ensure the delivery of food in a fast and convenient way without sacrificing quality of food and service," Ayuyu said.

To date, McDonald's has capitalized on mobile phone apps, the use of digital menu boards for both in-store and drive-thru, and self-order kiosks in stores to cater to customer convenience and fast service.

"Through customer feedback we get through our surveys, we are able to provide quality service and we do a good job of delivering this. We also continue to introduce new products while improving on our current product line," said Ayuyu.

A major part of McDonald's success, Ayuyu said, is

finding value in customer feedback. "McDonald's is survey driven. We listen to our customers through surveys, and it is the results of these surveys that we base what we do. Through these results, we are able to put together a plan to accomplish what our customers need."

The future of the franchise looks bright and promising for the Ayuyus and McDonald's of Saipan. When the company hit its 23rd anniversary in 2016, the Ayuyus acquired six McDonald's restaurants in Guam, thus fulfilling their dream of expanding their franchise. And with this, they joined the ranks of being one of the largest employers in Micronesia. Today, McDonald's of Guam and Saipan is staffed by a team of over 400 employees who work in the family's 10 restaurants—eight in Guam and two on Saipan. From humble beginnings, the Ayuyus have grown McDonald's of Saipan, which is now a part of a network of 40,000 McDonald's restaurants worldwide.

In Guam, the company began the modernization of its restaurants with the renovation of its Yigo branch, which has now turned into a state-of-the-art facility with the restaurants in Tamuning and Hagatna following suit. Awaiting a reopening date is its Harmon branch which is the most recent location to undergo renovation. Once completed, the restaurant will feature an interactive children's section on the second floor of its Harmon restaurant. McDonald's in Guam will also

be adding a new branch close to the University of Guam in Mangilao, while a new store to serve Guam's northern section is set for groundbreaking in 2024, said Ayuyu. Within the next five years, Ayuyu foresees opening new restaurants in Palau and in Pohnpei.

On Saipan, the company had also spruced up its main branch in Chalan Lau Lau, which now features a new kitchen and the two lane drive-thru. Further expansions on Saipan will depend mainly on the state of the local economy, Ayuyu said. For now, McDonald's of Saipan will maintain its Chalan Lau Lau and Garapan branches. "When the opportunity arises for Saipan, we will take advantage of this. But we will heed the call if

there is a demand to open new branches."

Ayuyu said another important milestone for the company is the addition of Joe Jr., who is now the owner and operator of the restaurant's Yigo branch in Guam. "We have been preparing our children to eventually take over the business and my role now is to continue to support Joe Jr. and to make sure that things are running smoothly."

Bringing McDonald's to the Northern Marianas has brought Ayuyu personal

fulfillment and happiness. "I think that we brought a unique type of restaurant to Saipan and the Marianas that all our kids love. With our presence in the community, they don't need to go to the States or anywhere anymore to visit a McDonald's and enjoy our offerings because we have them here on the islands."

McDonald's of Saipan is grateful for the commitment of their vendors and the local community, which has stood by them and supported their restaurants

over the past 30 years.

The Ayuyu patriarch is very proud of the legacy his family has built and shares with the Northern Marianas community. "Growing McDonald's on Guam and Saipan is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. We have personally benefited a lot in terms of supporting us as a family. I am so happy and blessed we have McDonald's. It has provided our family with a means of living and that's why we make sure that it's going to be around for a long time.



The Ayuyu family is shown in this photo provided by the family.

LAUREN BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY



McDonald's golden arches became one of Saipan's iconic landmarks on March 18, 1993. Photo shows a sketch of the main branch in Chalan Lau Lau. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

McDonald's of Saipan

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Cheers to 30 Years of Commitment to the Marianas

Matson is proud to be the official shipping partner for McDonald's of Saipan and congratulates the Ayuyu Family, the McDonald's management team, and the entire staff on their successes over the past 30 years. We applaud your longstanding commitment to the Marianas community and wish you continued success for decades to come.

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'McDonald's gives opportunities to the motivated'

By **CHRYSTAL MARINO**
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CORRESPONDENT

As McDonald's of Saipan celebrates its 30th anniversary on Saipan, both employees and many members of the community alike assuredly have their share of memories of the golden arches.

Joyce Asistores, the general manager of the McDonald's Chalan Lau Lau branch, certainly has lots of memories to share. As one of the earliest employees of the Saipan franchise, Asistores began working at the store's Middle Road branch just a year after its opening on Saipan in 1993. She recalled how the drive-thru was such a wonder at that time as it was one of the newest ways of service in a restaurant.

From then until today, McDonald's has been consistently moving forward and progressing, from the face-to-face drive-thru orders in the '90s, to the modernized kiosks and technology in these times. "And right now you can see how everything is modernized, all the technology, and they never stop. Each time there's something new," Asistores said.

And the franchise not only focuses on developing their restaurant but also the lives of their workers. "The investment in their employees isn't a joke." Asistores explained how her boss deeply invested in her, from travelling to get certified, going to McDonald's Hamburger University, and even at a time when she was still a foreign visa worker. Even with the amount of paperwork it takes to travel, she said her bosses still did it.

Asistores noted that the investment her employer puts into the workers does translate to the employees having a sense of loyalty. Asistores certainly can attest to that, as she has been working with the company going on 29 years.

Asistores also noted from experience that the quality of training under McDonald's is some of the best—teaching lessons that can be applied

to life and isn't limited to customers and happy meals. Some of the things she had learned and passes on when training other individuals include people skills, how to approach certain situations, discipline, and proper time management.

"Each day you gain more experience dealing with different personalities, different behaviors, of not just the external customer but also the internal customers, which are your coworkers," she said. "If you work at McDonald's you learn the discipline, the work ethic. You've got to be on time; that's important. Looking your best for a customer, 'cause you want to be professional to them. Presentable [and] professional, because your appearance will also give a first impression."

She said if customers notice how presentable you are, they will also be assured that the food being served is also taken care of.

Asistores said she has learned so much and is still learning, this time from a leadership perspective. She enjoys learning the everyday challenges and is still learning new ways to work through a situation and have the right mindset. "Really, some people might think McDonald's is all about...making the food, making the burgers, and everything, but it's not...With all the trainings from the very beginning, you will learn a lot."

Aside from learning these skills, there's also food knowledge, such as food safety. She noted that McDonald's likes to keep their facilities clean and has several outside organizations check them, in addition to their own clean checks.

"So I'm very proud that all managers of McDonald's are all Serve Safe-certified. So they're really on top of it when it comes to food safety, cleanliness, and everything."

Asistores said that she would recommend working at McDonald's. "We encourage them... and show them the importance of being motivated, committed, and dedicated. At McDonald's you never run out of new things; we learn everyday."

She said each day they may face new struggles, new challenges, and but also new achievements in the end. "So the learning never stops and, when you learn, you keep on improving and getting better." As a leader she too learns leadership behavior everyday. "...I can attest to all of that because I started as a crew and now I'm already here...and I'm very thankful to my employers, my bosses for all the opportunity they gave to me, giving me the opportunity to lead the restaurant here on Saipan. It's really something that they gave me their trust."

"So yes I'd encourage them [to join McDonald's] because...McDonald's believes in developing people. It's not like you come first as a crew and you'll be forever a crew. No, once they see the poten-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Joyce Asistores, the general manager of the McDonald's Chalan Lau Lau branch.

tial in you, they will start developing you and a lot of opportunities will open up. So it doesn't matter if you've been here for just three months, if you have the commitment,

dedication, and you're motivated, they will develop you...and you can kind of climb the ladder going up to the management."

Asistores is the first gen-

eral manager in Guam and Saipan to win the Ray Kroc award in 2019. The award is given to only 1% of all McDonald's general managers in the United States.

From the management and staff of
Hafa Adai
Saipan Tribune
THE GAMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

'McDonald's is both a career and family'

By **CRYSTAL MARINO**
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 CORRESPONDENT

Ruthzel L. Perez, who is the general manager of the Garapan branch of McDonald's, sincerely believes that she was destined to join the McDonald's of Saipan family.

Perez and her husband had just relocated to Saipan from Palau in 2009 and she soon joined the McDonald's of Saipan just about three months later.

"I'll never forget the person that interviewed me was Mr. Ayuyu"—referring to Jose "Joe" Ayuyu Sr., the owner/operator and president of McDonald's Guam and Saipan—"at the office located on Middle Road, and I was kind of nervous at the time 'cause I was still new on the island—like, I've only been on island for three months." She felt more at ease after the interview and was offered the job soon after.

Although she was never a part of the McDonald's team when she was still in the Philippines and going to college, Perez said it was my dream even then. That was because McDonald's was known to cater to and help students in need of work while studying. She explained that she had never gotten the job there, but when she came here, she thought, "Why not?"

Perez said she started working for the company in 2010 as a crew member, and from there worked her way up. After two years, Perez was awarded perfect attendance

and was recognized as the Employee of the Year. Her bosses saw potential in her and began working with her, and she soon progressed up to management.

"Of course they motivate us [and] they also provide us the training we need because at McDonald's, we always put people first. Who I am today is because of the support of McDonald's, and our boss's investment in us to learn," she said.

One of the most memorable time she had while working in the franchise was when she got the opportunity to go to the McDonald's Hamburger University in 2021, and their General Managers Summit right after. This would be the prelude to her becoming a general manager herself.

"I'm very grateful thankful to the company, of course, and the Ayuyu organization for trusting my leadership, and investing in me by sending me off island to go to Hamburger University, and to learn the different areas of how to run a great restaurant." She said the experience was one she would never forget.

Perez also noted that working at McDonald's has helped her continually develop as an individual and a leader, especially in the area of people skills. "McDonald's helped me to improve the behavior that I have, because I thought I was OK, but learning all these from the McDonald's training, all the classes we attended, working with different people in the restaurant, understanding their personality, it helps me kind of improve..." she said.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

McDonald's of Saipan general manager for Garapan Ruthzel Perez.

She said she has learned to really come out of her shell and be a more open. These times, when having new employees, especially those who are shy, she helps motivate them and encourage them to be open.

Perez said she would fully encourage others to work at McDonald's, since there are so many great work traits and ethics that are taught and practiced. "It's not just fastfood. You have a career at McDonald's. And again it's really on you, how you will step up. There's a career at McDonald's, and at McDonald's we put people first. We promote a positive work environment, that's also family-oriented. We are like your second family, we take you as our family when at the restaurant, we give you the best training, we have. ...The people that have been here and work here know the experience—there's no place like McDonald's."

"I really salute this organization, especially [McDonald's of Guam and Saipan vice president and owner/slash operator Marcia Ayuyu]," said Perez. "She's really on top when it comes to community, she's really giving back everything to the community...and I'm very happy that McDonald's is always there for the community, So in the restaurant we always support them. They're putting people first and also at the same time giving back to the community."

She believes their staff are also motivated and happy to be a part of the community, and it gives her great pride to be part of it as well.

Navarro: Learning the ropes at McDonald's has taught me many things



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

John Michael Navarro is McDonald's of Saipan's 2022 Employee of the Year.

By **CRYSTAL MARINO**
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 CORRESPONDENT

John Michael Navarro, who is McDonald's 2022 Employee of the Year, believes that working at McDonald's has taught him a lot of things that he will bring with him if he seeks jobs in other fields of work.

For one, he has learned to be more social, "especially with my coworkers and my managers, so that led me to become more social outside of work."

It has also taught him to respect others and how to be happy. "You can learn many things from here that would really benefit you if you were to work outside of McDonald's," Navarro added.

Now when he sees new workers, it takes him back to when he first started and just watching them progress encourages him. "I will highly recommend this [working at McDonald's] because it's like a big step into the workforce, and you can really benefit from working here."

Navarro came to work at McDonald's after graduating high school. "I needed a job just to keep myself not bored at home, because right after high school I felt bored, and I told my mom I needed a job. So that's what I did. I started job hunting around, and that's when I applied to McDonald's," he said.

Soon after he got his food handler's certificate, which is one of the require-

ments for becoming a McDonald's crew members, he started working in July 2021. "I first started at the ice coffees, then made my way up to cashier, then drive-thru order taker and now am inside the kitchen."

One of the things that Navarro enjoys while working at McDonald's is the family aspect and getting to bond with his co-workers. "This is my second family." He enjoys the camaraderie and, on rough days, he'd try to encourage and uplift his workmates.

As a student at the Northern Marianas College and on his second year pursuing a nursing degree, Navarro's schedule does get pretty tight but he said McDonald's has been accommodating with his schedule.

He described being "shook" when he learned that he was receiving the Employee of the Year award in 2022, but is grateful at the same time. As Employee of the Year, no doubt Navarro already has good customer service, but when pressed for what makes customer service good, he said, "Bond with customers, make the customers first priority."

Navarro said he's proud and happy to be a part of the McDonald's of Saipan family and takes pride in its service to the community, its philanthropy work, and the donations it has made. "Like when they donated to my college; it gives me a big smile," he said. Now that's a happy meal.

Congratulations

McDonald's of *Saipan*



All the best to the management and staff of
McDonald's of Saipan on this momentous occasion.
Wishing you many years of success.



Tan Siu Lin
Foundation