

ugnayan



Get to know National Winner Lydia Malot and the six other winners' stories of hardship and victories here.

Nata de Coco Manufacturer is 2015 Citi Microentrepreneur of the Year

Public school teacher turned nata de coco manufacturer Lydia Malot of Davao City was chosen the National Winner of the 2015 Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA). Lydia is the first CMA National Winner to hail from Mindanao in the program's 12-year history. Together with six other winners, Lydia was honored during the awarding ceremonies held at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) on December 2, 2015.

A partnership among the BSP, Citi Philippines, and the Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. (MCPI), the CMA is a nationwide

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco, Jr. (standing, 3rd from left) and Citi Philippines CEO Aftab Ahmed (standing, 2nd from left) led the Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards (CMA) ceremonies to honor seven outstanding microentrepreneurs. Apart from cash prizes, the awardees also received a laptop, and will soon have access to entrepreneurship and computer literacy training, business and financial mentoring, and microinsurance coverage to help accelerate their progress from micro to small and medium enterprises. Funded by the Citi Foundation, the CMA is a partnership among the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Microfinance Council of the Philippines, Inc. (MCPI) and Citi Philippines.

The other members of the CMA National Selection Committee, Ayala Corporation President Fernando Zobel de Ayala (standing 2nd from right) and Chair of the Philippine Daily Inquirer Marixi Rufino-Prieto (standing), were also present to congratulate the awardees.

CMA awardees include (seated from left to right): Special Award for Agri Micro-business awardee Laarni Ditablan, Regional Awardee for Mindanao Maternidad Salili, National Winner Lydia Malot, Regional Awardee for Luzon Ester Shiela Vitto, Special Award for Agri Micro-business awardee Victoria Bantilan, (standing leftmost) Regional Awardee for Visayas Jordan Inalisan and Special Award for Community Leadership awardee Marines Takingan (standing rightmost).

search for the most outstanding micro business owners. Funded by Citi Foundation, it started in 2002 as part of the celebration for Citi's 100th year in the Philippines. The CMA has since recognized more than 100 winners across the country.

This year, the CMA set a new record with 144 nominations from 28 microfinance institutions across the country.

Citi Philippines CEO Aftab Ahmed, who served as co-chair of the National Selection Committee (NSC) that chose this year's winners, expressed his appreciation for the industry's continuing support for the program. "Each year, it is a very involved process to identify seven awardees from a long list of winners. With each passing year, it becomes more and more evident that there continues to be a great wealth of entrepreneurs in this country. These are men and women who have displayed exceptional commitment, determination, and ingenuity to create businesses that have contributed to better lives for themselves and their families as well as to the communities in which they live."

The NSC members were all equally generous in their compliments for the exemplary business accomplishments and inspiring stories of the nominees. Despite the difficult task of sifting through nominations, the NSC unanimously chose Lydia because of her impressive business achievements and acts of bravery and perseverance.

Armed with basic knowledge on nata de coco production and Php300 capital, Lydia and her husband were able to build a thriving enterprise. When her husband succumbed to an illness, she bravely took on the reins of the business and now

supplies nata de coco to large canned food and juice producers in the Philippines. Lydia will soon be exporting her product to a customer overseas. Microfinance institution Kabalikat para sa Maunlad na Buhay, Inc. (KMBI) helps her by providing capital for expansion.

The stories of the regional and special awardees are also full of hardship and victories.

Regional Awardee for Luzon Ester Shiela Vitto and husband Ronald were able to carve a market for their homegrown sandals and slippers using old tires for the footwear's outer soles complemented with a unique service offering of free repair. Visayas Awardee Jordan Inalisan who started as a pastillas business worker is now the owner of the go-to store offering special pastillas and other delicacies from Carigara, Leyte; and Maternidad Salili, Mindanao winner, is a proud manufacturer of coil springs for some of the country's biggest manufacturing companies. Ester, Jordan, and Maternidad are clients of CARD Bank, Inc., Taytay sa Kauswagan, Inc., and KMBI, respectively.

The NSC also gave the Special Award for Agri Micro-business to two outstanding microentrepreneurs - mushroom and organic rice grower Victoria Bantilan of Negros Occidental; and fish breeder and knife fish trader Laarni Ditablan of Binangonan, Rizal. Marines Takingan's advocacy on organic farming in La Trinidad, Benguet earned him the Special Award for Community Leadership. Victoria is a member of the Negros Women for Tomorrow Foundation, Inc; while Laarni is supported by Ahon sa Hirap, Inc. Marines receives assistance from ECLOF Philippines Foundation.

The winners received close to

Php2 million in cash and non-cash prizes including life and health insurance coverage; a 4-week entrepreneurship training; and laptops and IT training. They were also inducted to the CMA Alumni Network, the winners' circle organized to provide support and networking opportunities to past winners. The alumni network offers members access to a one-on-one mentoring program that aims to identify and address specific business needs of the alumni to enhance business competitiveness.

BSP Governor and NSC Co-Chair Amando Tetangco, Jr. in his keynote said that, "Indeed, our microentrepreneurs represent a gold mine of lessons and information that has been helping us transform and improve the lives of millions of Filipinos through microfinance. A significant factor in our growing harvest of successful microenterprise stories is a regulatory environment that enables microfinance institutions or MFIs to provide appropriate products and services."

This year's NSC is composed of Gov. Tetangco and Ahmed as co-chair; with members Antonino Alindogan, Jr., Independent Director, Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation; Lisa Gokongwei-Cheng, President, Summit Media; Jose Ma. Concepcion III, President and CEO, RFM Corporation; Atty. Felipe Gozon, President and CEO, GMA Network, Inc.; Sec. Imelda Nicolas, Chairperson, Commission on Filipinos Overseas; Marixi Rufino-Prieto, Chair, the Philippine Daily Inquirer; Darwin Yu, PhD, Dean of John Gokongwei School of Management of the Ateneo de Manila University; and Fernando Zobel de Ayala, President, Ayala Corporation. ♦