

PRESS RELEASE

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AMBASSADOR GAA VISITS VIRGINIA BEACH, TIDEWATER REGION FIL-AM GROUPS

30 March 2007 – Philippine Ambassador to the United States Willy C. Gaa reported to the Department of Foreign Affairs that he visited the Filipino community in the fast-growing region of Virginia Beach, Virginia and the Tidewater Region on 16 March 2007.

The one-day visit of Ambassador Gaa and his party to the Commonwealth of Virginia – home to a high number of concentration of Filipinos and Filipino-Americans – was in response to the invitation of Virginia Beach City Councilman Ron Villanueva and hosted by The Travel Outlet CEO Roy Estaris and COO Naomi Villanueva-Fitzwilliams.

Ambassador Gaa was accompanied by his wife, Erlinda Gaa; Third Secretary and Vice Consul Angelito Nayan; Attaché Jose Edgar Ledonio; Mr. Abe Agustin of the Embassy; and Filipino-American and Civic leader and Public Relations assistant, Ms. Bing Branigin.

On his party's brief stop at the London Bridge Trading Company, Ambassador Gaa expressed to the Filipino employees that one of his priorities is to ensure favorable working conditions to every Filipino in the U.S. He encouraged the Filipinos to continue being hardworking and exhibit the correct work-attitude.

One of the matters raised during the open forum was the processing of the Filipinos' GSIS pension, particularly the need to regularly appear before a Philippine Consular Official to ensure that the pension payments are received as scheduled. Ambassador Gaa informed them that the GSIS has simplified the process by installing electronic GSIS verification kiosks in select US cities. He also assured them that other concerns will be conveyed to appropriate authorities in the Philippines for action.

Aside from the tour facilitated by Councilman Villanueva and meetings with local city officials led by Mayor Meyera Oberndorf, Ambassador Gaa visited Filipino-owned establishments and other businesses such as eateries, barbershops and lending institutions that cater to the needs of the Filipino community in Virginia Beach.

To cap off the visit, the Council of United Filipino Organization of Tidewater (CUFOT) hosted a dinner gathering for the Ambassador and his party before they returned to Washington, D.C. END

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