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In honor of *mom*



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By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

As a mother to three grown-up children, I recall how, between the ages of 3 to 10, they would each give me handcrafted cards they made with their little hands each time another Mother's Day comes around. I used to hang them on my refrigerator, together with the other artworks they used to bring home from school.

As they grew older, the gifts became savvier, with the most expensive being a card that contained cold, hard cash that they wanted me to use to file for my U.S. citizenship. If I choked up all those years of receiving those handmade gifts, I cried a bucketload over that cash gift, knowing they blew their paychecks to secure my future. In hindsight, I felt my dream of contributing something worthwhile had finally come true. That was when this quote came alive for me: "Being a mother is not about what you gave up having a child but what you gained from having one." In my case, three. That is my reward for being a mother.

Whatever we call them—Mama, Nana, *Inay*, Mommy (being the terms that are most familiar to us), More in Dutch, Mutti in German, Ama in Basque or Mamicka in Slovak—thank you for being the selfless, loving, kind, compassionate, the fount of unconditional love.

In honor of mothers all over the world, we prepared these stories about mothers and motherhood, beginning with trivia about this occasion as well as a gift guide to help you find the ideal gift for the queens of our homes. Also, learn about the traditions surrounding Mother's Day celebrations in different countries.

Get to know Maricar Manicdao Guintu and how through her kindness, she was able to give the lasting gift of education to her nephew and niece. Find out about the role mother's play in our society from Pastor Evelyn Armia and get some words of wisdom from former Ms. CNMI Sheryn Cabrera, who shares her experience when she was a new mother.

...and now we raise a glass to honor the woman and women, young and old. Cheers!

Happy Mother's Day!

Nuggets of wisdom for new mothers

By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

Francisco Sablan Middle School principal Cheryl Brel Cabrera Osung knows a lot about the emotional seesaw of being a new mom. As a mother to energetic and fun-loving 2-year-old Ezra (or Ezzy Bobo, as he is known in Nigerian), Osung is just thankful for the strong support she and her husband get from family and friends that allows her respond to the challenges new motherhood brings.

Another challenge is that Osung is not your typical young mother. Compared to her peers, Osung was already in her early 40's when she started her family.

While she still has a lot to learn about motherhood, Osung says, "I am blessed

to be both Chamorro, from my father, and Palauan, from my mother. I'm blessed to be from both cultures and families where support for new babies is a willing sacrifice many in my family are willing to do."

Osung and her husband, who is also a lifelong educator, were married in Palau just three years ago. Osung believes

that starting a family at a later age has its benefits. "Since I am a new older mom, it's wonderful to have the wisdom of having lived a while. I already had the resources and life experiences I needed in raising our son. I just wish I had the energy I had when I was 20," she said.

While support from relatives and family may be readily available for young mothers in the community, many still struggle with the basics of finding a steady income or at times, food, shelter and medical care. But help is available.

"For moms currently in school, we do have great community resource of childcare through the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs. We also have many partnering agencies that can help new moms. The biggest hurdle would be to know what agencies to contact for what help," Osung said.

In the U.S., a Pew Research Center poll

shows that the average age of women at their first birth has increased steadily over the last decade. Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the average woman gave birth for the first time at 27 years old, up from the 2011 data of 25 years old when she first gave birth to her first child.

For new moms, Osung shares these tips that helped her during her son Ezra's early days.

1. Get help so you can sleep and shower in peace. "I remember hearing this advice before my son was born—sleep when the baby sleeps. Sleep deprivation can take a toll on the body and mind," said Osung. Naps are a rejuvenating way to relax, especially for new mothers, so don't be afraid to ask a family member or a friend to watch your child while you take some time to rest and sleep.

2. Enjoy connecting with your baby. They are extremely smart and will remember and benefit from the quality time you spend with them.

4. See your doctor if you have postpartum depression or start thinking unusual thoughts.

5. Co-parenting helps. "We



It is overwhelming to be a mom as it's an awesome responsibility to raise a little human. But there is help out there if moms are willing to search and ask around.

6. Have faith.

One amazing resource is God. He answers prayers and we can talk to him anytime 24/7.

The greatest takeaway about motherhood? Osung shares several of them. "I learned how amazing it is to love another human so much. It's made me love and have a softer spot in my heart for little babies and little kids even more. I've learned how inspiring kids can be to help us want great things for them. I've come to appreciate my own parents and other parents even more for the years of sacrifice and love. Most importantly, it helped me to understand how Divine Providence loves and accepts us despite our imperfections."



The Osungs with 2-year-old Ezra. "My husband and I have wanted children for so long that every step of early infancy really was a joy," she said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Pew Research Center poll

Untangling the roles of mothers and motherhood today

By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

Evelyn Arnia, a mother of three and the regional director for Micronesia of Jesus is Lord Church in Guam, says motherhood is still considered a noble state these days, but it also has its share of misconceptions, including the thinking that motherhood is simple. "Motherhood it is not easy. It is not simple. Every child is unique, there is no raising a good child template that fits all."

In order to meet the demands of motherhood, Arnia recommends that mothers be open to seeking help and familial support when the need arises. "While there is inexpressible joy in being a mother, it can be also be incredibly challenging, both physically and emotionally. Mothers need to be continuous learners and take the essential support from immediate family, friends, church, and the community."

Another misconception, Arnia says, is the extent of a mother's influence on the lives of their children. While this may be true, in the end the presence of both parents still hold much more influence in their children's lives, Arnia says.

"Both parents have great influence in the lives of the children. Children respond positively to the unconditional love of their mother, but based on many observations, children unconsciously tend to imitate their father more. Fathers need to be more involved in raising the kids and need to set good example for their children to emulate."

Each of Arnia's three children have carved a career in the U.S. armed forces. Her eldest son, Kedesh, 32, is based in Hawaii with his wife, Marjorie, and serves in the U.S. Army, while her daughter, Keziah, 24, is currently based in Texas with her husband, Kellen, who is retired from the U.S. Navy. Her third son, Kenneth, 22, lives in Georgia and serves in the U.S. Air Force.

Arnia's faith played an important part in helping her deal with the demands of motherhood. "My faith helped me to act with love and to trust God during times of uncertainty. It has allowed me to have a loving relationship with my late husband and with my children."

Consistently following a balanced schedule also helps, Arnia said. "It was a great tool in fulfilling my role as wife, a mother, a career woman, and a church leader. Managing my time with a balanced schedule was not restrictive, but it enabled me to do more, especially for my family."

Arnia also advises mothers to take time for self-care. "I'm so grateful that my late husband was so considerate and allowed me to have time for simple physical exercises like walking. He also accompanied me to the gym. Having massages at least once a month, and time to have friendly dates with my female friends also contributed to my wellbeing."

Mothers should value their wellbeing, Arnia said. "We cannot give what we do not have. In the same manner, if a mother's holistic health is not optimal, she will not be able to give her best to her children."

Still, motherhood has not strayed that far from its previous state as a valued member of society. "Mothers are recognized for their love, sacrifice and selflessness in raising well-rounded children. They have a great impact in the lives of their children. Not only are they the first instruments of God's love, but mothers are also the first mentors. Whatever the children learn from home, they will bring it to their community. If they learn love and respect at home, they will reflect love and respect," Arnia said.

This is reflected in a recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, which found that 83% of U.S. mom say that being a parent is one of the most important aspects of their personal identity, with the same percentage also finding that parenting is described as both an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

A Special

Mothers' Day 360

to Remember




Offer available on Saturday and Sunday
May 13-14, 2023
Lunch and Dinner

Starters:

*Oriental creamy chicken noodle soup
*Toss green salad with bacon and Swiss cheese in thousand island dressing
*Spicy orange chicken bites

Entrée

Marinated grilled chicken breast in chili soy glaze and
Oven baked mahi mahi piccata
Serve with pimiento fried rice and vegetables
\$59.00

OR

Grilled Certified Angus Beef Ribeye steak with roasted
pepper sauce and Sautéed garlic butter shrimp
with twice baked potato and vegetables
\$69.00

Dessert

Fudge brownies butter scotch trifle

For reservations and inquiries please
call **(670) 234-3600** or **(670) 285-0360**.



Interesting **facts** about *Mother's Day*

By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

What's the big deal about Mother's Day and why do we all go about trying to buy gifts

and organizing get-togethers around this internationally recognized occasion? Why the fuss indeed?

To find answers to these questions, I scoured the internet for some answers and dug up some gems that were not only interesting but were

worth sharing, beginning with the origins of the word "mother."

The Oxford dictionary offers a dry and succinct definition of the word "mother." It merely states that a mother is "a female parent of a child or animal; a person who is acting as a mother to a child."

What then is so special about a mother if this definition is to be followed?

To put that in context, I ran into American humorist Erma Bombeck, who offers this defi-

nition: "Mothers are not the nameless, faceless stereotypes who appear once a year on a greeting card with their virtues set to prose, but women who have been dealt a hand for life and play each card one at a time the best way they know how. No mother is all good or all bad, all laughing or all serious, all loving or all angry. Ambivalence rushes through their veins."

Abraham Lincoln also famously said, "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel

mother," referring to his mom, Nancy, who died when he was just 9 years old.

Noted American politician and religious leader James E. Faust also says, "The influence of a mother in the lives of her children is beyond calculation."

One of my favorites, however, comes from Calvin, of the famed Calvin and Hobbes cartoon, who offers the following observation about his sainted mom: "I asked Mom if I was a gifted child. She said they certainly wouldn't

have paid for me."

Another interesting definition that explains why mothers are celebrated says: "A mother is a selfless, loving human who must sacrifice many of their wants and needs for the wants and needs of their children. A mother works hard to make sure their child is equipped with the knowledge."

So when and where did Mother's Day originate? According to the History Channel's website, Mother's Day

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Happy
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From the team at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan

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Give mom the sweetest Mother's Day yet with these specials!
Because when it comes to spoiling mom, we've got you covered.

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Great Harvest Specials
Promo Duration: May 10-20
24hrs minimum order required

- Round Cake -**\$16.95**
(Your choice: Taro or Chocolate Flavor)
With personalize short message
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Promo Duration: May 13-15

- Penne Alfredo w/ Chicken - **\$17.95**
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Make your reservations today! Surf Club Restaurant: (670) 235-1122 • Great Harvest Bread Co.: (670) 234-2733

Moments with



Mom

Tan Holdings and Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan are pleased to announce that all 124 entries to the Moments With Mom photo contest, are declared winners. Every entry showed the precious occasions spent with their mothers. Thank you all for sharing with us these priceless moments.



Note: To claim your prize—a gift certificate for a one-night stay with free breakfast and dinner for two at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan—call Rina Robles at 235-0561, extension 118.


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ANNIVERSARY
Tan Holdings

“A mother is clothed with strength and dignity, laughs without fear of the future. When she speaks her words are wise and she gives instructions with kindness.” — Proverbs

HAPPY
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DAY

From the staff and management

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“When you are looking at your mother, you are looking at the purest love you will ever know.” — Charley Benetto

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Mother's Day traditions around the world

From the Greeks and the Romans, to our modern times, mothers are celebrated all over the world in different ways and times during the year.

It is part of a religious observance in the United Kingdom. In Taiwan, it is celebrated on the same day as Buddha's birthday. In the U.S. and other European countries like Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and Turkey, as well as in major parts of Latin America, Mother's Day is held every second Sunday of May. In Indonesia, Mother's Day is celebrated on Dec. 22.

In China, sons and daughters are known to honor their mothers by gifting them with a Hemerocallis flower. In the United States, the white car-

nation was originally used as a badge at the first Mother's Day gathering in the early 1900's.

In rural India, their Mother's Day celebration is a feast spread over a nine-day period in honor of the mother goddess, Durga.

In Japan, Mother's Day took a different meaning after World War II when it was held to console grieving mothers who lost their children during the war. On this day, Japanese children give their mothers pink carnations, which symbolizes purity, love, and endurance.

Mexican children, on the other hand, treat their mothers to a long lunch during La Dia Del Madre, which is how Mother's Day is referred to in their language. **(Teri M. Flores)**

FACTS

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celebration dates as far as the Greeks and Romans, who held festivals in honor of their mother goddesses, Rhea and Cybele.

It was believed that the medieval British held a religious festivity known as Mothering Sunday, where the faithful went back to their "mother church" for a special service. Later on, the British broadened this festival to include human mothers as well.

Mother's Day celebrations are held at different times in different parts of the world and the celebration also depends on the tradition of the country.

The second Sunday of May is widely celebrated as Mother's Day in the United States and in several other countries that include Australia, Nigeria, Switzerland, and Greece. The United Kingdom still holds on to the tradition of Mothering Sunday and has Mother's Day celebrations on the fourth week of Lent. In Thailand, mothers are celebrated in August to coincide with the birthday of Queen Sirikit, while Ethiopia celebrates Antrosht, where large feasts and singing are held to celebrate motherhood.

In the 1900's, the efforts of West Virginia native Anna Jarvis to get Mother's Day officially recognized as a holiday in the United States became tinged with controversy. Originally, Jarvis conceived Mother's Day in honor of her own mother, Ann Reeves Jarvis, who was an activist and an advocate for caring for children and promoting peace. In honor of mothers, the young Anna promoted the use of white carnation as a badge and encouraged a visit to one's mother and attending church services. Mother's Day became a public event in 1914 when President Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation in 1914 declaring the second Sunday of May as Mother's Day.

The event grew in popularity and with that came the so-called commercialization of the event, where florists, card makers, and candy makers made a profit out of selling their goods as gifts. Unhappy that the holiday's meaning veered away from her original intent of celebrating the personal, individual connection between a mother and her children, Jarvis used her own money to file lawsuits against profiteers of the event and lobbied to have the holiday removed from the calendar of national holidays.

One internet site says Jarvis put Mother's Day on the calendar as a day dedicated to expressing love and gratitude to mothers, acknowledging the sacrifices women make for their children. Which is why she was determined to keep "Mother's" a singular possessive, as marked by the apostrophe before "s."

Today, Mother's Day has grown into a billion-dollar industry not just for businesses but also for fundraising organizations. This year, Mary Meisenzahl from digitalcommerce360.com reports that the National Retail Federation expects Americans to spend \$35.7 billion (about \$110 per person in the U.S.) in Mother's Day merchandise alone. This \$4 billion is more than the previous record of \$31.7 billion in 2022.

Today, these simple gestures have blossomed into larger efforts that are based on sales and profits. Before the COVID-19 virus took hold of the country, the Statistical Research and Analysis firm predicted that 2020 Mother's Day spending could reach \$26.7 billion.

Shopping, both online and retail stores, are tied as the preferred destinations to get Mother's Day gifts, with flowers, greeting cards, and outings as the most popular gifts for this event. Of course, a majority of spending will be in jewelry.

Whatever the case may be, celebrating our mothers should be the end goal, while giving her thanks and recognizing her central role in our families.

What **to do** and where **to go**

By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

If you're still on the fence whether to take Mom for some retail therapy or have her indulge in the gustatory delights of some of the island's cooks and chefs, here's a quick guide to help you plan and execute a Mother's Day surprise for the woman who is the queen of our hearts and homes.

SHOPPING

Joeten Shopping Center

Pick a gift for Mom from Joeten's wide selection of merchandise and groceries. From May 11 to 14, take advantage of 25% off on ladies apparel, shoes, jewelry, make-up, and home appliances. For the family barbecue, meat products and select wines and spirit are also on sale, while select baking products and vegetables are also available for a special low price. Visit any of Joeten's four branches in Supe, Garapan, Dandan, and Kagman.

Joeten Motors

This Mother's Day, get Mom a new 2023 Nissan Rogue for a down payment of just \$500 and only \$242 monthly payments. The purchase comes with a \$500 shopping spree for Mom, free tint and Ziebart undercoating and a one-year free service. Visit www.joetenmotors.com or call 670-234-5562 for more information.

MG Mall

Check out the big Mother's Day sale at MG Mall, which features up to 70% off on select merchandise and 50% off on all other items. Store hours are 10am to 8pm. MG Mall is located between Gold Ribbon and Hopwood Junior High School in Chalan Piao.

Midea Appliances

Update Mom's appliances with sales that range from 10% to 25% for window and split type air-conditioning units. Refrigerators and freezers are from 10% to 30% off. There is also a 10% discount on washer, solar lights, and rice cookers and much more. The store is located in Chalan Kanoa, Saipan.

IT&E

Sign up for IT&E's phone plans this Mother's Day and get up to \$200 in gift certificates for a spa treatment at Namaste Beautiful on Saipan. Rota and Tinian subscribers are eligible for \$200 vouchers from Ace Hardware. For those who already have a phone and are just looking for a phone plan, IT&E offers a value-packed data plan starting at \$35 a month. This comes with unlimited access to select social media sites. Also, purchase a new phone with a phone plan through IT&E's Device Payment Plan and get an unlimited voice and data plan starting at \$55—a plan originally worth \$80. Some conditions apply. Visit IT&E for more information.

DINING

McDonalds

A gift card from McDonald's is a sure-fire way to satisfy Mom's craving for their sandwiches, fries, and milkshakes. Available at any of the McDonald's location on Chalan Pale Arnold Road and its Garapan Express branch.

KFC and Taco Bell

From May 12 to 19, KFC offers a "Special MOMent Deal," which is a choice between two meal sets, each for only \$29.99. Set A includes six pieces of chicken, five-piece

chicken strips, two large sides, three cookies and two drinks (no refill). Set B includes 10 pieces chicken, two large sides, three cookies and two drinks (no refill).

Taco Bell offers a \$14 Mother's Day packet of one Nachos Bell grande, one quesadilla, and a three-piece taco.

Shirley's Coffee Shop

A \$30 gift voucher and a 30th anniversary commemorative shirt awaits five winners of Shirley's Mother's Day photo contest. It's easy to join! Take a photo of your Mom at any of Shirley's Chalan Kanoa or Century Hotel branches and let the world know why you love her by posting the photo on Shirley's Facebook page. Winners will be announced on May 31. Visit Shirley's Coffee Shop on Facebook for more information.

Crown Plaza Resort Saipan

Treat Mom to the best of the best buffets at one of the most scenic restaurants on Saipan. On Sunday, May 14, The Terrace will host a Mother's Day feast from 11am to 2pm. Indulge in a delectable spread of seafood on ice, various smoked meats, including a whole roasted lechon and Angus prime rib, a pasta station, a hot and cold dessert selection. The buffet costs only \$65 for adults and \$25 for children between 4 to 11 years old. A 15% local resident discount applies.

For reservations, visit saipan.crowneplaza.com or call 670-234-6414.

Coral Ocean Point

It's called the Lovely Mother's Day brunch and dinner buffet, which awaits your family at the resort's Restaurant Ole on Sunday, May 14. Buffet menu includes special Angus top blade steak served tableside (one per adult). Lechon, fresh sushi, sashimi and fresh oysters are inclusive of champagne, wines, and cocktails from the Beach Club Live Bar. For reservations, call 680-237-5026.

Great Harvest Bread Co.

Spoil Mom with these specials from Triple J Wholesale. Begin with special pastry orders from the Great Harvest Bread Co., that are sure to satisfy Mom and her brood's sweet tooth. From May 10-20, order a round, chocolate, or a taro-flavored cake for only \$16.95. You may also add a short, personalized message with this order. Get a Raspberry, Mango or Blueberry Cheesecake with a heart-shaped cookie, also for \$16.95 only. A minimum 24-hours is required for each order of these delectable pastries.

Surf Club Restaurant

From May 13 to 15, Moms get to try either a plate of penne alfredo with chicken or a raspberry citrus salad with shrimp for only \$17.95 to add on to their meals at the Surf Club Restaurant. For reservations, call the Surf Club at (670) 235-1122

Saipan 360

Take Mom to a meal with a view of Saipan at night. Between May 13 and 14, Saipan 360 has a special Mother's Day menu for lunch and dinner. Take your pick between a \$59 menu that includes marinated chicken breast in chili soy glaze and oven baked mahi-mahi piccata with pimiento fried rice and vegetables. Or you can have the \$69 set, which includes grilled certified Angus beef ribeye steak and sautéed garlic butter shrimp with twice-baked potato and vegetables. All meals start with chicken noodle soup and tossed salad and end with a dessert of fudge brownie butter scotch trifle. Call (670) 234-3600 or (670) 288-4360 for reservations.

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1 Winner of a Recliner Chair & 32 Inches Smart TV

Get a chance to win with every \$35 worth of KFC and Taco Bell products in a single receipt.

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All For \$14.00

Special MOMent Deal

KFC & Taco Bell Saipan Mother's Day Special
Choose 1 for \$29.99

A.
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3 Cookies
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2 Large Sides
3 Cookies
2 Drinks (No Refill)

May 12 - 19, 2023

CHICKEN GRADPACK

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7 PCS CHICKEN | 5 PCS CHICKEN STRIPS
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"We owe it to the mothers whose love and guidance will touch us no matter where we go or how long we are gone."



Happy Mother's Day!



RAMON "RB" JOSE BLAS CAMACHO
MAYOR OF SAIPAN AND STAFF



A tale of two mothers

By **TERI M. FLORES**
CORRESPONDENT

This is a tale of two mothers—one who temporarily gave up her children in order to secure their futures and another mother who took in both her nephew and her niece so they can have a fighting chance to grow up enjoying the privileges they otherwise would not have if they had remained with their own mother.

This story of two sisters is also a tale of grit, of the limitless capacity of a mother to put on hold her own dreams in order to make sure that her child reaches his or her dreams first, of the stoic love that sees nothing of the personal sacrifices they have to make in order to make sure that their children are headed to a better life.

It's a school night at the Guintus' Gualo Rai home and gathered around the table are the couple Frederic and Maricar and their four children—Oneil, Mac, MJ, and Inku—all busy poring over their schoolwork.

To casual onlookers, this nightly scene at the Guintu

household embodies a traditional family setting. But what makes the Guintu family different is that it is a blended one made up of two parents, two of their biological children, and Maricar's nephew and niece—the children of her sister, whom the Guintus took custody of 11 years ago. Oneil, 23, and his sister, MJ (Milarose Jeanne), 16, have grown up with the Guintus own children: Mac, (Frederic Dean Michael), 19, and Inku (Michael Jan Frederic), 11.


Maricar considers the addition of her nephew and her niece to their family as the gift that continues to give.

"My sister had to go back to the Philippines because her immigration status at that time did not allow her to remain here. I wanted to help take care of her children. Instead of sending money, both my husband and I considered it best for us to take them so they can continue their studies here on Saipan. I wanted them to enjoy the privileges of being U.S. citizens, especially the educational opportunities that were open to them.

"My husband and I believe in the saying 'Teach a man to fish and he will be fed the

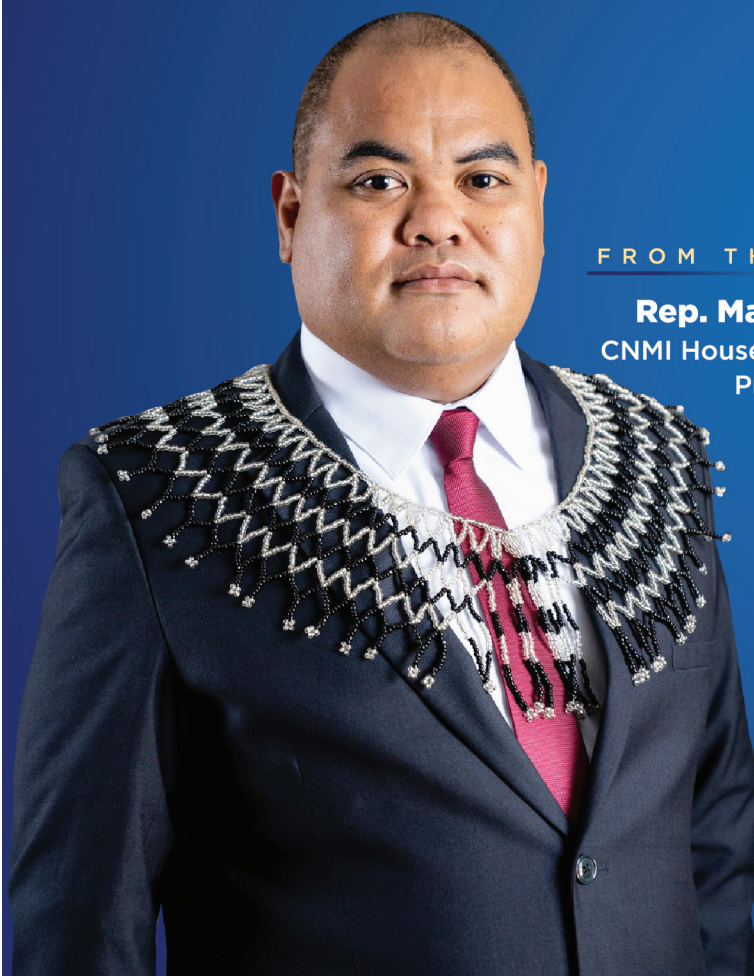
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"Mother's love is peace. It need not be acquired, it need not be deserved."
- Erich Fromm



FROM THE OFFICE OF

Rep. Malcolm J. Omar
CNMI House of Representatives
Precinct #4





The Guintu family enjoy the company of a friend. From left, Oneil, Mac, Maricar, a family guest, Frederic, Inku and MJ.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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rest of his life.' Education is the best gift we can give my nephew and niece because this will set them up for life," added Maricar.

As a mother herself, Maricar knew how difficult it must have been for her sister to give up custody of her two children so they can take advantage of the opportunities available to them. Oneil was 12 while MJ was just 4 years old when they went back to Saipan to join the Guintus.

■■■

All Maricar has for her sister is respect and admiration for

another mother who longed to see her children grow up, but had to make sacrifices for the good of her family.

Maricar herself understands the toll separation has on a family because she and Frederic only saw each other intermittently during the first seven years of their marriage due to their jobs. Frederic was then working as a mechanical engineer in Saudi Arabia before he joined Maricar on Saipan to raise their family together. Frederic is now a six-year veteran at Saipan International School where he teaches math.

Helping her sister and her

children came naturally for Maricar who grew up as the youngest in a family of nine children. Her father worked as an electrician for a provincial bus line in the Philippines while her mother took to washing other people's laundry to make ends meet.

Maricar did not let her family's meager finances deter her from pursuing her dreams—to finish school and land a job so she could give her parents some of life's conveniences. She finished college on an academic scholarship and right before she came to Saipan, Maricar

Continued on Next Page

"Mothers hold their children's hands for a short while, but their hearts forever."



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The Guintu family—from left, Mac, Maricar, Frederic, MK, and Inku—enjoy one of their favorite family activity—dining out.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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spent four years as a public schoolteacher in the Philippines. For the past 20 years, Maricar has been a part of Tan Holdings Corp.'s legal department where she is a legal assistant.

■■■

Like any other family, the Guintus have their unique challenges to overcome, one of them being the bouts of loneliness that come when one is away for a prolonged period from one's family.

"We don't fail to remind Oneil and MJ that their separation from their mom is just for the time being. What is important is that they focus

on their studies and that they be good at what they do. Eventually, their hard work in school will pave the way for all of them to one day become one family again. At the same time, I always tell all four of them to always keep on trying. Never give up and always do their best in anything that they do."

Maricar considers Frederic her No. 1 ally. "I have been blessed with a very supportive husband. He fully agreed with my desire to help my sister and her children, and he even backed my plan for MJ and Oneil to become a part of our own family."

The family does most of their activities together, especially

schoolwork. "We're very hand-on. Both of us make sure we do not take any outside commitments during study times. We also require the same of the children. They are also constantly reminded about their schoolwork," said Maricar.

The bond between cousins is very strong. All three younger ones look up to Oneil, not just as an older brother but also as their inspiration. In fact, Mac, who is attending college on a full academic scholarship, has decided to emulate Oneil, a working student, by becoming one himself.

■■■

It also helps the family that Maricar is a green thumb.



The fruit of Maricar and Frederic Guintu's kindness and generosity—the high school graduation of Oneil, center. From left, Mac, Imku, Maricar, and Frederic.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The Guintu's academic achievers, from left, Oneil, MJ, Mac, and Inku's last photo together before Oneil went off to college in Oregon.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During her spare time, Maricar tends to a vegetable garden, some of the produce of

which she uses for their daily meals while she also earns additional income by selling a part of her harvest. It is the same with Frederic, who takes to fishing as a hobby. Whatever leftover catch he has is also sold.

"She is a very selfless mom. She does everything for her family," said Mirasol Dayao, a longtime friend of Maricar. "I admire her for her very giving spirit and how she turned her love for gardening not just as a source of food for her family, but also as a source of additional income. She budgets well, saves her income and uses her money wisely."

Maricar herself has nuggets of wisdom that she said has served her well in life: "Spend within your means. Use your hobbies, talent, and abilities to earn extra income. In short be diligent and extra creative."

■■■

Today, the Guintus are reaping the rewards of their hands-on parenting, as well as the generosity they have shown their nephew and niece. This coming June, Oneil is graduating with a computer science degree from the Western Oregon University, which he attended under a Million-Dollar Scholarship. Both Maricar and MJ are attending his graduation. He plans to go back to Saipan after graduation where he would like to work—Oneil's way of showing his gratitude to the place he calls home.

Mac is a junior at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, which he attends as a full academic scholar. He is a math and computer science major with a minor in physics. Even as a scholar, Mac still works as a student assistant so he can have spare money for his other needs. "He doesn't want to ask us for money. But he knows we are here in case he needs financial help," Maricar says.

The younger ones, both honor students as well, are attending Saipan International School. MJ, a consistent honor student who was just recently inducted to the National Honor Society, is in 10th grade, while Inku is a 6th-grade student who intends to pursue law in college.

■■■

Maricar said she has no regrets about helping her sister and her family. In their journey as a family, the whole experience has taught her about compassion, unconditional love, and how the power of kindness can transform lives.

"I hope that when it's their turn to help, my children will also be able to look at our life as a family and use the lessons we learned as their inspiration to help. As the saying goes 'Charity begins at home.' The biggest challenge is to ensure that all of them never lose sight of their humble beginnings and that they respect all those that they will meet in their journey," she said.

"No language can express the power and beauty and heroism of a mother's love."
—Edwin Chapin

Happy
Mother's
Day

From the Management & Staff of

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Saipan Tribune

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