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**Gen. Hermogenes
Cendaña Esperon Jr.**
AFP (Ret.)

Transparency,
Classrooms,
and CADENA:

How Senator Bam Aquino
Turned RCM's 12th Weekly
Meeting into a Call for
National Reform

**RC Manila's Annual
Sportsfest 2025**

Formal
Launch of
The Rotary Quill

**THE OG OF
PHILIPPINE
HOSPITALITY:**

The Steady Forge of
Arthur Monroy
Lopez

CONTENTS



Program	4
Editorial	6
Guest of Honor and Speaker's Profile	10
President's Message	12
Transparency, Classrooms, and CADENA: How Senator Bam Aquino Turned RCM's 12th Weekly Meeting into a Call for National Reform	18
Club Administration	56
Team Visit in preparation for the Governor's Visit	60
Prospective Members Attend Rotary Information Committee Briefing	62
RCM Meets with Onstrike Library Solutions Corporation to Discuss Website Updates	64
Format Launch of The Rotary Quill	66
RC Manila and RC Aduana de Manila Conduct a Lecture Session on Katarungang Pambarangay	78
Discussion on Water Treatment and Management Project for RCM and RCMFI	80
Interclub Event and District Event	140
Recognition Corner	142
RC Manila's Annual Sportsfest 2025	146
RCM Fellowship	154
Board of Directors and Executive Officers for RY 2025-2026	156
Editorial Board for RY 2025-2026	157



PROGRAM



ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA 13th Weekly Membership Meeting Rotary Year 2025-2026

A joint meeting with the **Rotary Club of Agham, Quezon City**

Thursday, November 20, 2025, 12:30 PM
Manila Polo Club

Moderator: DE DELFIN “Del” N. LORENZANA

PART I

11:00 AM Registration

12:30 PM Call to Order

PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA | RC Manila
PRES. LORENZO ANGELO R. “Ench” SANTOS
RC Agham, Quezon City

Invocation | **RTN. CARLOS “Caloy” C. BUENDIA**

Philippine National Anthem | **AVP**

Rotary Club of Agham Hymn |
Rotary Club of Agham
Rotary Club of Manila Hymn
RCM WF Music Chorale

The Four (4) Way Test
PRES. LORENZO ANGELO R. “Ench” SANTOS
RC Agham, Quezon City

Acknowledgement of Guests
DE DELFIN “Del” N. LORENZANA

Welcome Song | **RCM WF Music Chorale**

Birthday Celebrants

RC MANILA
Nov. 14 Rtn. Martin Romualdez
Rtn. Gerry Magbanua
Nov. 17 Rtn. Toby Pañares
Nov. 19 PDG Vince Carlos

RC AGHAM
Nov. 11 PP Rafael P. Saldaña

Maligayang Bati / Happy Birthday Song | **RCM WF CHORALE**

Induction of New Members

Introduction of New Members
PP TEDORO “Teddy” J. OCAMPO
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

Mr. Eric G. Eugenio
Asst. Vice President for Sales
CE – Logic, Inc.

Atty. Oliver L. Pantaleon
Sr. Partner & Head Litigation and
Dispute Resolution Dept.
ACCRALAW Offices

Proposer:

PP Teodoro “Teddy” J. Ocampo *Proposer: Pres. Raoul C. Creencia*

Oath of Membership **PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA**

PART II

12:55 PM President’s Time
PRES. LORENZO ANGELO R. “Ench” SANTOS
RC Agham, Quezon City
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA | RC Manila

1:00 PM Introduction of the Guest of Honor and Speaker
PP RAFAEL “Raffy” M. ALUNAN III

Guest of Honor and Speaker
GEN. HERMOGENES C. ESPERON, JR. AFP (Ret.)
Chairman of the Board, Philtrust Bank

1:30 PM Open Forum / Q & A

1:45 PM Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA

2:00 PM Adjournment
PRES. RAOUL C. CREENCIA | RC Manila
PRES. LORENZO ANGELO R. “Ench” SANTOS
RC Agham, Quezon City

EDITORIAL

Reginald T. Yu
Editor-in-Chief



AS the Rotary Club gathers for today's Weekly Membership Meeting, members find themselves convening at a moment when the country's challenges have grown increasingly interconnected. Across news headlines and community conversations, one theme persists: the Philippines is navigating a period of deep transition, marked by shifting alliances, domestic pressures, and emerging forms of national vulnerability.

In this context, the presence of **General Hermogenes Cendaña Esperon Jr., AFP (Ret.)**, as today's guest speaker lends a timely dimension to the Club's reflections. His long career in safeguarding the nation has placed him at the crossroads of issues that now affect businesses, communities, and ordinary lives alike — issues that extend far beyond the confines of the defense or intelligence sectors. His role in key national task forces, as well as his continued involvement in public and private leadership, offers insights into the realities that shape the environment in which every Filipino now lives and leads.

Yet today's meeting is not merely about hearing a distinguished leader speak. It is about recognizing that Rotary itself stands at the intersection of civic duty and national awareness. As community builders and professionals, Rotarians operate in a landscape influenced by the very concerns that General Esperon has grappled with throughout his service — whether it be the preservation of peace, the stability of institutions, or the safeguarding of our sovereignty and democratic values.

EDITORIAL

This afternoon reminds the Club that understanding national issues is not the responsibility of policymakers alone. It is integral to every Rotarian whose work touches the lives of others. From education to livelihood, from humanitarian programs to environmental initiatives, the health of the nation invariably shapes the success of the Club's service.

Today's gathering therefore becomes more than the usual cadence of reports and fellowship. It becomes a moment of alignment — an occasion to reflect on how Rotary's mission of "Service Above Self" takes on renewed meaning in times when clarity, vigilance, and informed citizenship are indispensable.

As the members listen to General Esperon's message and engage in thoughtful exchange, they do so with the awareness that leadership, in all its forms, begins with understanding. And in meetings like today's — where fellowship converges with insight—Rotary affirms its role as both participant and partner in the nation's ongoing journey.

Today's gathering therefore becomes more than the usual cadence of reports and fellowship. It becomes a moment of alignment — an occasion to reflect on how Rotary's mission of "Service Above Self" takes on renewed meaning in times when clarity, vigilance, and informed citizenship are indispensable.

In uncertain times, gatherings like this serve as anchors. They remind the Club that service is not only about action, but also about awareness — about seeing the bigger picture, understanding the deeper realities, and standing collectively for the good of the nation.

Today's meeting offers exactly that:

*a moment of clarity,
a space for reflection,
and a renewed commitment to lead
with purpose in the evolving story of
our country.*

GUEST OF HONOR & SPEAKER



Credit: PNA photo by Avito C. Dalan

General Hermogenes Cendaña Esperon Jr. AFP (Ret.)

GENERAL Hermogenes Cendaña Esperon Jr., AFP (Ret.) is a highly respected military leader and public servant who has devoted more than five decades of his life to serving our country.

General Esperon served as National Security Adviser from 2016 to 2022, while concurrently leading several key national bodies, including the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, the National Task Force on the West Philippine Sea, and the National Intelligence Board.

Throughout his illustrious career, he held some of the most critical positions in the Armed Forces of the Philippines — among them, Chief of Staff of the AFP, Commanding General of the Philippine Army, and Group Commander of the Presidential Security Group. He also served as Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and Secretary of the Presidential Management Staff.

Beyond government service, General Esperon continues to make an impact as Chairman of the Board of Philtrust Bank and as a consultant for various private sector initiatives. He is also an active Rotarian, having been part of several Rotary Clubs.

A proud graduate of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1974, General Esperon has received numerous prestigious awards, including the Order of Lakandula Grand Cross, the Presidential Medal of Merit, and international honors from Malaysia and Indonesia.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

ROTARY QUILL.

IN a remarkable celebration of education, collaboration, and community service, the Rotary Quill, a reading hub for senior high school students of Mariano Marcos Memorial High School, was successfully launched.

This initiative, realized through the partnership of our Rotary Club and 14 other Manila-based Rotary Clubs, embodies a shared vision: to create a space where young minds can explore knowledge, develop critical thinking, and cultivate a lifelong love for learning. This all began when I invited Manila-based Rotary Club Presidents to a *merienda* last August 6, which became the opportunity to share ideas on what joint project we could viably pursue.



Raoul C. Creencia
President

One ocular inspection and a few other meetings later, the renovation and conversion of a room to become what is now a reading room was relentlessly pursued. Last Friday, November 14, the successful launch was held.

The Rotary Quill is more than a collection of books. It is a vibrant, dynamic hub designed to spark curiosity, inspire creativity, and empower students to reach their full potential. With thoughtfully curated reading materials, comfortable study areas, and

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

spaces for discussion and reflection, the Quill aims to provide an environment where students can engage deeply with ideas, broaden their perspectives, and prepare themselves for the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The success of this initiative reflects the remarkable power of collaboration. All 15 participating

Rotary Clubs contributed to the success of the project, thereby demonstrating the extraordinary results that can be achieved when various clubs unite behind a common purpose. The Rotary Quill is a tangible representation of Rotary's ethos: that service to others, particularly to the youth, can create lasting, positive change in our communities.

As we celebrate this significant milestone, we also look toward the future impact of the Rotary Quill. Every student who walks through its doors has the opportunity to discover new interests, challenge themselves intellectually, and pursue their dreams with confidence. The hub is poised to become a lasting center of inspiration, growth, and opportunity for generations of students to come.

The Rotary Quill stands as a proud testament to what can be achieved when purpose, passion, and partnership converge. As students explore its shelves, immerse themselves in its resources, and engage with its opportunities, we are reminded that the greatest investment we can make is in the minds of the next generation.



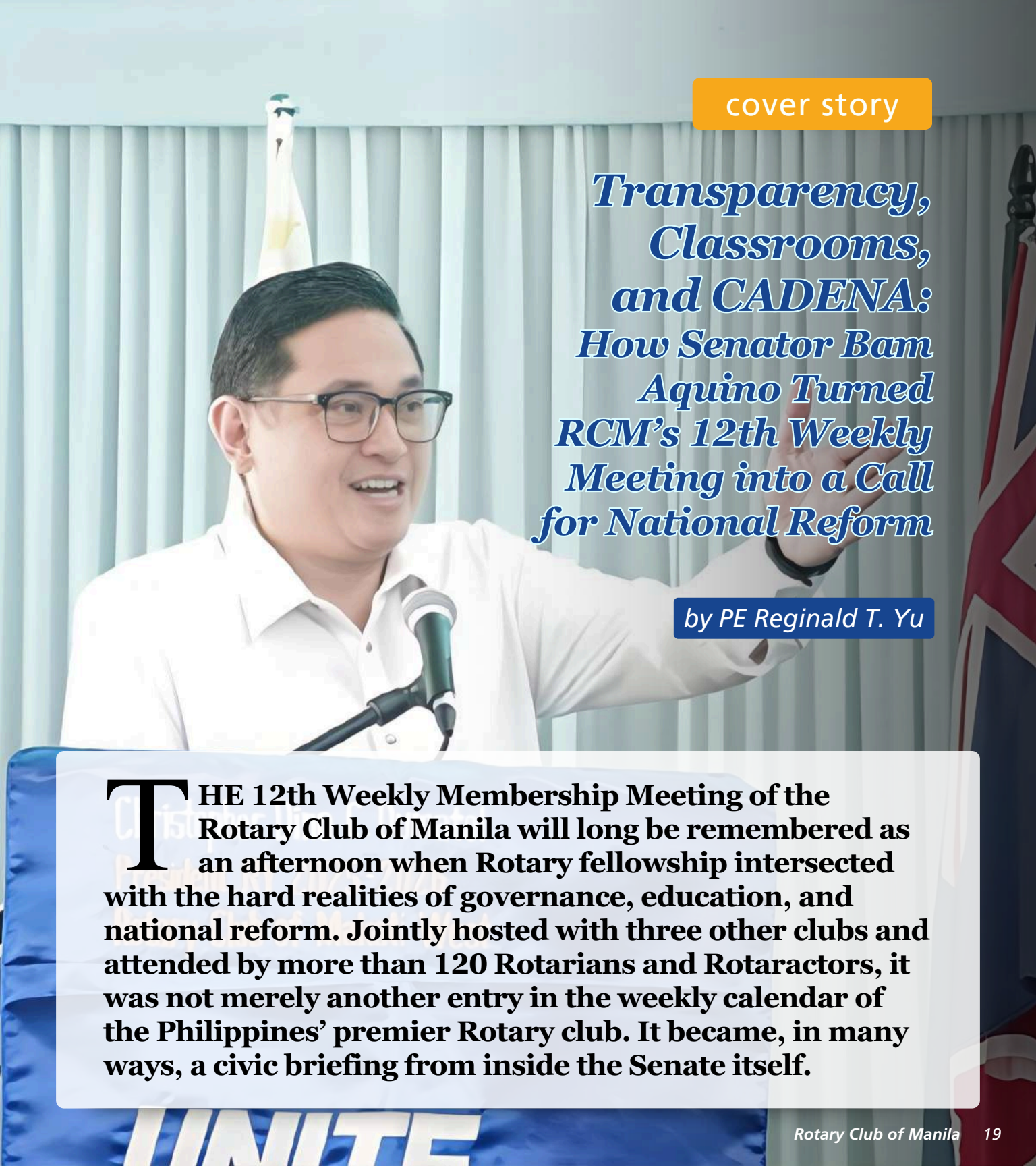
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

STRONGER THROUGH SPORTS.

Over the weekend, Manila Rotarians had a great sports fellowship. The whole day activity not only showcased athletic skill and friendly competition, but also reaffirmed the enduring fellowship that has always been the heart and soul of our Club. As we reflect on the energy, unity, and genuine camaraderie that filled every game, every gathering, and every shared moment, I extend my deepest and most heartfelt thanks to all who made this event a remarkable success. Kudos to Committee Chair and PD Nagi for successfully organizing the event.

Truly, this year's Sports Fest was far more than a series of friendly matches. It was a celebration of Rotary's values in action: teamwork, respect, integrity, leadership, and the spirit of service expressed through togetherness. The participation and enthusiasm of the members, some accompanied by their families, transformed the event into a memorable showcase of what the Rotary Club of Manila truly stands for -- a community that thrives on fellowship as much as it does on service.





cover story

*Transparency,
Classrooms,
and CADENA:
How Senator Bam
Aquino Turned
RCM's 12th Weekly
Meeting into a Call
for National Reform*

by PE Reginald T. Yu

THE 12th Weekly Membership Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila will long be remembered as an afternoon when Rotary fellowship intersected with the hard realities of governance, education, and national reform. Jointly hosted with three other clubs and attended by more than 120 Rotarians and Rotaractors, it was not merely another entry in the weekly calendar of the Philippines' premier Rotary club. It became, in many ways, a civic briefing from inside the Senate itself.



At the heart of that gathering was the Guest of Honor and Speaker, Senator **Paolo Benigno “Bam” Aquino IV**—returning to a room filled with old friends, mentors, and fellow workers in public life.

A Rare Gathering of Four Clubs

The afternoon began with the familiar dignity of Rotary ritual. **Rotary Club of Manila President Raoul Creencia** called the meeting to order, setting the tone for a special joint

gathering. In partnership with the **Rotary Club of Makati**, the **Rotary Club of Makati West**, and the **Rotary Club of Muntinlupa Central**, RCM welcomed members and guests into a hall that crackled with energy and expectation.

The invocation by RCM President-elect **Reggie Yu** invited everyone to align their hearts with the higher purpose of service. The Philippine National Anthem followed, sung with quiet pride, then the Rotary Hymn, evoking the global fellowship that



President Dino Dumatol of RC Makati West, President Eddie Galvez of RC Makati, President Raoul Creencia of RC Manila, and President Ana Lorena Oliva of RC Muntinlupa Central called the joint Weekly Membership Meeting to order.

binds Rotarians from Manila to the rest of the world. The Four-Way Test, recited in unison, carried a particular weight that day. Its questions—Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?—hung in the air like a moral frame for what was to come.

Roll call and the acknowledgment of visiting Rotarians gave a sense of the breadth of representation in the room. Tables were filled with business leaders, former and current government officials, senior Rotarians, Rotaractors, and friends of the clubs. The presidents of the co-hosting clubs—President **Dino Dumatol** of Makati West, President **Eddie Galvez** of Makati, and President **Ana Lorena Oliva** of Muntinlupa Central—were recognized, underscoring the collaborative spirit of the gathering.



PP Bobby Lim (RC Makati West) moderated the meeting.



President-elect Reginald “Reggie” T. Yu led the invocation.

Among the distinguished guests were some of the most familiar names in public service: past District Governors **Peps Benzon, Vince Carlos, Obet Pagdanganan**, and former Senator **Joey Lina**; Past Rotary International Director **Guilier Tumangan**; District Secretary and PDG **Louie Aceoche**; and PDG **Tony Quila**.

From the world of government and business came DepEd Assistant Secretary **AP Bartolome**; former Department of Transportation Secretary and now award-winning airline executive **Jimmy Bautista**; former DOTr Undersecretary **Bobby Lim**; and former Education Secretary **Jesli Lapus**.

Business and civic leaders such as **George Barcelon** and Architect **Felino “Jun” Palafox Jr.** added further depth to the audience.

Rotaractors—representing the next generation of Rotary—were also present in strong numbers, their presence a quiet assurance that the torch of service was far from dimming.

It was a room seasoned by experience and animated by concern for the country. Into this setting the guest speaker was introduced.

A Personal Introduction and a Familiar Face

The task of presenting the Guest of Honor fell to someone who knew him not only as a public figure but as family: former Education Secretary **Jesli Aquino-Lapus**, uncle of Senator Bam Aquino. His introduction blended institutional respect with personal affection, tracing the Senator’s journey from youth leader and social entrepreneur to lawmaker and now Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education.



Rotarian Jesli Aquino-Lapus introduced the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

He spoke of a young man shaped by the tumult of Philippine politics and the demands of nationhood, and of a senator who has chosen to focus on education, governance, and the future of Filipino children. By the time he concluded, the room was primed not

just to listen to a politician, but to hear from a fellow Filipino who had grown up within sight of many of those seated before him.

“That has to be one of the best introductions I’ve had,” Senator Aquino began, smiling as he took the podium. “Of course, it comes from my uncle.”

Laughter rippled through the hall, softening the edges of formality. Then he began to speak in earnest.

A Room of Friends and a Nation Under Strain

Before plunging into his main message, Senator Aquino took time to greet those present—Rotarians, former cabinet secretaries, business leaders, and Rotaractors—many of whom he had known since he was a young boy accompanying his elders to functions much like this one. He acknowledged the presidents of the four co-hosting Rotary clubs and the many past presidents and directors in the audience. He recognized colleagues and former colleagues in government, from education and transportation to the private sector. He waved to Rotaractors and reminded them that he had been there at their induction.

These opening greetings were more than polite formalities. They anchored his message in relationships and continuity. Here was a senator speaking not to strangers, but to peers, mentors, and partners in service—people who understood both the promise and the frustrations of trying to move a country forward.

Then he shifted tone. The warmth of the opening gave way to a sobering picture of where the Philippines stands today, particularly in the realm of education.

The Classroom Crisis: “Twenty-Two”

As Chair of the Committee on Basic Education, Senator Aquino began with a simple, almost naïve question that he had asked during a budget hearing with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH): “Ilan na ba ang classroom na nagawang DPWH sa taong ito?” — How many classrooms has DPWH built this year?

It was not a trick question. It was the kind of straightforward query that any concerned citizen might ask, expecting a substantial answer given the chronic shortage of school facilities all over the country. The DPWH Secretary, new to the post,

consulted his aide and read from a cue card. The figure he gave stunned the Senator and, as he shared it, stunned the Rotarians in the room as well.

As of October 2025, only 22 classrooms had been completed.

Not 22,000. Not 2,200. Only twenty-two.

The number seemed almost absurdly small in a nation of over 110 million people, with millions of schoolchildren. Senator Aquino contrasted this with the work of a private NGO, Agap, which, under the leadership of Sir Eddie, had managed to construct more than 1,400 classrooms over the last decade. If a modest non-government initiative could achieve that, how could the national government's output be barely a couple dozen in a year?

He went on to explain that the government's own target for that year was 1,700 classrooms — already far below the total national classroom gap of 165,000. Even if the target were fully achieved, it would still represent only a drop in the bucket. Worse, projections showed that if current trends continued — if more classrooms continued to be condemned for disrepair and more were destroyed by increasingly powerful typhoons — the gap could reach 200,000 by 2028.

... the crisis in Philippine education is not some abstract issue debated in conference rooms. It is painfully concrete. It begins with the simplest things—like whether children have a classroom at all.

Even if the target were fully achieved, it would still represent only a drop in the bucket. Worse, projections showed that if current trends continued—if more classrooms continued to be condemned for disrepair and more were destroyed by increasingly powerful typhoons—the gap could reach 200,000 by 2028.

The Senator noted that even just in the past week, thousands of classrooms had been damaged or destroyed by natural calamities. Against this backdrop, the number 22 did not merely seem inadequate; it felt almost like a national moral failure.

This was the first major thread of his message: that the crisis in Philippine education is not some abstract issue debated in conference rooms. It is painfully concrete. It begins with the simplest things—like whether children have a classroom at all.

Building a 10-Year Education Plan

From this starting point, Senator Aquino turned to the work being done through the Education Commission (EDCOM), a joint body composed of members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, along with agency heads and experts. He described how EDCOM was in the process of finalizing a 10-year education plan, scheduled for completion in the coming month.

In this plan, the issues were as fundamental as they were urgent.

First came classrooms—building, repairing, and protecting them as the physical foundation of the learning environment. Then textbooks, ensuring that learning materials were actually printed, delivered, and used on time. He pointed to the imperative of bringing internet connectivity into schools, recognizing that to educate a Filipino child today is also to prepare them for a digital world. Nutrition was another essential pillar; children cannot be expected to absorb their lessons if they arrive at school hungry. Finally, he mentioned teachers' tools: laptops, tablets, and other basic devices that many educators still had to provide out of their own pockets.



The Senator drew a picture of an education system that, in many ways, was still struggling with the basics—classrooms, books, food, and teacher support. These needs were not glamorous, but they were foundational. It was here, at the ground level, that the future of Filipino youth was being decided.

Yet, as he was careful to emphasize, addressing these needs requires more than good intentions. It requires money—and more importantly, the right priorities.

Budgets and Priorities: Classrooms vs. Flood Control

Having laid out the shortfall in classrooms and the elements of the

10-year education plan, Senator Aquino turned to the arithmetic of governance. To close the classroom gap within six years, he explained, the Philippines would need to invest approximately 90 billion pesos per year in classroom construction and rehabilitation. Over six years, that would amount to about 540 billion pesos.

To many, these numbers might seem overwhelming. But the Senator quickly provided a comparison that made the supposed impossibility of the task look more like a question of political will.

For the 2026 national budget, before the flood-control controversy erupted, an allocation of around 260 billion pesos had originally been slated for flood control alone—almost half of the entire six-year requirement to close the classroom gap, compressed into a single year and a single program.

Placed side by side, the contrast was jarring. On the one hand, the country supposedly could not afford to build enough classrooms. On the other, it seemed prepared to pour hundreds of billions into a single category of infrastructure spending—not over a decade, but in one fiscal cycle.

The conclusion he drew was sharp and familiar: *“Kung gusto, may paraan.”*

Kung ayaw, maraming dahilan.”

When there is genuine will, a way can and will be found. When there is none, excuses multiply.

In other words, the classroom crisis was not only about capacity. It was about choices.

On the one hand, the country supposedly could not afford to build enough classrooms. On the other, it seemed prepared to pour hundreds of billions into a single category of infrastructure spending—not over a decade, but in one fiscal cycle.

A Historic Education Budget—If It Is Protected

Despite this sobering analysis, Senator Aquino did not leave the audience in despair. He brought a piece of genuinely encouraging news. For the first time in the country’s history, the proposed 2026 national budget would allocate more than one trillion pesos

to education. This would represent roughly 20 percent of the total budget and bring education spending to about 4.5 percent of GDP—the lower end of the 4 to 6 percent range recommended by the United Nations.

He called it an “education budget” in the truest sense, a long-awaited alignment of rhetoric and resource allocation. For decades, the Philippines had heard speeches about education being the “great equalizer,” yet actual funding often told another story. Now, at least on paper, the government was taking a major step towards giving education the share of the budget it deserved.

But this, he cautioned, is only half the battle. What good is a trillion-peso education budget if the money does not reach the schools, the teachers, and the children for whom it was intended? If corruption, inefficiency, and misallocation continue, even the largest budget will be swallowed by the system before it hits the ground.

This is where the Senator’s message pivoted from education to governance—from how much we spend to how honestly and transparently we do it.

From Outrage to Reform: “Ikulong, Ibalik, Baguhin”

The country, Senator Aquino noted, is

living through one of the most serious corruption scandals in recent years. Massive allegations of misuse of public funds, particularly in the area of flood control, have shaken public confidence. Yet, in the nationwide protests and rallies that followed, he hears not only anger but also a more mature call to reform.

He summarized the dominant battle cry in three demands:

First, “*Ikulong ang sangkot*”—jail those responsible.

Second, “*Ibalik ang pera*”—return the stolen funds.

And **third**, increasingly voiced by the youth, “*Baguhin ang sistema*”—change the system itself.

The first two, he admitted, are not new. For decades, generations of Filipinos had marched under those slogans. What is new, and deeply significant, is the insistence on systemic change. It is no longer enough to simply replace one set of officials with another; people want reforms that alter the way power is exercised and money is managed.

From this point, Senator Aquino moved to the centerpiece of his speech: a legislative proposal designed to transform how government spends and reports the people’s money.

The CADENA Act: “Blockchain the Budget”

Just the day before his Rotary speech, Senator Aquino had filed a bill in the Senate known informally as the “Blockchain the Budget Bill.” Its official name is the **CADENA Act**, short for **Citizens Access for Disclosure of Expenditures for National Accountability**.

The core idea of CADENA is disarmingly simple: make the national budget and related government financial transactions radically transparent by requiring the disclosure of key documents and placing them on a secure, tamper-resistant technological platform.

Under CADENA, all national government agencies would be mandated to publicly disclose:

- Budget documents;
- Procurement documents;
- Contracts, including those for big-ticket projects like DPWH infrastructure;
- Supporting details such as lists of contractors, bidders, and bills of materials.

These documents would have to be posted within seven days on a platform that is machine-readable, verifiable, open-source, and interoperable. A failure to disclose within

CADENA is designed precisely so that even if physical files are destroyed, the digital record of contracts and spending will remain intact and publicly accessible.

that period would carry administrative penalties for the responsible officials—from reprimand to suspension or even dismissal. If the failure extends to 30 days, the offense becomes criminal in nature.

The Senator emphasized that this is not just another version of a Freedom of Information (FOI) bill, which for years has failed to become law. In a sense, it is FOI evolved: from a right to request information, to a requirement for proactive, real-time government disclosure; from isolated documents, to an integrated, technology-backed system.

From Files to Data to Citizens’ Phones

The Senator then painted a vivid picture of what this would look like in practice.

Because CADENA requires that data be machine-readable and interoperable, ordinary citizens—armed only with a smartphone and an AI assistant like ChatGPT—would be able to query the budget in natural language.

A citizen could, for example, ask: “How many classrooms are set to be built in Quezon City this year, and what is the budget for them?” Another might want to know how much is being spent on flood control in a particular province, or which contractor is handling a specific road project.

Public infrastructure projects would also carry QR codes on their signboards. Anyone passing by could point their phone at the code and immediately see who the contractor is, what the total project cost is, and even the unit prices of materials like cement. They could see whether the project is completed or delayed, and check this against the contract.

Over 250 volunteers—from tech companies, start-ups, universities, watchdog groups, and government agencies—had already engaged with the proposal during committee hearings. They argued that with modern tools, it would be relatively straightforward to build user-friendly

applications that sit on top of the government’s open data. These apps could alert watchdogs, NGOs, even Rotary clubs every time funding is released for projects in the areas they are monitoring.

In practical terms, this means an architect like Jun Palafox could receive automatic notifications every time a new flood control project is approved in a given city, and check it against urban planning principles. A Rotary club concerned about local school facilities could track all classroom-related spending in its city.

What was once buried in dense and incomprehensible budget books could become searchable, understandable, and actionable for ordinary citizens.

Three Phases and a Crucial Window

Senator Aquino explained that the CADENA Act is designed to be implemented in phases.

In the first nine months from the law’s effectivity, the focus would be on disclosure: getting agencies to publish documents and enforcing penalties for non-compliance. This, he said, is the most critical window. It is when resistance will be strongest, and when the public and civic organizations will

need to be most vigilant and vocal in demanding, *“Ipakita ninyo kung saan napunta ang pera ng bayan.”*

In the second and third years, the technological components would be fully built out and refined. This is where blockchain and other technical solutions would be fully integrated, ensuring the permanence and integrity of the data and enabling sophisticated tools to be developed on top of it.

But the Senator was clear: without the first phase, the rest will not matter. The culture of secrecy must be broken before technology can work its magic.

A Personal Journey: From Yale to the Senate Floor

In one of the speech’s most personal passages, Senator Aquino shared that in 2023, when he was temporarily out of public office, he had joined a fellowship program at Yale University in the United States. Each fellow was required to choose an area of study. His choice: AI and blockchain for government transactions.

It was there, in an academic setting far from the hurly-burly of Philippine politics, that he began to imagine what

it might mean to place a national budget on blockchain—to turn public finance into something that citizens could actually see, interrogate, and understand.

At the time, he thought it was a long shot. The idea of forcing government to expose so much information, and in such a permanent and transparent way, seemed nearly impossible to sell in a political culture accustomed to opacity.

Yet here he was, just two years later, addressing Rotarians about a bill that had already drawn strong support—eight co-authors and co-sponsors in the Senate and several congressmen who had filed companion measures in the House. Even the Speaker had reportedly expressed keen interest.

The Senator made the point that crises, while painful, can create openings for breakthroughs that would otherwise be politically impossible. The scandals of recent months, as destructive as they have been to public trust, have also generated momentum for reform. Without them, CADENA might never have advanced beyond a concept paper. Now, it stands on the brink of becoming law.

The Power of Public Attention—and Rotary’s Role

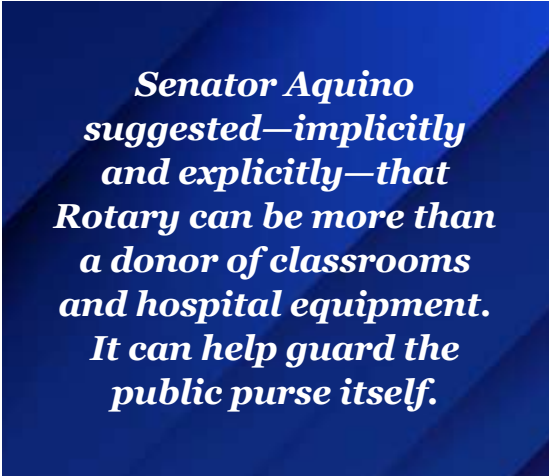
Throughout his remarks, Senator Aquino returned to a single, candid insight: politicians are more likely to do the right thing when citizens are paying attention.

He admitted, as a politician himself, that public scrutiny motivates better behavior. When people watch closely—when they demand explanations, when they follow the budget debates, when they ask hard questions—laws are passed more carefully, budgets are shaped more responsibly, and abuses become riskier.

The problem, he noted, is that the country’s collective attention span is short. Outrage flares, then fades. Crises come and go, but the structures that allowed them often remain.

The challenge, then, is to sustain attention—not just in the heat of scandal, but in the quieter months of implementation and oversight. This is where organizations like Rotary can play a vital role.

Rotary clubs are not social clubs in the ordinary sense. They are networks of professionals and leaders committed to service and ethical standards. They have the credibility, the expertise, and the local presence to help communities understand and use



Senator Aquino suggested—implicitly and explicitly—that Rotary can be more than a donor of classrooms and hospital equipment. It can help guard the public purse itself.

tools like CADENA. They can partner with universities and tech groups to develop apps that monitor local projects. They can conduct public forums that teach citizens how to read budget data and why it matters. They can incorporate public finance literacy into their own advocacy and service programs.

In short, Senator Aquino suggested—implicitly and explicitly—that Rotary can be more than a donor of classrooms and hospital equipment. It can help guard the public purse itself.

Hopeful Realism: Emerging Stronger from Crisis

Despite the grave subject matter—corruption scandals, classroom deficits, decades of underfunding—Senator Aquino ended on a note of guarded hope.

He spoke of the coming 2026 budget as possibly one of the best the country has seen in many years: unprogrammed appropriations reduced to limit hidden insertions, flood control slashed dramatically with much of the freed-up funds redirected to education and social services, and significant additional resources allocated to DepEd, CHED, DOH, and government hospitals. There was even a serious attempt at implementing zero-balance billing in public hospitals so that the poor do not leave medical facilities with crushing debts.

Why was this happening, he asked? Because the public was watching. Because people were no longer willing to look away. Because, in his own words, *“kung nakatutok po yung taong bayan, people will behave better.”*

He acknowledged that the investigations rocking the political system today are painful and destabilizing. Yet he argued that they are necessary. Without them, the country might have continued down a darker path, with abuses growing ever more brazen and entrenched.

Now, however, there is a chance—a window—to do better by the Filipino people. There is an opportunity to create systems that reduce the room for corruption and increase the incentives for integrity.

He shared that, in his first term as senator, he had been only 36 years old, still learning the full reach and responsibility of the office. Now, older and more seasoned, he feels better equipped to use the Senate’s power to help engineer meaningful change. And he believes that CADENA, if passed and implemented well, could be one of the most significant transparency measures in Philippine history.

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He ended with an invitation, not just to hope, but to walk alongside him and his colleagues in the years ahead. “We need your help,” he told the Rotarians. “We need your attention. We need your intention. And I hope we can work together for our country.”

Applause filled the hall. It was not the perfunctory kind that merely signals the end of a speech. It carried the weight of recognition: that the people in that room had just been given both information and responsibility.



Open Forum, Response, and Closing Moments

The open forum that followed drew thoughtful questions from the audience. Rotarians asked about the feasibility of implementing CADENA in agencies historically resistant to transparency, about the protection of sensitive data while honoring the principle of openness, and about specific ways civic organizations like Rotary might plug into the system once it is in place.

Senator Aquino responded point by point, reiterating that the strongest

provisions of CADENA lie in its penalties and in the people's capacity to demand compliance. He stressed that while technology can help secure data and increase access, the success of the law will ultimately rest on whether citizens—organized, informed, and persistent—choose to use it.

After the forum, one of the club leaders delivered a formal response, thanking the Senator for his candor, clarity, and courage. He drew a direct line between the principles embodied in CADENA and the ethical framework of Rotary's Four-Way Test.



Open Forum: Sen. Bam Aquino engaged in an interactive conversation with Architect Felino “Jun” Palafox Jr., Secretary Anton Mauricio, Rtn. Willie Peliño, Past Director Beda Fajardo, and Past Director Amading Valdez



A token of appreciation, symbolic yet heartfelt, was then presented to the Guest of Honor and Speaker.

Photographs were taken—Senator Aquino flanked by the presidents of the co-hosting clubs, past district governors, and key officers of the Rotary Club of Manila and its partner clubs. The images captured not just faces, but an unspoken compact between public office and civic society.





The meeting closed with announcements of upcoming service projects and activities, and finally, the adjournment of what was unquestionably one of the most substantive weekly membership meetings of the Rotary Club of Manila this Rotary year.

An Afternoon That Redefined a Weekly Meeting

As the more than 120 participants began to filter out into the late afternoon, many carried with them more than just the memory of a well-attended joint meeting. They carried a renewed understanding of how deeply intertwined their work as Rotarians is with the work of governance.

The story of that day could be told simply: four clubs met, a senator spoke, a token was given, and the

meeting was adjourned. But a deeper reading reveals more.

It was an afternoon when the number “22” forced everyone in the room to confront the state of Philippine classrooms. When a trillion-peso education budget was both celebrated and scrutinized. When the cries of “Ikulong, ibalik, baguhin” were translated into the concrete architecture of a legislative proposal. When blockchain, AI, and public accountability stopped being buzzwords and became instruments in a real plan for reform.

Above all, it was a day when the Rotary Club of Manila and its partner clubs were implicitly invited to move beyond project-based generosity and into a more demanding, more transformative role: not only as builders of classrooms, but as vigilant stewards of the public trust.

In that sense, the 12th Weekly Membership Meeting was not just a highlight of the Rotary year. It was a reminder that, in the long struggle for a better Philippines, civic organizations like Rotary remain indispensable partners—watchful, engaged, and ready to help turn bold ideas, like CADENA, into lasting change.

Meeting Fellowship



Meeting Fellowship



CLUB ADMINISTRATION

RCM Members' Attendance Report
RY 2025-2026



ATTENDANCE REPORT
November 2025

	November 06, 2025	November 13, 2025
NOVEMBER 2025	PEZADGTERESO O. PANGA	SENATOR BAM AQUINO
MEMBERS PRESENT	38	36
MEMBERS PRESENT %	18%	17%
MAKE UP ATTENDEES	18	12
EXEMPTED	6	5
ON LEAVE	0	0
Total Active Members	56	48
Total # of Members	212	212
TOTAL %:	25%	23%
ROTARACTORS	12	0
MEDIA	0	0
EMBASSIES / DIPLOMATIC CORPS	0	0
DG, DGE, DGN, PDG	0	0
GOHS / GS	4	1
VISITING ROTARIAN	10	0
Guests of RCM MEMBERS	6	8
TOTAL ATTENDEES	70	45



LIST OF ATTENDEES
November 13, 2025

- 1 Bagatsing, Valentino S.
- 2 Bartolome III, Arsenio M.
- 3 Carlos, Vicente J.
- 4 Castro, Karlo Eugene Josef M.
- 5 Co, Val Constantine L.
- 6 Creencia, Raoul C.
- 7 Cutter, John Michael
- 8 Del Rosario Sr., Oscar A.
- 9 Egan, Brendan W.L.
- 10 Eldebs, Issam
- 11 Fajardo, Beda G.
- 12 Garcia, Paul Joseph M.
- 13 Go, Henry S.
- 14 Guevara, Jr., Domingo S.
- 15 Locsin, Arsenio Z.
- 16 Lonzaga, Reinerio C.
- 17 Lorenzana, Delfin
- 18 Magsaysay, Francisco D.
- 19 Matschuck, Guenter Gerhard G.
- 20 Mauricio, Antonilo DC
- 21 Nones, Romeo C.
- 22 Obrado, Daniel Calzado
- 23 Ocampo, Teodoro J.
- 24 Ong, Rowel Janson S.
- 25 Pagdanganan, Roberto M.
- 26 Pascual, Abraham F.
- 27 Peliño, Wilfredo M.
- 28 Recto, Philip H.
- 29 Reynolds, David J.
- 30 Rodriguez Sr., Joaquin C.
- 31 Schneider, Bernd
- 32 Serapio, Carlos G.
- 33 Tee, Teddy Jr. B.
- 34 Valdez, Amado D.
- 35 Valencia, John Nico P.
- 36 Yu, Reginald Tieng

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

List of Members Who Have Paid Their Annual Dues for RY 2025-2026

As of November 18, 2025

1	ABOY, VALENTINO G.	58	FAJARDO, BEDA G.	116	PALACIOS, ALBERT S.
2	ABRIAM, ARIEL	59	FERNANDEZ, ANTONIO JAIME JOSE V.	117	PALLASIGUE, JOHN BRIAN C.
3	ACOSTA, CRISPINIANO G.	60	FOLLOSCO, CEFERINO JR. G.	118	PANTALEON, OLIVER
4	AGNES, JERRY A.	61	GARCIA, HERBERT JOEY	119	PASCUAL, ABRAHAM
5	ALBAÑA, MICHAEL JAEY	62	GARCIA, PAUL JOSEPH M.	120	PAYUMO, FELICITO C.
6	ALDAY, ALBERT S.	63	GARCIA, THEODORE Q.	121	PELIÑO, WILFREDO
7	ALINGOG, ALDOUS REX A.	64	GARCIA, VICTOR III G.	122	PINEDA, JESUS JR. M.
8	ALUNAN, RAFAEL M.	65	GASPAR, FERNANDO	123	PINEDA, PATRICIO JR. F.
9	ANDAL, AVELINO L.	66	GO, DANNY C.	124	PIZARRAS, JORDAN M.
10	ARAGON, JOSHUA RUEBEN G.	67	GO, HENRY S.	125	PREYSLER, FAUSTO JR. D.R.
11	ARAMBULO, JOAQUIN JR. L.	68	GONZALES, JONAS R.	126	PUJALTE, JOSE BRITTANIO JR.
12	ARGUELLES, PABLO C.	69	GONZALES-LA'O, EMIL	127	RA, INGILL
13	AVENTURA, AVELINO JR. L.	70	GUARIN, MICHAEL ARCATOMY	128	RAMOS, CLAVER P.
14	BAGATSING, VALENTINO	71	GUEVARA, DOMINGO JR.	129	RANKL, PETER
15	BALANAY, ARIES B.	72	GUEVARA, RICARDO S.B.	130	RECTO, PHILIP H.
16	BARTOLOME, ARSENIO III M.	73	HALLARE, DELFIN JR.	131	REYNOLDS, DAVID
17	BAUTISTA, JOHN JR.	74	HALLARE, NICOLÒ	132	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN ANTHONY JR. H.
18	BEDIONES, RODOLFO P.	75	HERNANDEZ, EDWIN H.	133	RODRIGUEZ, JOAQUIN SR. C.
19	BELLA, GERONIMO JR. D.	76	HESSE, UWE	134	ROMUALDEZ, FERDINAND MARTIN G.
20	BENEDICTO, BERNARDO III T.	77	IBUYAN, BENEDICT JULIUS F.	135	ROXAS, MICHAEL D.
21	BENEDICTO, SIXTO T.	78	KALAW, TEODORO ALEJANDRO IV Y.	136	SARMIENTO, RICARDO MANUEL M.
22	BERTELSEN, BERTEL INGMAR	79	KANDA, HIROYUSI	137	SCHMITZ, STEFAN
23	BLANCO, MANUEL M.	80	KATIGBAK J ALFONSO L	138	SCHNEIDER, BERND
24	BOGOVICH, JASON M.	81	KLEBS, DAVID	139	SERAPIO, CARLOS G.
25	BRANELEC, JACQUES	82	KOH, PAUL ANTHONY	140	SEVILLA, LUIS ANGELO L.
26	BUENDIA, CARLOS	83	LACAMBACAL, ALVIN	141	SHIMODA, SHIGERU
27	CABANGON, EDGARD	84	LAUREL, RICARDO P.	142	SIBAYAN, JOSELITO H.
28	CABUNAG, ROGELIO	85	LAZARO, JUAN MIGUEL	143	SIMON, JUANITO AYSON
29	CAMAT, NATHANIEL	86	LEDDA, JAIME VICTOR B.	144	SO, WARREN
30	CAMPOS, JOSELITO JR. D.	87	LEE, RICHARD L.	145	STRANATHAN, IKE EDWARD
31	CANON, RAUL JR. C.	88	LI, RICHARD JOSEPH C.	146	SYJUCO, JOSE, JR. A.
32	CARLOS, VICENTE J.	89	LIM, DAVID EDUARDO T.	147	TAGAYSAY, HECTOR O.
33	CARRANCEJA, ARVIN ARIK B.	90	LOCSIN, ARSENIO Z.	148	TALAMPAS, JOSE ANGEL L.
34	CASTRO, KARLO EUGENE JOSEF M.	91	LONZAGA, REINERIO C.	149	TALUSAN, FERDINAND E.
35	CATALAN, RODILLO	92	LOPEZ, ANTONIO	150	TAMANO, SHALIMAR H.
36	CHAHWAN, RAMI	93	LOPEZ, ARTHUR M.	151	TAMAYO, VICTOR L.
37	CHAN, ROBERT JR.	94	LORENZANA, DELFIN	152	TAN, EUSEBIO V.
38	CID, DEAN	95	MACAPAGAL, MICHAEL T.	153	TAN, JOHN G.
39	CO, VAL CONSTANTINE L.	96	MACATOMAN, ABDULGANI M.	154	TAN, LAWRENCE L.
40	COYIUTO, ROBERT JR. G.	97	MAGSAYSAY, FRANCISCO D.	155	TEE, TEDDY JR. B.
41	CREENCIA, RAOUL C.	98	MANALAYSAY, CESAR P.	156	TEJUMAL, MICHAEL
42	CUREG, ALEXANDER P.	99	MANGALILE, SENEN	157	TILLMAN, HANSEL JOSEPH MICHAEL L.
43	CUTTER, JOHN MICHAEL	100	MARTINEZ, RONALD	158	VALDES, JOEL C.
44	DAYANG, JUAN E.	101	MATSHUCK, GUENTER GERHARD G.	159	VALDEZ, AMADO
45	DAVIS, RAYMOND N.	102	MAURICIO, ANTONILO DC	160	VALDEZ, JASON ROLAND N.
46	DEL ROSARIO, OSCAR	103	MAURICIO, FRANCISCO C.	161	VALDERRAMA, JASON ROMEO
47	DIONISIO, RAFAEL	104	MENDOZA, MIGUEL	162	VALENCIA, JOHN NICO P.
48	DOMINGO, RICO, V.	105	MENDOZA, RAYMUND JOSEPH D.	163	VALENCIA, RODOLFO G.
49	DOMINGUEZ, CARLOS G.	106	MOMMAERTS, STEVE	164	VAZQUEZ, EVARISTO JR.
50	DY, MANUEL	107	NOLIDO, RAMON ALBERTO B.	165	VILLARICA, HENRY R.
51	EGAN, BRENDAN	108	NOMURA, KAZUHIRO	166	YAP, ENRIQUE JR.
52	ELDEBS, ISSAM	109	NONES, ROMEO C.	167	YORDANOV, STEFAN
53	ENRIQUEZ, EDUARDO III	110	NÚÑEZ, JOSE A.	168	YU, GEOFFREY C.
54	ESGUERRA, HERMINIO S.	111	OBRADO, DANIEL	169	YU, REGINALD T.
55	ESQUIVIAS, JOAQUIN PABLO A.	112	OCAMPO, TEODORO J.	170	ZALDARRIAGA, FELIX FRANCISCO S.
56	EUGENIO, JOHN EMYL G.	113	ONG, PHILIP	171	ZEITOUNI, NAGI
57	EUGENIO, ERIC	114	ONG, ROWEL JANSON S.	172	ZIALCITA, XAVIER Y.
		115	PAGDANGANAN, ROBERTO M.	173	ZIMMER, CHRISTOPHER

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

Team Visit in preparation for the Governor's Visit



Team Visitors from RI District 3810 included Senior Deputy Governor Mildred Catajay (RC Manila Binondo Prime), Assistant Governor Kat Castillo (RC Manila Premier), Assistant District ES Len Francisco, Assistant Governor Boots Leano, and UCP Joy Francisco (RC Manila Binondo Prime).

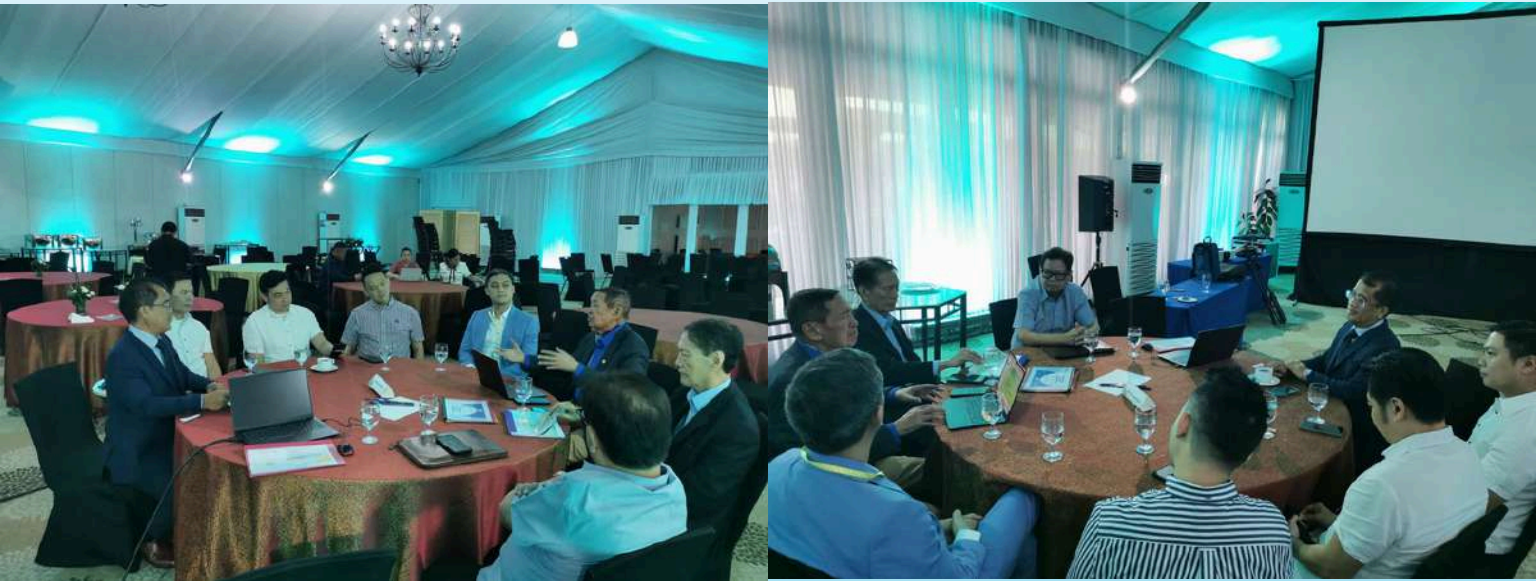
TEAM Visit in preparation for the Governor's Visit was held on November 13, 2025 at the Milky Way in Pasay Road, Makati City.

President Raoul Creencia delivered an initial presentation, accompanied by Secretary Anton Mauricio.



CLUB ADMINISTRATION

Prospective Members Attend Rotary Information Committee Briefing



THE Rotary Information Committee conducted a briefing for prospective members last Thursday, November 13, 2025, at the Glass Pavilion, Dusit Thani Manila.

In attendance were prospective members Messrs. Winston Ginez, Eric Ke, Ralph Valentin Kho, Christopher Liao, and Chris Tamesis.

Rotary Information Chairman PDG Obet Pagdanganan, together with Co-Chairman PP Boy Guevara and Rtn. Romy Nones led the session and shared essential information about Rotary. The discussion covered Rotary's vision, mission, and objectives, as well as the history and ongoing projects of the Rotary Club of Manila.

The briefing aimed to orient new prospects on the values and service opportunities that define Rotary membership and the club's continuing commitment to *"Service Above Self."*

CLUB ADMINISTRATION

RCM Meets with Onstrike Library Solutions Corporation to Discuss Website Updates



A Zoom meeting with Onstrike Library Solutions Corporation (OLSC) President Jerwyn Fernandez and Mr. Ram Migrino was held on November 17, 2025 to discuss updates, proposal, and other relevant information regarding the RCM website.

Representing RC Manila were President Raoul Creencia, Rotarian Nico Hallare, Consultant Anna Kun-Toledo, and RCM Executive Secretary Lhea Lozano.



ROTARY CLUB OF MANILA TREE PLANTING WITH COMMUNITY IMMERSION

Join us for a morning tree planting event dedicated to preserving our planet and creating a green & circular economy for future generations to come.

SAVE THE DATE

 November 30, 2025
7am-12nn

 San Ysiro, Antipolo, Rizal

Package A (In Person Visit) P2000/head: Includes guides, lunch, 3 trees + 1 pair of boots donated to farmers	Package B (Donation only) P1300/head: Includes 3 trees + 1 pair of boots donated to farmers
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Rotary 
Club of Manila

UNITE FOR GOOD



BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY

The Rotary Quill



The ROTARY QUILL is a reading hub at the Mariano Marcos Memorial High School (Sta. Ana, Manila). This project is a joint effort of 15 Manila-based Rotary Clubs.



The Rotary Quill



The Rotary Club of Manila was joined by 14 other clubs in making this a reality; and it was such an amazing experience working with fellow Club Presidents.

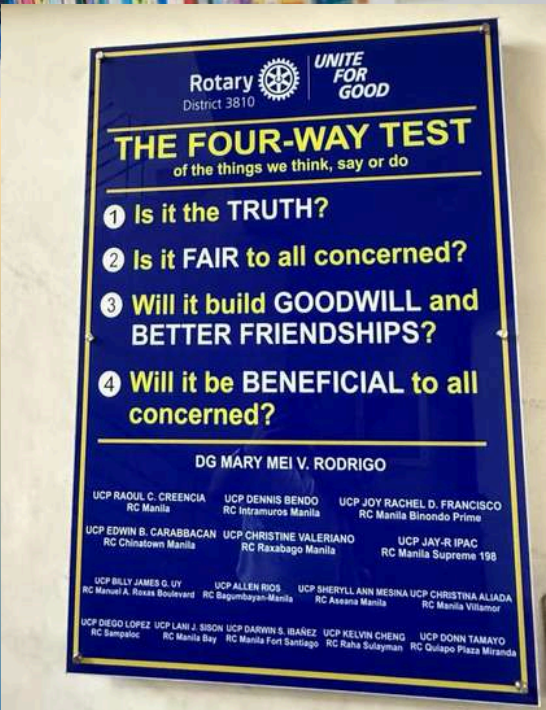


On November 12, President Creencia was joined by 7 other club presidents, and they personally cleaned and prepared the newly repainted room (with new shelves, ceiling fans, lights, tables, and chairs) in time for its inauguration on November 14.





The Rotary Quill



A Four-Way Test marker bearing the names of the 15 club presidents was also installed.



Formal Launch of the Rotary Quill



DGND Hermie Esguerra, representing the District Governor, delivered the Inspirational Message during the program, which was attended by school administrators, teachers, students, Rotaractors, and Rotarians from the participating clubs.

“ We need to build a nation of readers, a nation of thinkers. Encouraging the youth to love reading is building the foundations of critical thinking, empathy, creativity, and informed citizenship. In a world overflowing with fast, shallow content and constant digital noise, reading offers something radically different: depth, focus, and imagination. ”

- Pres. Raoul C. Creencia





BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY

Formal Launch of the Rotary Quill





BASIC EDUCATION
AND LITERACY

Formal Launch of the Rotary Quill





PEACEBUILDING AND
CONFLICT PREVENTION

RC Manila and RC Aduana de Manila Conduct a Lecture Session on Katarungang Pambarangay



The Rotary Club of Manila, in partnership with the Rotary Club of Aduana de Manila, conducted a lecture session on Katarungang Pambarangay, featuring Atty. Daniel Pante as the lecturer.

The onsite and online attendees consisted of Barangay officials, Rotaractors, and other community leaders.





WATER, SANITATION,
AND HYGIENE

Discussion on Water Treatment and Management Project for RCM and RCMFI

A meeting was held on November 18, 2025 to discuss a potential water treatment and management project for RCM and RCMFI. RCM President Raoul Creencia and RCMFI President Jujut Enriquez met with J.T. Warring, Chief Executive of The Rotary South East Asia Communities Water Management Systems Project.

Also present were PRID Raffy Garcia, PDG Jackie Rodriguez, and Rtn. Jack Rodriguez.



WATER, SANITATION,
AND HYGIENE

RC Manila Facilitates Donation of a Custom-Made Wheelchair for Grade 9 Scholar Paolo Gabriel Cornel Resurreccion



Paolo Gabriel Cornel Resurreccion, a Grade 9 scholar of PAREF Southridge Afternoon School, has been hospitalized since he met an unfortunate accident when he was hit by a motorcycle rider on October 23, 2025. He was initially admitted at Medical City of Muntinlupa (MCM) and later transferred to the University of Santo Tomas Hospital (UST) on October 25, 2025, where he remains under medical care.

Past District Governor Lyne Abanilla responded quickly to President Raoul Creencia's appeal for a wheelchair, allowing Paolo to return to school and complete the school year.

The wheelchair, which costs PHP 15,000, was custom-made for Paolo's specific needs.



Paolo's shin was replaced.



At the accident site

Paolo is the youngest child of the late Allan Resurreccion and Michelle O. Cornel, both of whom passed away in 2018. He has since been cared for by his aunt, who is also his legal guardian.

PEOPLE

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER

**Bernd Schneider
and Harmony of
Leadership**

From the kitchens of Bavaria to the corridors of Raffles and Fairmont Makati, German hotelier Bernd Schneider has turned service into symphony and leadership into art. His story reveals a timeless truth — that the finest hotels are built not just on excellence, but on empathy. MAKATI

By PE Reginald T. Yu



THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

THE city has not yet awakened, but within the quiet corridors of **Raffles Makati**, a rhythm is already at play. The marble floors catch the first pale light of dawn as **Bernd Schneider** begins his morning walk — unhurried, deliberate, attuned to every sound. A soft greeting from a security guard, the faint scent of coffee drifting from the kitchen, the whisper of a curtain being drawn open. These are the notes of a symphony he knows by heart.

Each morning, this ritual reminds him why he chose a life in hospitality. “In every detail,” he says, “there is an opportunity to make someone feel cared for.” His gaze moves instinctively to the small things others might overlook — a polished brass handle, the perfect alignment of a frame, the warmth of a smile. It is not supervision; it is communion.

Hospitality, to Bernd, has always been an **art of anticipation** — a craft born from precision, empathy, and the quiet joy of giving. Long before he became one of **Accor’s** most respected leaders, he learned these lessons in the disciplined

kitchens of Europe, where he began as a young chef. The heat of the stove, the demand for exact timing, the insistence on excellence — these shaped his philosophy that service, like fine cuisine, must engage every sense and come from the heart.

Now, as **Cluster General Manager of Raffles and Fairmont Makati**, Bernd orchestrates a different kind of artistry — one that unites hundreds of people in the shared pursuit of perfection. To him, the grandeur of a five-star property means little without the sincerity behind it. “Luxury,” he says, “is not defined by things. It is defined by thoughtfulness.”



Honored at the 32nd TTG Travel Awards 2023, Raffles Makati earns the Best City Hotel Award, accepted by Cluster General Manager Bernd Schneider.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

He has walked these corridors through celebrations and crises alike — greeting guests, encouraging staff, and finding meaning in moments of calm. His leadership is neither loud nor theatrical. It is felt in presence: the leader who listens, who joins the team when the ballroom is full, who notices when someone's effort deserves quiet praise.

Colleagues call him “the conductor who never raises his baton.” For Bernd, that is compliment enough.

Outside the hotel's glass façade, Makati's skyline glows — a city he now calls his **second home**. It was here that his son

was born, where his daughters graduated, and where he rediscovered the beauty of service that is not only professional but deeply human. “Manila has a special warmth,” he reflects. “People here serve not out of obligation, but from the heart.”

As the lobby awakens — the soft murmur of voices, the gentle clinking of China — the symphony resumes. Bernd pauses at the foot of the grand staircase, watching as light spills across the marble, illuminating the day ahead. In that moment, everything he has built — his discipline, his compassion, his devotion to excellence — comes together in quiet harmony.



Outside the hotel's glass façade, Makati's skyline glows — a city he now calls his second home.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

For in the end, Bernd Schneider is not merely the maestro of a luxury hotel. He is its most devoted musician — one whose life's work is the music of service itself.

The Making of a Hotelier

Long before the tailored suits, the boardrooms, and the glittering lobbies of the world's most storied hotels, there was a young man in a Bavarian kitchen, sleeves rolled up, knife in hand, learning the language of excellence through heat, repetition, and patience. Bernd Schneider's journey began not in luxury, but in discipline — a discipline he would later translate into grace.

He grew up in **Kaufbeuren**, a small town in southern Germany surrounded by the pastoral calm of Bavaria — a place where values were clear, work was earnest, and community meant more than convenience. In his family home, simplicity and rigor coexisted. Days were structured, and effort was expected. "Growing up in Kaufbeuren taught me family values, discipline, and the value of hard work," he would later reflect. "My apprenticeship in Bavaria exposed me to high standards and a strong culture of service. Together, they shaped how I see the world and how I lead — with focus, respect, and a deep commitment to quality."

“

My apprenticeship in Bavaria exposed me to high standards and a strong culture of service. Together, they shaped how I see the world and how I lead — with focus, respect, and a deep commitment to quality.

It was in these formative years that the foundation of Bernd's philosophy was laid: **excellence was not to be demanded — it was to be lived.** He often credits this early environment for shaping his sense of purpose and precision. In a society that revered craftsmanship — whether one was a baker, a blacksmith, or a brewer — perfection was not a pursuit but a duty.

By the time he entered the **Berufsschule Bad Wörishofen** in 1981 to study culinary arts, Bernd had already made peace with the demanding world he was entering. The kitchens of Bavaria were exacting, where the clang of pans echoed like a clock's tick, and a misplaced garnish could spell a lecture in humility. He apprenticed as a chef — first mastering the basics of flavor, balance, and timing, then learning the subtler art of presence. "A chef must always be two steps ahead," his mentors would tell him.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

“The moment the guest arrives, the experience must already be perfect.” This early training instilled in him a **profound respect for anticipation**, a theme that would later define his approach to hospitality. To cook was to prepare not just food, but joy; to lead, later in life, was to prepare not just plans, but people.

His years of apprenticeship led him to France, where he worked at the **two Michelin-starred Schillinger restaurant**, a crucible of refinement and creativity. It was here that he began to understand the power of **cross-cultural collaboration**. Among chefs from different nations — each with their own accents, temperaments, and techniques — Bernd found that excellence had no nationality. “At Schillinger, I learned that true excellence transcends borders,” he recalls. “Working alongside multicultural colleagues, I saw how quiet precision and deep respect for craft could elevate every gesture.”

Those experiences in France, and later in Spain and Austria, would permanently alter his worldview. It was no longer just about technique — it was about **craftsmanship meeting humanity**. Behind every dish, every service, every interaction, there was emotion: the smile of a satisfied guest, the quiet camaraderie of a kitchen brigade, the shared pride of a team that had created something beautiful together.

During those years, Bernd began to see that the kitchen was a metaphor for life. It was a place of hierarchy and heat, yet also of mentorship and artistry. You learned to take criticism without losing confidence, to serve others without losing self, and to strive for perfection while embracing imperfection as part of growth.

It was during one late evening, long after the last plate had left the pass, that Bernd realized something that would change his path forever. Standing in the quiet kitchen, surrounded by the faint aroma of herbs and the soft hum of cooling ovens, he understood that what he loved most was not the food — **it was the feeling of giving**. It was hospitality in its purest form: the alchemy of care turned into experience.

“I realized hospitality was more than a job during my early years in Europe,” he would later say. “There was something deeply fulfilling about creating moments that made people feel seen and cared for. But it truly became my life’s purpose when I began working internationally. Experiencing how service transcends language and culture, how a warm welcome or a perfectly timed gesture can connect people anywhere in the world — that is when I knew this was my calling.”

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

From that moment on, his career ceased to be a profession and became a vocation. Hospitality was no longer about service — it was about connection. And **connection**, to Bernd, was sacred. He deepened his understanding of this craft at the **Hotel School Bad Wörishofen**, where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Hotel and Catering Management in 1992. But Bernd, always restless for mastery, did not stop there. In 2001, he attended the **General Managers Program at Cornell University's School of Hotel Administration** — an experience that would mark his formal transformation from chef to hotelier. There, he learned the art of systems and scale, the science of leadership, and the strategic thinking that would allow him to lead not just teams, but organizations.

“The combination of Hotel School Bad Wörishofen and Cornell gave me both the operational foundation and the strategic perspective essential for leadership in today's hospitality world,” he recalls. “It taught me to see the big picture — to understand that a hotel is not just about operations, but about culture, brand, and experience.”

What set him apart even then was his ability to blend **discipline with empathy**, precision with poetry. He understood numbers and narratives with equal fluency. His mind could process logistics, while his heart intuited emotion — a rare balance that would later make him one of Accor's most trusted leaders.

As his education ended and his career with **Accor Hotels** began, Bernd carried one constant belief: that in a world of evolving trends and technologies, the **human touch remains timeless**. He had seen it in the kitchens of Europe and would soon see it in the lobbies of Asia: that the soul of hospitality lies not in opulence, but in sincerity.

Those early years — of flame and fragrance, of long hours and quiet breakthroughs — did more than prepare him for management. They forged a leadership style defined by humility, curiosity, and an unshakable respect for people. And they left him with one enduring truth: **that service, at its highest level, is not about performance — it is about presence.**



Joining the team on a field sales call, Bernd showcases hands-on leadership as General Manager of Raffles.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership



Sharing a fun and meaningful moment with hotel colleagues, Bernd takes part in their Annual Team Building event.

The Accor Odyssey

When Bernd Schneider first joined **Accor Hotels**, he did so not as an ambitious executive but as a craftsman eager to learn how great hotels moved — how they breathed, adapted, and served with elegance. Over the next three decades, that curiosity would evolve into mastery. His career would become a living chronicle of Accor's own transformation — from a European hotel company rooted in operational precision to **a global hospitality leader defined by innovation, culture, and care.**

From the beginning, Bernd treated every posting not as a transfer, but as a classroom. Whether in **Europe, the Middle East, or Asia**, he saw each culture, each property, as a study in human behavior. His philosophy matured from process-oriented leadership to a

profoundly **people-centered approach**, mirroring Accor's own shift toward what it now calls “heartist” culture — a belief that every employee is both artist and ambassador, creating experiences through the art of the heart.

“My leadership philosophy has evolved from operational precision to people-centered empowerment,” Bernd reflects. “It mirrors Accor's own journey — from a traditional hotel group to a global lifestyle brand.”

The first phase of his career was marked by discipline. In those early years in Europe, he focused on consistency, standards, and systems — the mechanics of great hospitality. His attention to detail, honed in kitchens and fortified through management training, became his signature. Yet as his roles expanded across continents, Bernd began to see that **leadership was not about systems alone — it was about souls.**

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

In the **UAE and India**, he learned adaptability; in **China and Southeast Asia**, he learned diplomacy; and in Japan, where he served as General Manager of the Swissôtel Nankai Osaka and Area General Manager for AccorHotels West Japan, he absorbed an almost spiritual approach to service — one rooted in ritual, respect, and relentless self-improvement. “Each country reshaped my understanding of what excellence meant,” he recalls. “In Japan, it was precision. In the Philippines, it was heart. In France, it was artistry. In Indonesia, it was grace. The best leaders know how to blend them all.”

His **33 years** with Accor became a mosaic of cultural lessons and professional evolution. In 2016, when Accor acquired the Fairmont Raffles Hotels International (FRHI) group, Bernd immediately recognized the significance. “Raffles has always been an admirable brand to work for, with its great history and reputation,” he said. “I saw in it a chance to blend tradition with transformation.” It was not merely another assignment — it was a convergence of heritage and innovation, a chance to lead two legendary brands into a new era of global relevance.

By 2019, Bernd had assumed the role of **Cluster General Manager of Raffles and Fairmont Makati**, overseeing what he calls “a striking 30-floor masterpiece” in the heart of the city’s financial district.

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Each country reshaped my understanding of what excellence meant. In Japan, it was precision. In the Philippines, it was heart. In France, it was artistry. In Indonesia, it was grace. The best leaders know how to blend them all.

Two years later, he was named **Area General Manager for the Philippines**, supporting ten operating hotels and fifteen under development. The scale was immense; the stakes, even higher. Yet Bernd’s compass remained simple: lead with empathy, uphold standards, and build trust.

“Empathy does not mean lowering expectations,” he explains. “It means understanding what people need to succeed — and holding them accountable with care.”

This philosophy defined his leadership style in the Philippines. He built teams not around obedience, but around **ownership**. Meetings were not mere reports — they were conversations. Feedback was not criticism — it was mentorship. His belief was that

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

leadership happens by presence, not position. Colleagues recall how he would personally visit departments — engineering, housekeeping, culinary, concierge — to listen, guide, and celebrate progress. To them, Bernd was both leader and listener, exacting yet approachable.

At Raffles Makati, he introduced the “**The Butler Did It**” campaign — a celebration of service excellence where the hotel’s butlers became symbols of empowerment. In one memorable instance, his team created a heartfelt surprise for a guest who had returned to the Philippines after forty years abroad. They prepared a video montage of Manila’s sights and sounds, ending the evening with a nostalgic gesture: a serving of balut and a bottle of San Miguel Beer — icons of homecoming. The guest was moved to tears. For Bernd, that was **luxury defined by emotion, not expense.**

He also oversaw Raffles Makati and Fairmont Makati’s journey toward sustainability and innovation. His hotels became the **first luxury properties in the Philippines to earn Green Globe certification**, a milestone he describes not as an accolade but a responsibility. “Sustainability is not a trend,” he insists. “It’s a duty.” Under his guidance, rooftop herb gardens were planted, a bee sanctuary was established to promote biodiversity, and eco-conscious guest programs like bicycle rentals and electric vehicle options became standard.

His daily routine, though structured, is filled with humanity. Each morning, he begins with a quiet walk through the hotel, taking note of details guests might never consciously see — a scuff on the marble, the temperature of the lobby, the aroma of fresh coffee. Then come the briefings: operational, strategic, and developmental. In the afternoons, he dedicates time to training and mentoring. “I attend and observe our in-house programs,” he says, “because leadership is a contact sport. You must be present.”



Raffles Makati and Fairmont Makati became the first luxury properties in the Philippines to earn Green Globe certification.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

That contact — the genuine connection between leader and team — is what sets him apart. His “heartist” philosophy, derived from Accor’s blend of heart and artist, underlines his conviction that hospitality is both craft and care. “Service must come from the heart,” he tells new hires. “That comes naturally to Filipinos — it’s why this country feels like home to me.”

Over the years, he has become a **custodian of legacy brands**. To him, Fairmont and Raffles are not just hotels but symbols — each representing a different dimension of luxury. Fairmont, with its North American lineage, celebrates the bold and modern; Raffles, steeped in Asian tradition, embodies timeless grace. His task was to ensure both coexisted harmoniously, each retaining its identity while sharing one soul.

“Fairmont brings destinations to life through authentic service and memorable moments,” Bernd explains. “Raffles offers timeless, bespoke hospitality defined by legendary care. Together, they represent two sides of the same coin — warmth and refinement.”

He measures success not by spreadsheets alone, but by sentiment. Guest feedback, online reviews, repeat visits — these are the metrics that matter. When Raffles and Fairmont Makati both received a **MICHELIN Key in the 2025/2026**

MICHELIN Guide Hotel Selection, Bernd saw it as a culmination of his team’s relentless pursuit of excellence. “This recognition affirms our commitment to exceptional experiences,” he said with quiet pride. “But it also reminds us that excellence is not an endpoint — it is a journey.”

That journey has never been solitary. Bernd credits his teams, his mentors, and his family for grounding him. His wife, **Pipin**, whom he met during a posting in Jakarta thirty years ago, and their three children — **Laura**, **Eirine**, and **Benedict** — form the center of his universe. “Manila is where our story continues,” he smiles. “It’s where our son was born, and where our daughters finished school. It’s home in every sense.”



Helping protect and restore waterways through hands-on stewardship, Bernd participates in River Clean-Up Drive.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

Looking back on three decades with Accor, Bernd recognizes that his evolution mirrors the company's own: from transactional to transformational, from service to **soulful experience**. He often tells his managers, "Hotels are no longer just places to stay — they are places to feel."

And perhaps that is why, after thirty-three years, Bernd Schneider remains one of Accor's most respected leaders — not because he built hotels, but because he **built meaning within them**. His life's work stands as a testament to the idea that hospitality, at its finest, is not a business — it is a bridge between hearts.

The Philippine Connection

There are places that define one's career, and there are places that define one's soul. For Bernd Schneider, the Philippines has been both. His story with the country spans nearly two decades and three distinct chapters, each one marking not just a professional milestone but a personal homecoming.

When he first arrived in Manila in 2005 as **General Manager of Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila and Area General Manager of Accor Philippines**, he found a country teeming with warmth, optimism, and a natural gift for hospitality. "Our son was born in Manila during my first assignment," he often recalls with pride. That single



Embracing the values of unity, cooperation, and togetherness, Bernd joins the celebration of World Duo Day.

moment marked not only the beginning of a new posting but also the start of a lifelong bond. "Manila," he would later say, "is not just where my work took root — it's where my family's story flourished."

That first tenure introduced him to the unique Filipino spirit of service — a blend of sincerity, generosity, and joy that felt instinctive rather than taught. "Filipinos have an extraordinary ability to serve not just with skill, but with heart," Bernd says. "Hospitality here is not a profession — it's a reflection of culture."

For a man who had worked across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, this realization was transformative. In the Philippines, he saw what many in global

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

hospitality often sought but rarely found: **empathy as an instinct**, kindness as a constant. From the way staff greeted guests with unforced warmth to how communities treated one another with respect and humor even in hardship, Bernd discovered a cultural DNA that resonated deeply with his own philosophy of leadership.

When he returned to the country in **2014** as **Pre-Opening General Manager of Novotel Manila Araneta Center**, Bernd found the hospitality landscape evolving — boldly modern yet still anchored in its people-first roots. “On my second assignment to the country,” he recalls, “our two daughters graduated high school in Manila.” For him, the Philippines had become a family chapter, a place of growth not just for his team, but for those he loved most.

That second tenure was defined by innovation and reinvention. Novotel, a contemporary midscale brand, represented Accor’s forward-looking spirit, and Bernd led its establishment with the same rigor and creativity he once brought to luxury brands. But more than infrastructure, he focused on **people infrastructure** — developing teams, shaping mindsets, and instilling a belief that Filipino hoteliers could excel on the world stage.

He recalls those early days of the pre-opening: training sessions filled with

enthusiasm, corridors buzzing with first-day energy, and young professionals brimming with curiosity. “What I found most inspiring was how fast Filipinos learned — not just the processes, but the philosophy of service,” he says. “They understood instinctively that hospitality was about heart before it was about hierarchy.”

*In the Philippines,
he saw what many
in global hospitality
often sought but
rarely found:
empathy as an
instinct, kindness
as a constant.*

When he returned for his **third posting** in **2019**, this time to helm the **Raffles and Fairmont Makati**, it felt less like an assignment and more like a **homecoming**. “Manila is like a second home to me and my family,” he says. “They love it here, and they are in full support.” By then, he was no longer an expatriate leading a foreign property; he was a steward of Filipino excellence on the global luxury map.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

The Raffles and Fairmont Makati complex, with its thirty stories of refined elegance and artistry, became Bernd's newest canvas — a place where his global experience met his emotional connection to the Philippines. Each corner reflected his meticulous eye: the balance of light and texture in the lobby, the curated art collection featuring Filipino masters, and the **Writers Bar**, a modern homage to heritage and intellect.

Under his leadership, **Raffles Makati** and **Fairmont Makati** became models of both **luxury and responsibility**. Sustainability was woven into every detail — from eco-conscious architecture and operations to community engagement programs that extended beyond the hotel walls. The properties became the first luxury hotels in the country to achieve Green Globe certification, a distinction



Taking part in the Hotel Fun Run, Bernd enjoys the energy and camaraderie of colleagues and team members.

Bernd treats not as a trophy but as a commitment. “Sustainability is a cornerstone of leadership,” he explains. “It’s not about what we achieve — it’s about what we preserve for the next generation.”

In interviews, Bernd often credits the **Filipino spirit of “bayanihan”** — the collective sense of community — as an enduring source of inspiration. During crises such as typhoons or the pandemic, he witnessed his teams go beyond their professional roles to serve and support others. “The pandemic tested us all,” he says. “But it also revealed the true strength of Filipino hospitality — resilience anchored in compassion.”

When lockdowns closed borders and emptied hotels, Bernd and his team at Raffles and Fairmont Makati reimagined their purpose. They hosted quarantine guests, frontliners, and long-stay professionals; they developed creative initiatives to sustain morale; and they turned moments of uncertainty into opportunities for care. “In those times, leadership meant being visible, reassuring, and human,” he reflects. “It reminded us that hospitality is not about luxury — it’s about humanity.”

Through it all, Bernd's attachment to the country only deepened. On weekends, he could be found **biking** with fellow

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

German expats and Filipino friends, or at the driving range, unwinding under the evening lights. Yet his favorite moments remained the simplest — family dinners, conversations with his children, and quiet evenings at home filled with laughter.



Enjoying a relaxing round on the fairway, Bernd spends quality time playing golf with friends.

He has often said that the Philippines taught him **gratitude** — not just for professional success, but for life's intangibles: warmth, family, friendship, and faith. "What makes Filipino hospitality unique is its soul," he says. "It's not learned in school; it's lived in daily life. And that is something the world can learn from."

When asked what legacy he hopes to leave in the Philippine hospitality industry, Bernd answers with characteristic humility. "I aspire to be remembered for heartfelt service, responsible leadership, and a culture of excellence that elevates Filipino professionals globally," he says. "My goal is to help shape a new generation of hoteliers who lead with both intelligence and empathy." He envisions Raffles and Fairmont Makati not merely as hotels, but as **institutions of learning and inspiration** — places where young Filipinos can refine their craft, develop global confidence, and discover their own voices as leaders. "I want them to see that excellence is not about imitation," he explains. "It's about authenticity — about expressing who we are, as Filipinos, as professionals, as people."

Perhaps this is why Bernd speaks of the Philippines not as a destination but as destiny. For him, each return has carried new purpose, each chapter deeper meaning. From the birth of his son at Sofitel to his daughters' graduations at Novotel, from his stewardship of Raffles and Fairmont to his Rotary and civic engagements, **the country has become part of his family's story — and he, part of its narrative of leadership and heart.**

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership



Celebrating camaraderie and club spirit, Bernd joins the German Club Cranes for a lively gathering.

In the end, it is fitting that Bernd Schneider finds himself once again in Manila, the city where his professional excellence meets his personal belonging. “It is great to be back home,” he says with quiet conviction. And indeed, for the man who has lived and led across continents, it seems the most natural conclusion — that the place which taught him warmth, resilience, and humanity is also the place where his greatest legacy continues to unfold.

The Philosophy of Leadership

Leadership, in Bernd Schneider’s world, has never been about titles, corner offices, or ceremonial authority. It has always been about **presence** — the visible, consistent kind that inspires people not through instruction, but through example. To him, the truest form of leadership is the kind that walks the talk — that translates lofty ideals into tangible daily acts of integrity, discipline, and care.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

“True leadership walks the talk,” he often says. “You cannot expect excellence from others if you do not live it yourself.”

In the bustling ecosystem of a luxury hotel, where hundreds of team members work in perfect synchrony, Bernd’s approach stands out precisely because it is human. He doesn’t command from a distance; he moves among his people. Early each morning, long before the first guests descend for breakfast, he takes his customary walk through the hotel — greeting staff, noting details, quietly reminding everyone that perfection begins with mindfulness. For the team, that morning ritual is not just routine; it’s a symbol of constancy.

At **Raffles and Fairmont Makati**, colleagues know that Bernd will not ask of anyone what he himself is unwilling to do. He has been seen rearranging chairs before an event, serving drinks during an unexpected rush, or personally checking rooms to ensure every guest’s experience meets the highest standards. These gestures, small but powerful, communicate something deeper than policy — they build **trust through humility**.

“Leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room,” he once told a group of new managers. “It’s about being the most trusted.”

Trust, Bernd believes, is the invisible currency of every great organization. It cannot be demanded; it must be earned — through consistency, fairness, and genuine care. This philosophy has made him not only a respected leader within Accor but a beloved mentor among his teams.

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Leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room. It’s about being the most trusted.

He leads with a rare blend of empathy and excellence — two forces that, in his view, are not opposites but complements. “Empathy doesn’t mean lowering expectations,” he explains. “It means understanding what people need to succeed — and holding them accountable with compassion.” He has built teams that feel both challenged and supported, where high standards coexist with a culture of respect.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

Bernd's approach to management is rooted in **mentorship** rather than authority. To him, developing people is not an HR function; it is the very essence of leadership. "Mentorship means helping others realize their full potential," he says. "It is leading by example, being present, and showing genuine care." He often shares stories from his own journey — from apprentice chef to general manager — to remind young hoteliers that success is not defined by how quickly one rises, but by how deeply one grows.

At Raffles, this mentoring culture is institutionalized through initiatives like The Butler Did It, a storytelling campaign that celebrates colleagues who go above and beyond for guests. These stories, drawn from real experiences, showcase the soul of the brand — the ability to anticipate needs and deliver moments of wonder with quiet elegance. One particularly memorable story involved a long-time guest returning to Manila after four decades abroad. Wanting to make his stay special, the Raffles team, inspired by Bernd's philosophy of personalized service, created a music video capturing the sights and sounds of the city and presented it along with a traditional Filipino balut and beer. The guest was moved to tears — a testament to what Bernd calls "luxury with a heart."

This kind of empowerment — encouraging staff to think creatively, act decisively, and serve meaningfully — is the hallmark of



Participating in the International Week of the Deaf, Bernd champions awareness and equal opportunities for the deaf community.

Bernd's leadership. He does not see his employees as subordinates but as **partners in the art of hospitality**. "Great leaders," he says, "create environments where people feel safe to innovate, free to care, and proud to belong."

His management meetings often include reflective discussions about purpose and emotional intelligence. He challenges his managers to ask themselves not just how they serve, but why they serve. "When people understand the 'why,'" he explains, "they find fulfillment beyond the paycheck — they find meaning."

In an industry often driven by numbers and reviews, Bernd insists that **emotional metrics** — trust, loyalty, gratitude — matter just as much

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

as financial ones. His offices across properties display not trophies or certificates, but handwritten letters from guests and staff — expressions of appreciation that, for him, are worth more than any award.

He also believes in the **power of listening** — a trait he calls “the silent strength of leader-ship.” Bernd’s open-door policy is legendary among his teams. Employees at every level know they can walk in, speak candidly, and be heard without judgment. “Listening builds bridges,” he says simply. “When people feel heard, they give their best.”

For him, **mentorship is cyclical** — what he learns from one generation, he

passes on to the next. Many of his former protégés now hold executive roles across Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Canada, a lineage of leadership that quietly reflects his influence. “The greatest success,” he says, “is seeing others rise because you believed in them.”

This same belief in people extends beyond the hotel walls. As an active member of the **Rotary Club of Manila** since 2006 and former President of the **German Club of the Philippines**, Bernd applies the same principles of empathy and action to his civic life. “Hospitality doesn’t end at the front desk,” he once said during a Rotary panel. “It continues in how we show up for our communities.”

Rotary’s motto — Service Above Self — resonates deeply with him. It mirrors the very values he brings to his professional world: compassion, service, and integrity. Through Rotary and the **European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines**, Bernd has supported numerous initiatives in education, health, and disaster relief, often focusing on programs that empower young professionals and underprivileged communities.

To his peers in both the civic and hospitality sectors, Bernd embodies the **servant-leader archetype** — a leader whose strength lies not in authority but in authenticity. His leadership style, calm yet purposeful, is a study in quiet power.



Turning over a meaningful donation to Caritas Manila, Bernd helps strengthen ongoing efforts to support vulnerable families.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

Those who work with him often describe a man of presence — never hurried, always aware, someone who can diffuse tension with a few words and inspire action with even fewer.

At the heart of it all lies a belief that **leadership is not a performance — it is a practice.** It is lived in everyday decisions: in how one treats a colleague, how one responds to a problem, how one celebrates a success. “True leadership,” Bernd reflects, “is not about being perfect. It’s about being consistent — with values, with vision, and with heart.”

And perhaps that is why his teams describe him not just as a general manager, but as a mentor, a coach, a friend. His influence is felt not through speeches, but through example; not through policy, but through purpose.

For Bernd Schneider, leadership is not about standing above — it is about standing with. And in the elegant dance of hospitality, he has mastered the rarest choreography of all: the **balance between excellence and empathy, precision and compassion, heart and art.**

Beyond the Lobby

To the casual observer, Bernd Schneider may appear the quintessential hotelier: poised, impeccably dressed, and fluent in



Supporting the mission of granting life-changing wishes to children, Bernd visits the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

the unspoken language of luxury. Yet those who know him well understand that beneath the polish lies a profound sense of **purpose** — one that extends far beyond the walls of Raffles and Fairmont Makati. For Bernd, hospitality is not confined to the art of service; it is a philosophy of living, one that **embraces care, stewardship, and social responsibility** as inseparable dimensions of leadership.

He often says that “**hospitality is about care, and that care does not stop at the front desk. It continues in how we show up for our communities.**” That conviction — quiet yet unwavering — has guided both his corporate and civic life for decades. Whether in his role as a general manager, a Rotary leader, or a father, Bernd believes that success without service is hollow.

A Steward of Sustainability

Under his stewardship, **Raffles and Fairmont Makati** became the first luxury hotels in the Philippines to earn Green Globe Certification — a distinction that, for Bernd, symbolizes not just environmental compliance but a moral commitment to future generations. “Sustainability,” he says, “is not a trend; it’s a responsibility.”

The certification was the culmination of years of deliberate effort: transforming sustainability from an abstract ideal into a lived practice. Guided by Accor’s Sustainability program, Bernd led his teams in integrating eco-friendly practices across operations — reducing waste, minimizing energy use, and sourcing ingredients responsibly. But where many leaders might have stopped at compliance, Bernd went further.

He envisioned the hotel as a living ecosystem, capable of both nurturing its guests and sustaining its environment. On the rooftop, a **herb garden** and a **bee sanctuary** thrive — a quiet oasis above the city’s noise, contributing to urban biodiversity and supplying fresh produce to the hotel’s kitchens. Inside, thoughtful innovations — such as water-saving fixtures, energy-efficient systems, and sustainable culinary practices — reflect his belief that luxury and responsibility can coexist beautifully.

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We don’t lecture guests about sustainability. We inspire them to be part of it.

“A truly great hotel serves the planet as much as it serves its guests,”

Bernd says. “Our guests today are not only seeking comfort — they are seeking conscience.”

His approach to sustainability is holistic, blending operational discipline with emotional intelligence. Guests are gently invited into the movement through simple yet meaningful choices: eco-friendly amenities, paperless transactions, and low-impact travel options such as complimentary bicycles and electric vehicle services. “We don’t lecture guests about sustainability,” he explains. “We inspire them to be part of it.”

Bernd believes that environmental stewardship is also a **form of leadership development**. “When you teach your team to think sustainably,” he says, “you teach them to think long-term. You teach them responsibility — not just for the present task, but for the future.”

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership



Welcoming a new year of leadership and service, Bernd stands alongside the newly elected Board Directors of the Rotary Club of Manila.

Service Beyond the Brand

Bernd's deep involvement in civic organizations reflects the same philosophy of care. As **Past President of the German Club of the Philippines, long-time member of the Rotary Club of Manila, and Member of the Board in the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP)**, he has worked tirelessly to bridge cultures and foster goodwill.

His presidency at the German Club was marked by outreach initiatives that brought the expatriate and Filipino communities closer together — through cultural events, charity drives, and educational scholarships. “The German Club has always been a bridge between nations,” he notes. “It reminds us that we are not just guests in this country — we are partners in its progress.”

Through Rotary, Bernd's sense of purpose

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

deepened further. He found in the organization a reflection of his own values — discipline in action, compassion in service, and humility in success. “Service Above Self is not just a motto,” he says. “It is a daily practice.” Over the years, he has participated in projects ranging from **disaster relief operations to education and health programs** for underserved communities. He has personally supported Rotary’s flagship causes — such as polio eradication, water sanitation, and youth empowerment — often engaging his hotel teams to volunteer alongside him.

During the pandemic, when many hospitality professionals faced uncertainty, Bernd’s commitment to service took on new urgency. “When our doors closed to travelers, they opened wider to our communities,” he recalls. “We supported frontliners, hosted medical teams, and ensured our employees’ safety and well-being.” For him, that period redefined leadership. “In times of crisis, people don’t need perfection — they need presence.”

A Mentor in the Civic Arena

Just as he nurtures his hotel teams, Bernd mentors young professionals and future leaders through civic platforms. In Rotary meetings and industry forums, his message remains consistent: **leadership anchored in empathy endures**. He

often tells younger Rotarians, “We can build skyscrapers, but the true measure of progress is how we lift people.”

His Rotary colleagues describe him as a man of quiet conviction — never one to seek the spotlight, yet always the first to lend a hand. His ability to navigate between the worlds of business and philanthropy with grace has earned him admiration from peers across sectors. “Bernd is the embodiment of balance,” one colleague once said. “He leads with the precision of a hotelier and the heart of a humanitarian.”

The Soul of a Global Citizen

Bernd’s life, after all, is one of constant movement — across continents, cultures, and communities. Yet wherever he goes, his compass remains steady: to serve, to uplift, to connect. He believes that in today’s complex world, **leadership requires not only competence but conscience**. “We are global citizens,” he often reminds his teams. “That means our responsibility extends far beyond the businesses we manage — it includes the societies we influence.”

For him, sustainability and service share the same moral foundation: empathy. Whether nurturing an eco-conscious brand or mentoring young Rotarians, Bernd’s underlying message is one of stewardship. “We are temporary

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

custodians of something greater than ourselves,” he says. “Our duty is to leave it better than we found it — whether it’s a hotel, a community, or the planet.”

The Human Side of the Hotelier

Behind the professional gravitas and civic dedication is a man who cherishes life’s simplest joys. Bernd finds balance in motion — through **football matches at Merville**, rounds of **golf with friends**, and leisurely **bike rides** with his family and friends. Evenings are for reflection, often spent with his wife **Pipin** and their children, **Laura, Eirine, and Benedict**, sharing stories over dinner or watching the Manila skyline from their apartment filled with antique treasures collected from his travels.

“Our apartment is a collection of the journey we’ve lived,” he says fondly. “Each piece tells a story — from the Capiz lamps of Manila to the paintings from India. It reminds us that life, like hospitality, is about preserving beauty while embracing change.”

In the quiet moments between the rush of meetings and events, Bernd returns to what grounds him: gratitude. “Every day, I start with a walk through the hotel,” he says. “I observe the details, greet my colleagues, thank them for their work. It’s a ritual of awareness and appreciation. It reminds me why we do what we do.”



Building camaraderie and strengthening bonds, Bernd plays golf with colleagues in the hospitality industry.

This daily discipline of mindfulness, he explains, is the secret to sustaining both energy and empathy. “Leadership can be exhausting if it is driven only by ambition,” he muses. “But when it’s driven by purpose, it replenishes you.”

And that is perhaps the heart of Bernd Schneider’s philosophy — **that purpose transforms work into art, and service into legacy**. Whether stewarding luxury brands, championing sustainability, or mentoring through Rotary, he approaches each endeavor with the same belief: that leadership, at its truest, is not about power but about care with conviction.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

The Art of Leading with Heart

In the tapestry of a career that has spanned continents, cultures, and decades, Bernd Schneider stands today as more than a hotelier. He is a builder of legacies — of institutions, of people, of meaning. His journey, woven through kitchens, boardrooms, and communities, has been anchored in one enduring truth: **leadership begins with authenticity and endures through service.**

When asked what success means after three decades at the pinnacle of global hospitality, Bernd does not speak of accolades, metrics, or milestones. He pauses, reflective, and answers softly, “Success is making a meaningful impact on people and leading with integrity and empathy.”

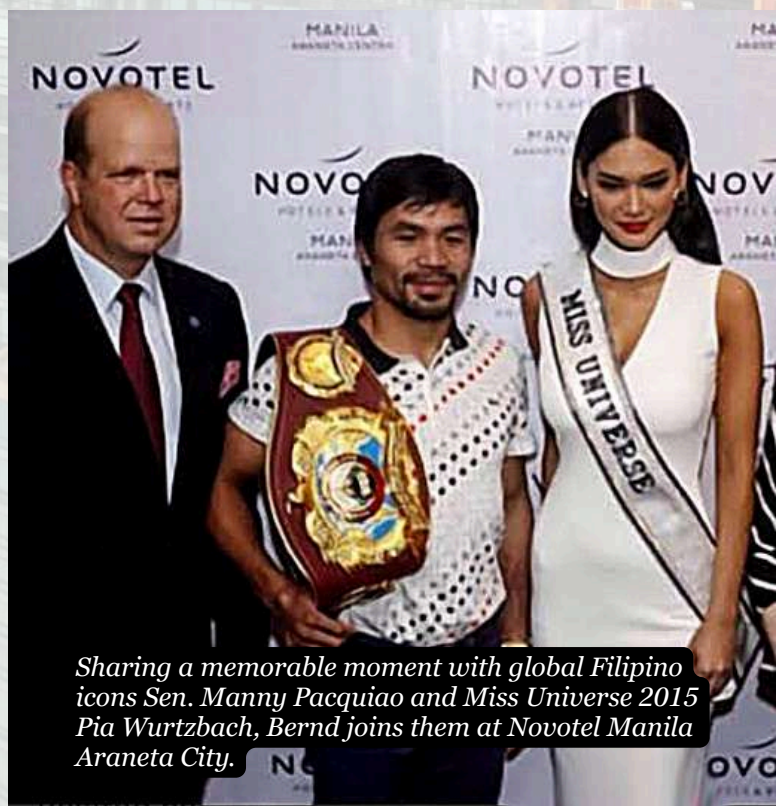
A Legacy Rooted in People

For Bernd, the most rewarding measure of leadership is not found in balance sheets or industry rankings, but in the people who have grown under his mentorship. Over the years, many of his protégés have risen to become hotel managers, executives, and leaders across Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Canada. Their success stories form a quiet constellation of influence, radiating outward from every property he has touched.

“What brings me the greatest fulfillment,” he says, “is witnessing the transformation

of people — seeing them rise into their potential, lead with confidence, and carry forward the same values of excellence and care. That is the true measure of success.”

He often describes leadership as “planting trees whose shade you may never sit under.” It is an act of trust and vision — believing that every investment in people will, in time, bear fruit. This philosophy has guided him from the early days of his career to his current post as Cluster General Manager of Raffles and Fairmont Makati, and it continues to inform how he grooms the next generation of Filipino hoteliers.



Sharing a memorable moment with global Filipino icons Sen. Manny Pacquiao and Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach, Bernd joins them at Novotel Manila Araneta City.

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership



Sharing a wonderful day on the course, Bernd joins his colleagues at the German Club for a memorable golf outing.

He sees in them the same spark that once defined his own youth: a hunger to serve, a curiosity to learn, and an instinct to care. To these aspiring professionals, he offers timeless counsel: “Build relationships, not just résumés. Understand not just the tasks, but the people behind them. And never forget that hospitality, at its core, is an act of kindness.”

The Vision for Tomorrow

As he looks ahead, Bernd envisions the future of Raffles and Fairmont Makati as

one grounded in sustainability, culture, and people-first leadership. “I want these properties to stand as benchmarks for sustainable luxury and authentic Filipino hospitality,” he says. “They should not only be admired for their elegance, but remembered for their humanity.”

His vision extends beyond the guest experience; it encompasses the environment, the workforce, and the broader community. Under his leadership, sustainability initiatives continue to evolve — not as add-ons, but as integral expressions of responsible luxury. The

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

rooftop gardens, bee sanctuaries, and eco-conscious systems serve as metaphors for the kind of world he hopes to help build: **rooted in beauty, nurtured by responsibility, and sustained by purpose.**

But for Bernd, innovation is not just about technology or green certifications — it is about mindset. He encourages his teams to think creatively, question conventions, and find joy in progress. “Innovation,” he says, “is born from empathy — the desire to make things better for others.”

He also sees hospitality as a **platform for cultural storytelling**, a bridge through which nations understand one another. “Hotels are windows to a country’s soul,” he reflects. “They carry its flavors, its artistry, its warmth. Through Raffles and Fairmont Makati, we celebrate Filipino culture in every detail — from art to cuisine to service. The world should not only visit the Philippines; it should feel it.”

Grace in Gratitude

At the end of each demanding day, Bernd returns to what grounds him — his family. His wife Pipin, an Indonesian whom he met in Jakarta, and their children Laura, Eirine, and Benedict remain his life’s greatest anchors. “Everything I do is for them,” he says with quiet pride. “They are my inspiration and my balance.”

Their apartment, adorned with antiques and artworks from the many countries he has called home, serves as a museum of memories — a reflection of a life lived in motion yet rooted in meaning. “Every piece tells a story” he says. “It reminds us that success is not about accumulation, but appreciation.”

It is this same spirit of gratitude that permeates his leadership. Bernd begins each morning with a silent walk through the hotel — a ritual of awareness. He notices the gleam of a marble floor, the scent of fresh flowers, the warmth in a colleague’s greeting. “These are small things,” he muses, “but they hold the essence of what we do. Hospitality is not about grandeur; it is about grace.”

The Teacher Becomes the Torchbearer

Bernd’s humility belies the magnitude of his impact. Over the years, he has been honored with distinctions such as People Asia’s “People of the Year”, Skat Philippines’ “Hotel Personality of the Year”, and the Tourism Award from the Rotary Club of Manila. Yet he wears these honors lightly, seeing them not as laurels but as reminders of responsibility.

“Every recognition is a reflection of the people who stood beside me,” he insists. “No leader succeeds alone. The orchestra

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

only plays beautifully when everyone contributes their part.”

For all his global achievements, Bernd’s influence within the **Rotary Club of Manila** remains one of his proudest legacies. Through the club’s humanitarian initiatives, he continues to embody Rotary’s timeless creed — Service Above Self. Whether raising funds for scholarships, supporting health missions, or mentoring young Rotarians, he carries with him the same attentiveness he brings to his hotels: to serve with both structure and soul.

Colleagues in Rotary often describe him as a “gentle catalyst” — someone who moves things forward not by force, but by inspiration. His quiet leadership style — observant, patient, inclusive — mirrors his belief that “influence is not about commanding others; it is about inspiring them to care.”

The Final Lesson: Leadership as Legacy

If there is a unifying thread in Bernd Schneider’s life, it is his unwavering conviction that leadership is service, refined by integrity and animated by love. His story is not one of meteoric rise or restless ambition; it is one of mastery through meaning — a journey defined by steadiness, empathy, and purpose.

“I hope to be remembered,” he says

“

Every recognition is a reflection of the people who stood beside me. No leader succeeds alone. The orchestra only plays beautifully when everyone contributes their part.

thoughtfully, “as someone who inspired others to reach their full potential, guided with intention and integrity, and made a meaningful impact on both the industry and the lives I had the privilege to touch.”

When asked what wisdom he would impart to the next generation of leaders, his reply is both simple and profound:

“True leadership begins with authenticity and service to others. Hospitality is not about titles or grandeur — it is about care, connection, and consistency. Lead with integrity, listen more than you speak, and never lose sight of the human element behind every guest, colleague, and decision. Excellence will follow naturally when empathy and purpose guide your actions.”

THE HEARTFUL HOTELIER: Bernd Schneider and Harmony of Leadership

In many ways, this credo is the culmination of everything Bernd Schneider stands for — a life's philosophy distilled into a single truth: **that excellence without empathy is empty, and success without significance is fleeting.**

As he stands today at the helm of Raffles and Fairmont Makati — two icons of elegance and heart — Bernd continues to write his story with quiet conviction. He leads not through noise, but through nuance; not through charisma, but through character. His leadership, like the hospitality he champions, is a living art form — composed of countless small gestures that, together, create something timeless.

And so, each morning, as he walks through the corridors of Raffles Makati — the marble gleaming, the staff greeting him with smiles, the air carrying the faint aroma of coffee and possibility — he is reminded of why he began this journey decades ago in a Bavarian kitchen. To serve. To connect. To create beauty through care.

That, ultimately, is Bernd Schneider's legacy: **a life where leadership became love in action, and where service became the most enduring art of all.**



Representing Raffles and Fairmont Makati, Bernd proudly receives the prestigious RCM Tourism Award.

INTERCLUB EVENT

Rotary Club of Manila Metro's 30th Anniversary



President Raoul Creencia with the Rotary Club of Manila Metro (RCMM) President Tim Esquivel, on the occasion of RCMM's 30th Anniversary on November 15, 2025.



DISTRICT EVENT

Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Chinatown Manila



DGND/DSG Hermie Esguerra and Special Assistant to the Governor-Manila SDG Albert S. Alday attended the Governor's Visit to the Rotary Club of Chinatown Manila last November 13, 2025 at the Century Seafood Restaurant in Manila.



RECOGNITION CORNER

Rotarian Ramon Alberto Nolido Honored with Professional Degree Award



Rotarian Ramon Alberto Nolido was honored with a Professional Degree Award in Civil Engineering by the U.P. Alumni Engineers(College of Engineering at the University of the Philippines) on November 16, 2025.



PUBLIC IMAGE

Rotary Club of Manila's Four-Way Test Banner Proudly Displayed Along EDSA



The Rotary Club of Manila's Four-Way Test banner is proudly displayed along EDSA.

Special thanks to Rotarian Junjie Vazquez for his generosity and support.



Rotary Club of Jinju Jeil Invites the Rotary Club of Manila to its 30th Anniversary Celebration



RC MANILA'S ANNUAL SPORTSFEST 2025



RC MANILA'S ANNUAL SPORTSFEST 2025



RC MANILA'S ANNUAL SPORTSFEST

2025



RC MANILA'S ANNUAL SPORTSFEST 2025



Rotary
District 3810



UNITE
FOR
GOOD



ALAY LAKAD 2025

Theme: "Alay Lakad, Edukasyon - Kaunlaran ng Kabataan"

SUNDAY

► 23 NOVEMBER, 2025

05:00AM

► QUIRINO GRANDSTAND

**END
POLIO
NOW**

The designated assembly point
for District 3810 will be located at
T.M. Kalaw Street.

For More Info ➡

Kindly coordinate with
DES Eric Candidato
+639174856077

ATTIRE:

END POLIO SHIRT



Alay Lakad 2024

RCM Fellowship



RCM Fellowship was held last Thursday, November 13, 2025, from 4 pm onwards, at the office lounge of Rotarian Teddy Tee. Led by Fellowship Chair Nico Valencia and attended by Rotarian Teddy Tee, STAR Rotarian Rowel Ong, Rotarian Che Soler, Secretary Anton Mauricio, Past Director Oscar del Rosario, and friends.



OPLAN KALINGA: Surgical Outreach Program

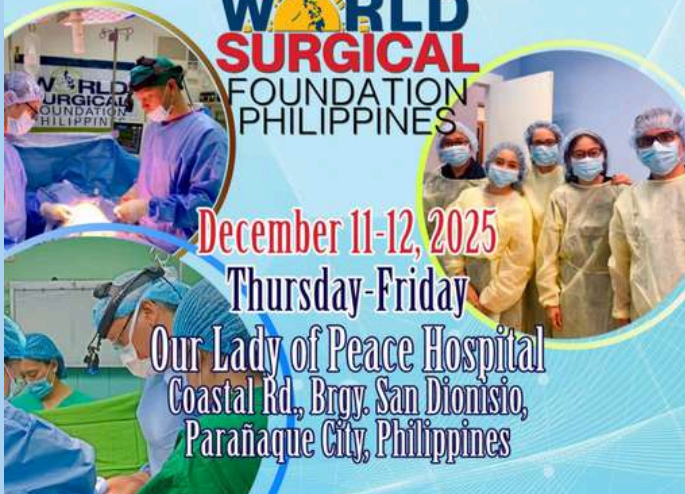
Rotary Club of Manila | UNITE FOR GOOD | RCMANILA FOUNDATION, INC.

OPLAN KALINGA: SURGICAL OUTREACH PROGRAM

in partnership with

WORLD SURGICAL FOUNDATION PHILIPPINES

December 11-12, 2025
Thursday-Friday
Our Lady of Peace Hospital
Coastal Rd., Brgy. San Dionisio,
Parañaque City, Philippines



Rotary Club of Manila | UNITE FOR GOOD

RCM Christmas Party

SAVE THE DATE
December 4, 2025
THURS | 5PM
HEXAGON LOUNGE
4TH FLR. RCBC BLDG., AYALA AVENUE





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