



# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026 EDITION

Facebook | Instagram | LinkedIn  
<https://paccaz.org>



**ROOTED IN COMMUNITY.  
RISING TOGETHER.**

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### COMMUNITY IMPACT & VOLUNTEERISM

Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) proudly supported the 3rd Annual Christmas Festival and Community Give Back Event, hosted by the Phoenix Asian American Lions Club.

### BUSINESS RESOURCE TOOLBOX

Strengthen Your Small Business Finances with Arizona's Small Business Accounting Academy

### ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona proudly shines a spotlight on Star Boutique

### ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona proudly highlights UR Amazing Enterprise, a purpose-driven lifestyle and beauty brand founded by Riza Margarett Varela.

### PACCA MEMBER NEWS & SPOTLIGHT

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona welcomes new members.

### PACCA UPDATE & NEWS

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) successfully held its 2026 Strategic Planning Session on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at the Hilton Phoenix Airport.

**PACCA's strength comes from deep community roots—culture, service, and shared history—while our collective vision lifts businesses, leaders, and future generations forward. In 2026, we honor where we come from as we grow together into what's next.**

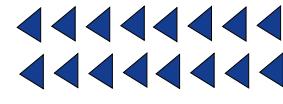
## MISSION

WE ARE COMMITTED TO ASSISTING FILIPINO-AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS AND PROFESSIONALS BY PROVIDING TIMELY AND INFORMATIVE RESOURCES, PROMOTING AND FOSTERING BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS, AND MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT AMONG OUR MEMBERS AND THE BROADER BUSINESS COMMUNITY, BOTH LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

## VISION

TO BE THE PREMIER RESOURCE FOR FILIPINO-AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS, CREATING A THRIVING COMMUNITY THAT DRIVES INNOVATION, GROWTH, AND IMPACT IN THE LOCAL AND GLOBAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE.





# MESSAGE FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

**Warm greetings to every member of our PACCA family** as we step into a new chapter together. Moments like this invite both reflection and renewed hope—and I'm grateful we get to share that as a community.

As I conclude my term as President, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for the trust, encouragement, collaboration, and shared commitment you have shown throughout this journey. Serving the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona has truly been an honor of a lifetime. What we have accomplished together—through challenges, milestones, and celebrations—was only possible because of the strength of our collective spirit and our shared belief in uplifting one another.

PACCA has always been more than an organization. It is a family built on service, cultural pride, entrepreneurship, and community impact. I am incredibly proud of the work we've done to support our members, champion local businesses, and foster meaningful connections across our community. These achievements belong to all of us.

As we turn the page and begin this new chapter, I am confident in and fully supportive of our incoming President, Atty. Luan Mai. His integrity, vision, and unwavering dedication to service give me great confidence that PACCA will continue to grow, evolve, and make an even greater impact. I encourage each of you to extend your support, collaboration, and continued engagement as he leads the Chamber forward.

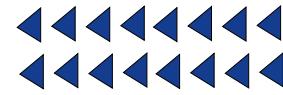
Thank you to everyone—board members, volunteers, partners, and members—who have been part of this meaningful journey. Your passion and commitment are what make PACCA thrive. While my role may be changing, my dedication to the Chamber and its mission remains strong. I look forward to continuing to support our work and to witnessing all that lies ahead for this incredible community.

With gratitude, pride, and optimism for the future,  
here's to continued growth, unity, and shared success for PACCA.



*E. Quiralla*  
Photography

Edward Henry Lago  
Immediate Past President & Board of Director  
Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona



# MESSAGE FROM THE 2026 PACCA STATE PRESIDENT

**Greetings of peace and joy to each member of our PACCA family!**

I am honored to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation for every one of you. You are the cornerstone of PACCA—our organization thrives because of your dedication, commitment, and unwavering support. Being part of this remarkable family fills me with immense gratitude.

To our new members, I extend a warm and sincere welcome—welcome to the PACCA family! To our long-standing members, thank you for your loyalty and continued commitment. Together, we have built a strong foundation, and your support inspires us to reach even greater heights.

The year ahead promises to be a season of growth, learning, and deeper connections. I recognize the demands of our busy lives, and please know that my team and I are fully committed to keeping you informed, engaged, and connected with all upcoming events. As we finalize our annual calendar, I humbly ask for your continued support, cooperation, patience, and understanding throughout the year.

We have ambitious and exciting events planned that build on the successes of previous years. I encourage you to stay engaged and be part of these moments as we continue to strengthen our bonds and advance our shared goals.

Wishing you all peace, unity, and continued collective success!



With gratitude,  
Atty. Luan Mai  
State President  
Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona

# MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**Mabuhay and warm greetings!**

Community doesn't just happen—it's built through the stories we share, the service we commit to, and the ways we choose to show up for one another. January's issue reflects what PACCA does best: bringing people, purpose, and community together.

In these pages, you'll meet members and entrepreneurs whose journeys highlight leadership in many forms. From education and wellness to fashion, entertainment, and service, each story reflects resilience, creativity, and a shared drive to build something meaningful. These spotlights go beyond success—they're about connection, representation, and belonging.

This issue also opens important conversations through business resources and updates designed to support real-world decisions, from strengthening small business finances to planning for long-term stability. At PACCA, empowerment begins with access to clear, practical information.

Community impact and volunteerism remain at the heart of who we are. We reflect on moments that embody the spirit of bayanihan, including the Knights of Rizal Gala—A Night of Heritage, Leadership, and Community Pride. The evening reminded us that honoring our history, celebrating culture, and serving one another are deeply connected.

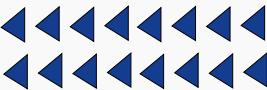
We also highlight gatherings that bring people together through creativity and shared experiences, while PACCA leadership continues behind the scenes to collaborate and align programs that better serve our members across Arizona.

As you move through this issue, we hope you feel informed, inspired, and connected—because PACCA is built on people, and our community thrives through your engagement and support.



With warmth and gratitude,  
Kristine Bartolome  
Editor-in-Chief  
Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona





# Strengthen Your Small Business Finances with Arizona's Small Business Accounting Academy

ARIZONA  
SMALL BUSINESS  
ACADEMY

**“Good accounting isn’t just about compliance — it’s about understanding your business and unlocking future opportunities.”**

Managing the numbers can feel overwhelming for entrepreneurs, especially in the early stages of growth. From tracking income and expenses to preparing for loans, solid accounting skills are central to business success. Fortunately, the Arizona Commerce Authority's Small Business Accounting Academy offers a free, practical way for Arizona business owners to level up their financial confidence and capacity.



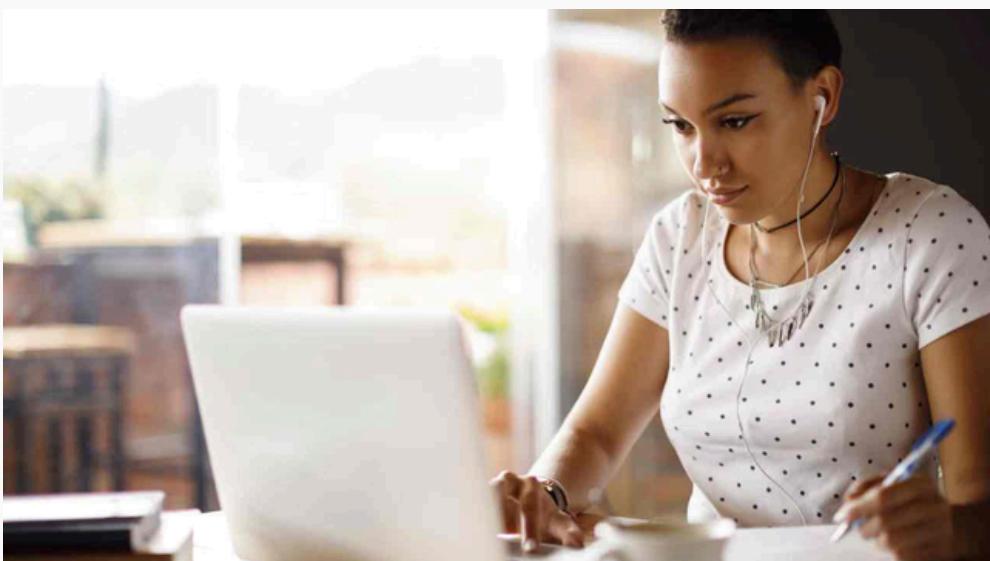
## What the Accounting Academy Offers

The Small Business Accounting Academy is a monthly virtual training series designed specifically for very small businesses and socially or economically disadvantaged business owners. Each session blends expert instruction with live Q&A, making accounting topics accessible and actionable.

### Series features include:

- Monthly live online classes
- Step-by-step demonstrations
- Practical Q&A to get your questions answered
- Topics covering both fundamentals and QuickBooks Online training

*This is a valuable opportunity for business owners who want to build stronger financial systems, stay compliant with tax and reporting requirements, and prepare for funding — including loan applications and growth opportunities.*



### Topics You Can Expect

The Academy's curriculum spans key financial skills that every business needs, such as:

- Accounting basics & bookkeeping fundamentals — Understand the financial foundation of your business.
- QuickBooks setup and navigation — Learn how to organize your accounts and record transactions.
- Financial statement insights — Decode balance sheets and profit & loss reports that drive decisions.
- Sales tax and compliance essentials — Navigate Arizona Transaction Privilege Tax (TPT).
- Payroll basics & managing employees/subcontractors — Know the differences and requirements.
- Year-end tax prep & planning — Get organized for a smooth tax season.

Whether you're just starting or looking to tighten up loose ends in your financial record-keeping, these sessions give you actionable steps to take your business forward.

### What You Can Do Now

Here's how you can put this resource to work for your business:

- Mark your calendar for upcoming sessions that match your immediate needs — whether bookkeeping basics or tax prep.
- Register early for classes that build competencies where you're weakest — like payroll or financial statements.
- Bring real questions to live Q&A — this is your chance to troubleshoot challenges with an expert.
- Pair training with your business goals — accounting skills help you prepare for funding, track growth, and plan for taxes.
- Explore 1:1 SBCI Technical Assistance if you want deeper, personalized help beyond the classes.

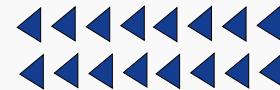
### Why This Matters for PACCA Members

Many entrepreneurs struggle with financial record-keeping — it's one of the most common barriers to securing loans, attracting investors, and scaling operations. The Small Business Accounting Academy fills that gap with practical, no-cost training that builds confidence and prepares businesses for future opportunities.

**Strong financial systems = stronger businesses.**

This resource helps Filipino-American founders and small business owners in PACCA's network build sustainable, compliant, and growth-ready operations.

[www.azcommerce.com](http://www.azcommerce.com)



# 401(k) Withdrawals for Homebuyers: Finding the Balance Between Homeownership and Retirement Security

## RETIREMENT

**"For many families, the decision to buy a home isn't just financial—it's generational. Protecting today's opportunity while securing tomorrow's stability is the real challenge."**



For many families in our community, this debate reflects a familiar crossroads:

Should we prioritize buying a home now, or protect retirement savings for the future? For first-time homebuyers, entrepreneurs, and growing families, the pressure of rising down payments can be overwhelming. Yet tapping into retirement funds—if done without careful planning—may reduce long-term growth, trigger penalties, or create financial vulnerability down the road.

At PACCA, we believe this is not just a policy discussion—it's a real-life decision that deserves thoughtful, informed consideration. Financial education remains a cornerstone of PACCA's mission, and we encourage members to look beyond a single solution. Before using retirement funds, explore alternatives such as first-time homebuyer assistance programs, grants, down payment support, and strategic savings plans tailored to business owners and self-employed professionals.

Most importantly, seek guidance from qualified financial and housing professionals who can help assess both short-term goals and long-term impact. The right decision looks different for every family—but informed decisions lead to stronger outcomes.

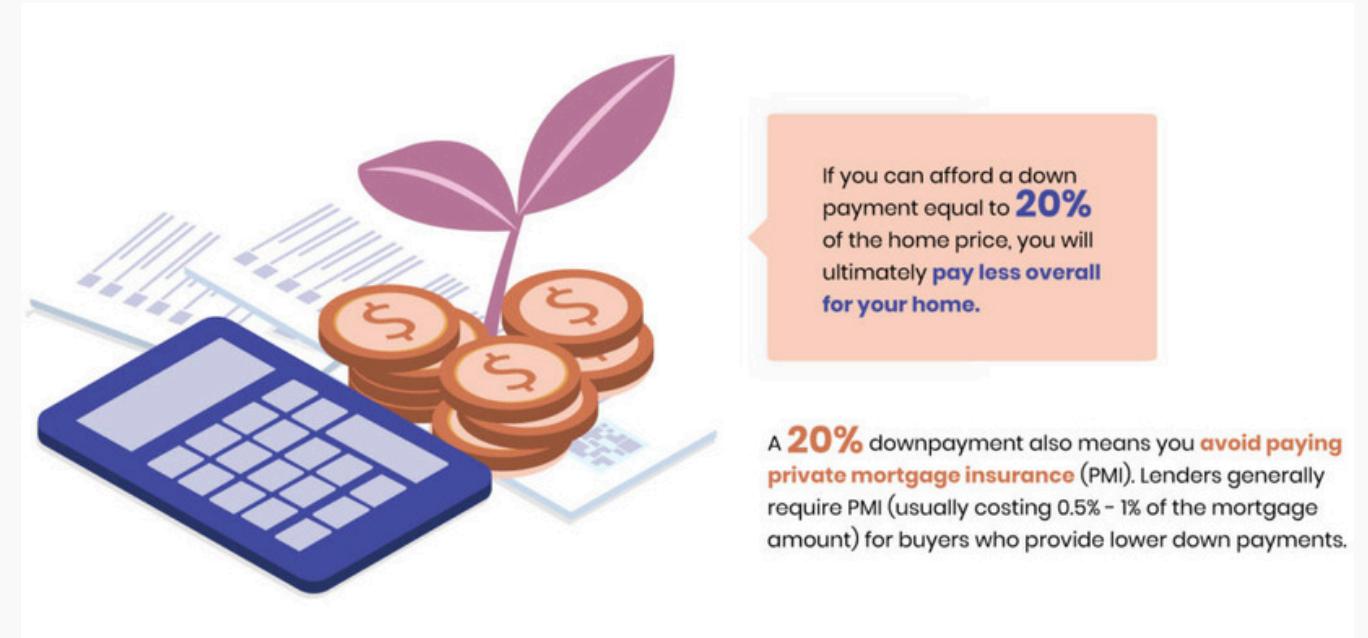
A proposed federal policy that would allow homebuyers to tap into their 401(k)-retirement savings for a down payment has sparked a national conversation—one that feels especially real for PACCA members and the Filipino-American community. With housing costs continuing to rise, the idea offers short-term relief for aspiring homeowners, but it also raises important questions about long-term financial security.

President Donald Trump recently expressed reservations about the proposal, pointing to the strong performance of retirement accounts and emphasizing the importance of protecting 401(k) savings for the future. While the housing market remains active, retirement accounts have seen significant growth, reinforcing concerns that early withdrawals could compromise financial stability later in life.



### What You Can Do Now

- Pause before withdrawing: Understand the long-term impact of using retirement funds, including lost growth, taxes, and potential penalties.
- Explore first-time homebuyer programs: Look into local, state, and employer-sponsored down payment assistance and grants.
- Talk to a financial professional: A certified financial advisor can help you compare options and model long-term outcomes.
- Plan with your household or business in mind: Entrepreneurs and self-employed members should factor in variable income and business cash flow.
- Stay connected with PACCA: Follow PACCA updates and community resources that support informed financial decision-making.



Empowered choices today build stronger futures tomorrow. PACCA remains committed to equipping our community with the knowledge and dialogue needed to build wealth responsibly—through homeownership, entrepreneurship, and long-term financial security.



# PACCA UPDATE & NEWS

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) successfully held its 2026 Strategic Planning Session on Saturday, January 17, 2026, at the Hilton Phoenix Airport. From 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM, PACCA leaders, ambassadors, and board members gathered for a collaborative and purpose-driven workshop focused on charting the Chamber's direction for the year ahead.

The session began with lunch, followed by professional headshots and group photos by Julian Gutierrez, setting a polished and energetic tone for the afternoon's strategic discussions.

State President Atty. Luan Mai led the planning session alongside the Executive Officers, Board of Directors, and Ambassadors, fostering open dialogue and strong alignment across leadership. Together, they reviewed PACCA's vision, mission, and core values; clarified governance structures; and strengthened roles and job responsibilities within each committee. A comprehensive SWOT analysis further helped identify organizational strengths, address key challenges, and uncover opportunities to expand PACCA's reach and impact.

A major highlight of the day was the completion of PACCA's full-year calendar of programs and events for 2026, providing a unified roadmap for business education workshops, mixers, signature events, and statewide partnerships. With solid planning and collaborative leadership, PACCA looks forward to an exciting and impactful year ahead.

PACCA also expressed appreciation to Immediate Past President Edward Lago for his ongoing support and guidance, which continue to help strengthen the organization and ensure a smooth transition for the new State President.



## 2026 PACCA Officers and Leadership Team

### Executive Officers:

**State President:** Atty. Luan Mai

**Vice President for Membership:** Kristine Bartolome

**Vice President for Events:** Cabrina Le Sampaga

**Secretary:** Princess Ann Halasan

**Treasurer:** Roxanne Angeles

### Public Relations Officers:

Daniel Bartolome

Julian Gutierrez

### Board of Directors

Edward Lago

Judith Austria-Bandin

Atty. Katya Lancero Norris

Priscilla Chesler, CPA

Leonardo Aromin Amleth De Torres

Atty Luan Mai

### Ambassadors

**PR & Media Ambassador:** Maria Lyons

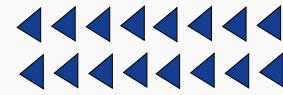
**Membership Ambassadors:** Tram Chu, Dr. Pam Zapanta, Gemenie Dragon

**Events Ambassadors:** Generose Danao-Uy, Brett Brokel

**Media Ambassador:** Ryan Reaño

**Government Relations Ambassadors:** Jason Dragon, Rhia Luz

**Learning & Development Ambassador:** Vicky Perez



# A Night of Heritage, Leadership, and Community Pride

**The Filipino American community in Arizona came together for an unforgettable evening of reflection, celebration, and connection as the Knights of Rizal of Arizona Chapters (KORAZ) partnered with the Council of Filipino Organizations in Arizona (CFO-AZ) to honor the legacy of Dr. José Rizal and celebrate the leaders who continue to serve our community today.**



From the moment guests arrived, the atmosphere was filled with pride and purpose. The evening opened with a formal procession, presentation of colors, and a moving portrayal of Dr. José Rizal's final moments—a powerful reminder of the values, courage, and sacrifices that continue to shape our Filipino identity across generations.

One of the most inspiring moments of the night was the Keynote Address by Hon. Adelio Angelito S. Cruz, Consul General of the Philippine Consulate in Los Angeles. His message emphasized leadership, cultural pride, and the importance of collaboration among Filipino organizations abroad. The program also recognized scholarship recipients, honored community leaders, and marked the ceremonial turnover of CFO-AZ leadership, symbolizing continuity and shared commitment to service.

The celebration continued with a formal dinner and heartfelt performances, followed by a vibrant cultural showcase featuring traditional dances, music, and modern interpretations by Filipino organizations across Arizona. The evening concluded with line dancing, open public dancing, and interactive entertainment—bringing everyone together in true community spirit.

PACCA proudly spotlights this event as a powerful example of what happens when our community comes together with a shared vision. These moments don't just celebrate our heritage—they strengthen relationships, open doors for collaboration, and inspire the next generation of Filipino American leaders.



**Want to be part of events like this—and help shape what's next?**

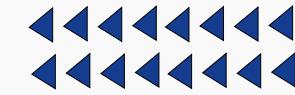
**Join the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) and become part of a growing network of professionals, entrepreneurs, families, and community leaders committed to uplifting our community through culture, connection, and opportunity.**

**As a PACCA member, you'll gain access to community events, business resources, leadership opportunities, and partnerships that make a real impact.**



**Get involved. Become a member. Build community with us.**

Together, we move forward. Mabuhay!



# Chandler International Film Festival: Celebrating Global Voices Through Film

**The Chandler International Film Festival (CIFF) continues to shine as one of Arizona's premier platforms for global storytelling, creativity, and cultural connection. Proudly based in Chandler, CIFF brings together independent filmmakers, artists, and film enthusiasts from around the world, creating a space where diverse voices and powerful stories take center stage.**



Each year, CIFF showcases an impressive lineup of feature films, short films, documentaries, and student works representing dozens of countries and cultures. Beyond film screenings, the festival offers filmmaker Q&A sessions, industry panels, educational workshops, and community events that allow audiences to engage more deeply with both the art and business of filmmaking.



What sets CIFF apart is its commitment to inclusion and representation. The festival actively uplifts BIPOC and women filmmakers while fostering meaningful cross-cultural dialogue through film. By partnering with local organizations and educational institutions, CIFF continues to strengthen Chandler's growing reputation as a hub for arts, culture, and creative innovation.



This year's festival is led by Mitesh Patel, President and Festival Director, and Betty Ramirez, Vice President, with Coco Gonzales—one of the festival hosts and a PACCA member—helping bring energy, connection, and celebration to the event. The festival is further strengthened by strong civic and community leadership in attendance, including Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke, Honorary Consul Jenny Ho Vijungco, Dr. Joseph Vijungco, and PACCA leaders Kristine Bartolome, Daniel Bartolome, and Julian Gutierrez, along with many members of the Filipino community who came together to support the arts, cultural representation, and independent filmmakers.

*"Events like the Chandler International Film Festival remind us that storytelling has the power to connect cultures, elevate diverse voices, and strengthen our community. PACCA is honored to stand alongside partners who celebrate creativity, inclusion, and collaboration."*

— Kristine Bartolome, VP of Membership, PACCA



# PACCA in Action: Celebrating Community and Bayanihan

During the season of giving, the **Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA)** proudly supported the 3rd Annual Christmas Festival and Community Give Back Event, hosted by the Phoenix Asian American Lions Club. The event brought together families, volunteers, and organizations in a celebration rooted in generosity, shared purpose, and community connection.



From the moment families arrived, the warmth of the gathering was evident. Laughter filled the space as volunteers welcomed guests, creating an atmosphere that reflected the true meaning of community. More than a holiday celebration, the event showcased the power of people coming together to uplift one another.

PACCA participated as a supporting organization, standing alongside community partners in the spirit of bayanihan—the Filipino value of unity and collective support. Through service and engagement, PACCA members helped foster moments of joy, connection, and belonging for families in attendance.



As part of PACCA's involvement, **Roxanne Angeles**, representing the organization as Mrs. Mindanao Arizona 2025, hosted a free Shoot-the-Ball Challenge, inviting attendees to enjoy a fun activity with prizes. The laughter and smiles shared during the game created meaningful moments that reflected the heart of the event.



PACCA was also represented by **Cabrina Sampaga**, incoming Vice President of Events, whose participation highlighted the organization's ongoing commitment to volunteerism and community engagement. This effort was supported by the leadership of PACCA President Edward Lago, whose guidance continues to strengthen PACCA's partnerships and community impact.

The event served as a reminder that when organizations and volunteers unite in service, even small acts of kindness can create lasting impact. Through collaboration and compassion, PACCA remains dedicated to strengthening communities and fostering a spirit of connection and generosity.

PACCA continues to champion initiatives that bring people together, nurture community bonds, and embody the spirit of bayanihan. By giving time, care, and support, we not only uplift others but also strengthen the fabric of our community, ensuring that every moment of service creates lasting positive impact.



# ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona proudly highlights UR Amazing Enterprise, a purpose-driven lifestyle and beauty brand founded by Riza Margaret Varela. Rooted in the empowering belief "Basta UR Amazing, Ikaw ang best of all!", the brand is dedicated to inspiring confidence, wellness, and self-love—naturally and authentically.

UR Amazing Enterprise offers thoughtfully crafted products that blend nature-inspired ingredients with effective, results-driven formulations. From skincare essentials and beauty must-haves to wellness drinks designed to support balance, energy, and overall well-being, each product is created to help individuals feel confident from the inside out. True to its mission, UR Amazing believes that beauty and wellness should be accessible, affordable, and empowering for everyone.



This people-centered philosophy has helped UR Amazing grow into more than a brand—it is a movement grounded in self-belief, empowerment, and shared success. With a growing and loyal community nationwide, UR Amazing continues to resonate with individuals seeking authenticity, confidence, and holistic wellness.

The brand's expanding lineup includes hydrating skincare essentials, rejuvenating beauty collections, functional wellness drinks, and everyday beauty staples—carefully curated to support modern lifestyles and moments of intentional self-care.



We invite our PACCA members, partners, and supporters to explore UR Amazing Enterprise, support its mission, and celebrate Filipino-inspired entrepreneurship that uplifts individuals and communities alike.

Basta UR Amazing!

<https://uramazingph.com>

#URAmazingPH



At the heart of UR Amazing is the vision of its founder, **Riza Margaret Varela**, who built the brand to go beyond beauty and wellness products and create meaningful opportunities for growth, income, and community uplift.

"UR Amazing was created to remind people—especially women—that confidence and wellness are not luxuries. They are daily choices. When you feel good about yourself, you unlock opportunities not just for beauty, but for growth, income, and community impact."

-Riza Margaret Varela, Founder, UR Amazing Enterprise

As a proud member of the PACCA Arizona community, UR Amazing Enterprise exemplifies entrepreneurship rooted in purpose and positive impact. Its commitment to accessible wellness, empowerment, and opportunity reflects the values PACCA celebrates—confidence, compassion, and connection in both business and life.



# ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona proudly shines a spotlight on **Star Boutique**, a fashion destination founded by **Star DeLong** that embodies creativity, confidence, and community connection. More than just a store, **Star Boutique** is a space where women—and now men—are encouraged to embrace their individuality and express themselves through thoughtfully curated fashion. From modern trends to timeless wardrobe staples, the boutique provides an inviting environment where style meets purpose.



“Star Boutique was created to inspire people to feel confident in their personal style while celebrating individuality. Fashion is more than clothing—it’s a way to express yourself and connect with your community.”

— Star DeLong, Founder

**Star DeLong** founded Star Boutique with a vision: to empower individuals to feel confident and authentic through the clothes they wear. She believes fashion is not just about clothing—it is a form of self-expression, a way to tell your story, and a means to connect with others.

#### A Curated Collection with Purpose

What makes Star Boutique truly special is its carefully curated collection. Each item is handpicked for quality, comfort, and style, ensuring that customers can find pieces that resonate with their personalities and lifestyles. Whether shopping for everyday essentials or statement pieces for special occasions, women and men alike can explore selections that reflect the latest trends while remaining timeless and versatile. The boutique’s focus on intentional curation ensures that every purchase is meaningful and confidence-boosting.

#### Expanding to Men's Fashion

In response to growing demand and a vision to serve the entire community, Star Boutique recently expanded its offerings to include a men's collection. The addition reflects Star DeLong's commitment to inclusivity and style for all. The men's line combines quality, comfort, and modern trends—ensuring that everyone can experience fashion that empowers and inspires confidence.

#### Empowering Individuals and Community

Beyond fashion, Star Boutique creates an experience. The boutique is designed to be welcoming, supportive, and inspiring. Customers are encouraged to explore, experiment, and embrace their unique style in a space where they feel seen and celebrated. This attention to personal experience sets Star Boutique apart as more than a retail destination—it is a community hub where individuals can connect, share, and feel empowered.

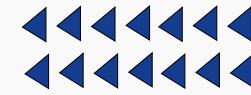
**Star Boutique's mission** extends beyond clothing. At its core, the brand is committed to uplifting people, fostering confidence, and nurturing community. By offering fashion that celebrates individuality, the boutique encourages self-expression and positivity—values that resonate deeply within the PACCA community.

#### Looking Ahead

Under Star DeLong's leadership, Star Boutique continues to grow and evolve while remaining committed to its founding principles. The brand envisions expanding its curated collections even further, exploring new fashion collaborations, and deepening its impact within the local community. Through every garment and accessory, Star Boutique reminds everyone that confidence starts from within—and can be expressed outwardly in every aspect of life.

We invite PACCA members, supporters, and the wider community to explore Star Boutique, celebrate Filipino-inspired entrepreneurship, and experience fashion with purpose. By supporting Star Boutique, you're not just shopping—you're joining a movement that celebrates individuality, confidence, and community.

Discover more: [Star Boutique Collection](#)



# From Global Classrooms to Community Leadership — A Journey of Resilience, Independence, Purpose, Integrity, and the Transformative Power of Education to Success

Miss Princess Ann A. Halasan is more than an educator—she is a global changemaker whose journey across continents reflects an unwavering commitment to learning, psychology, and service. This spotlight honors her remarkable professional path as an international educator and community leader. From teaching international students in the Philippines to becoming a resident educator in Brazil and ultimately establishing permanent residency while thriving as an English Language Arts teacher in the United States, Miss Princess's story embodies resilience, purpose, and the transformative power of education.



With over 12 years of teaching experience, Miss Princess began her career in the Philippines, where she taught international students and developed a strong foundation in inclusive, learner-centered instruction. Her professional journey continued in Brazil, where she became a resident and spent five years teaching in an international school, refining her expertise in multicultural education, language development, and cross-cultural engagement. She later transitioned to the United States, where she now teaches English Language Arts in a public alternative high school serving students in Grades 11-12 who are at risk of not completing their secondary education. What makes her work especially challenging—and deeply inspiring—is her commitment to students who have often been marginalized by traditional systems. In this setting, she focuses on empowering learners through the development of critical academic skills, emotional resilience, and real-world experiences essential for responsible, independent living. She holds a Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English, has completed 30 units toward a Master's degree in Education specializing in Literature and Language Arts, and is currently pursuing a Master of Liberal Arts in Psychology at Harvard Division of Continuing Education.

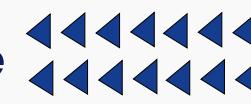
Her dedication to education has been formally recognized through multiple honors, including a 12 years' Service Award from the **2025 UNNIFIED International Educators Summit in New York City**, an Educator of the Year Nomination at the 2025 Outstanding Filipino Awards Gala, and a Certificate of Appreciation from the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce during the 2025 Business Luminaries Gala—each reflecting her excellence, service, and leadership in education and community engagement.

Miss Princess's influence extends far beyond the classroom. As **Secretary of the Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA)**, she actively supports mentorship initiatives, professional development, and community outreach that empower Filipino-American professionals and emerging leaders. Her national and regional leadership roles as Assistant Secretary of UNNIFIED Southern Arizona and National Assistant Membership Director for UNNIFIED INC (New York) further amplify her commitment to advocacy, education, and community building. Through these roles, she bridges education, psychology, and leadership—advancing PACCA's mission while uplifting the broader Filipino-American community.

Currently, Miss Princess remains deeply engaged in curriculum development, applied behavioral psychology in education, and professional speaking. She was recently invited by Pinal County Education Services to deliver a professional talk on "Engaging Students and Minimizing Distraction," and she will be a featured speaker at the 2026 Pinal County Educators Conference, presenting "The Psychology of Writing Instructions." Her work addresses one of today's most pressing educational challenges— supporting students who struggle with writing and reflection by helping them rediscover confidence, purpose, and agency in their learning.



**As she continues her academic journey at Harvard and her service within PACCA and national organizations, Miss Princess Ann A. Halasan stands as a powerful example of what it means to teach with compassion, courage, and vision. PACCA proudly celebrates her dedication to empowering at-risk students, strengthening communities, and transforming lives through education.**



# WELCOME TO PACCA!

## Welcome to PACCA: Ryan Serrano

Experienced Professional | Strategic Thinker | Growth-Focused Leader

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) is excited to welcome our newest member, Ryan Serrano!

Ryan is an accomplished business and project management professional with over a decade of experience in business analysis, strategic initiatives, and cross-functional collaboration. Known for his thoughtful, solutions-oriented approach, Ryan brings clarity, structure, and momentum to complex initiatives. He is deeply passionate about continuous improvement, professional growth, and helping teams succeed, making him a strong asset to any organization and a valuable addition to the PACCA community.

We are thrilled to have Ryan join PACCA and look forward to the expertise, collaboration, and leadership he brings. His commitment to growth and excellence strongly aligns with PACCA's mission to support and empower our business community.

**Welcome to PACCA, Ryan—we're glad to have you with us!**

Learn more: [ryanreano@gmail.com](mailto:ryanreano@gmail.com)



## Welcome to PACCA: Sol Tinio

Founder & Changemaker | Accomplished Leader | Purpose-Driven Advocate

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) is proud to welcome our newest member, Sol Tinio!

Sol is the CEO and Founder of the Heart of Sol Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering underprivileged children and young adults through education, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities. Her mission-driven leadership reflects a deep commitment to creating pathways for growth, confidence, and long-term success for the next generation.

Beyond her work in the nonprofit space, Sol is also a 2x national title holder, earning Miss Philippines USA 1st Runner-Up 2025 and Miss Philippines USA Tourism 2025. She uses her platform with purpose—advocating for service, representation, and meaningful community impact.

We are excited to have Sol join PACCA and look forward to the insight, passion, and collaboration she brings to our growing network. Her dedication to advocacy and service aligns beautifully with PACCA's mission to uplift and strengthen our community.

**Welcome to PACCA, Sol—we're honored to have you!**

Learn more: [heartofsofoundation.org](http://heartofsofoundation.org)



## Welcome to PACCA: J&A Genesis DJ and Entertainment Services LLC

Entertainment Experts | Event Experience Creators | Crowd Engagement Specialists

The Philippine American Chamber of Commerce of Arizona (PACCA) is thrilled to welcome our newest member, J&A Genesis DJ and Entertainment Services LLC, led by Jude Basiga and Alma Fe Basiga!

J&A Genesis brings the beat, energy, and unforgettable vibes to every event through professional DJ performances, live music, interactive karaoke, and customized entertainment experiences. Their services are tailored to elevate weddings, birthdays, corporate functions, private celebrations, and any occasion that deserves exceptional sound and atmosphere. Known for their passion for music and dynamic crowd engagement, Jude and Alma Fe specialize in creating moments that connect people, energize audiences, and leave lasting memories.

We are excited to have J&A Genesis join PACCA and look forward to the creativity, talent, and vibrancy they bring to our community. Their commitment to delivering high-quality entertainment aligns perfectly with PACCA's mission to support and spotlight outstanding Filipino-American businesses.

**Welcome to PACCA, J&A Genesis DJ and Entertainment Services LLC—we look forward to the energy and creativity you bring!**

Learn more: [jandagenesis.com](http://jandagenesis.com)





# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026 EDITION

Facebook | Instagram | LinkedIn  
<https://paccaz.org>



## FINAL THOUGHTS

As we step into a new year, we are reminded that progress is never achieved alone—it is built through collaboration, shared purpose, and a commitment to uplifting one another. The stories, initiatives, and milestones featured in this issue reflect the collective effort of individuals and organizations working toward a stronger Filipino-American business community.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our members, partners, and supporters who continue to believe in PACCA's mission. Your engagement and dedication drive our work forward. As we look ahead, we remain committed to creating opportunities, fostering meaningful connections, and championing growth for our community—together, with purpose and vision.

## PRODUCTION & CONTRIBUTORS

### Editor-in-Chief

Kristine Bartolome

### Editorial & Communications Team

PACCA Communications Team

### Layout & Design

Our Virtual Professionals

### Contributors

PACCA Writers and Collaborators

PACCA Members and Community Partners

### Production

Our Virtual Professionals

## 2026 PACCA OFFICERS AND LEADERSHIP TEAM

### EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

- **State President:** Atty. Luan Mai
- **Vice President for Membership:** Kristine Bartolome
- **Vice President for Events:** Cabrina Le Sampaga
- **Secretary:** Princess Ann Halasan
- **Treasurer:** Roxanne Angeles
- **Public Relations Officers:** Daniel Bartolome & Julian Gutierrez

### AMBASSADORS

- **PR & Media Ambassador:** Maria Lyons
- **Membership Ambassadors:** Tram Chu, Dr. Pam Zapanta, Gemenie Dragon
- **Events Ambassadors:** Generose Danao-Uy, Brett Brokel
- **Media Ambassador:** Ryan Reaño
- **Government Relations Ambassadors:** Jason Dragon, Rhia Luz
- **Learning & Development Ambassador:** Vicky Perez

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Edward Lago
- Judith Austria-Bandin
- Atty. Katya Lancero Norris
- Priscilla Chesler, CPA
- Leonardo ArominAmileth De Torres

## SHARE YOUR STORY WITH PACCA

Every PACCA story begins with people — our entrepreneurs, families, leaders, and community builders. The moments we share, the businesses we grow, and the culture we carry forward are what truly connect us.

We invite you to submit an article, share a personal story, or highlight a business, initiative, or meaningful moment that reflects the heart of our Filipino-American community.

From milestones and community impact to cultural celebrations and quiet wins worth celebrating, your story helps shape who we are and where we're going.

 Send your submission to:  
[kristine@ourcommunitymortgage.com](mailto:kristine@ourcommunitymortgage.com)

**LET'S CONTINUE BUILDING THE PACCA STORY — TOGETHER.**

