

McDonald's scholar gets \$17,000

Written by EDMUND M. SILVESTRE
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Fil-Am Ana Christina Reyes speaks at the Ronald McDonald House of Charities event at the Mandarin Oriental in Manhattan on May 18.

A bright Filipino-American teen, who raises funds to send school supplies to impoverished children in Cebu, Philippines, is rewarded for her philanthropy and academic excellence when Ronald McDonald House of Charities (RMHC) granted her a scholarship of \$17,000 for her pre-med studies this fall.

Ana Christina Reyes, 19, of Union City Academy of Allied Health Sciences in Scotch Plains, N.J., was among the six recipients of the RMHC New York Tri-State Area's 12th ASIA (Asian Students Increasing Achievement) Scholarship Program awarded honored at the Mandarin Oriental in Manhattan on May 18.

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Emceed by ESPN's SportsCenter's Michael Kim, a Korean-American, the ceremony was attended by local Asian-American community bigwigs and featured a heartwarming keynote speech by FOX 5 News medical correspondent Dr. Roshini Raj, a Sri Lankan-American.

Reyes told the **Filipino Reporter** she's using the grant — the largest Asian-American scholarship award in the New York tri-state area — for her biology studies this fall at Rutgers University, leading to medicine.

She dreams of becoming a surgeon, she says.

Reyes grew up in the Philippines surrounded by needy people and this left a lasting impression on her life as she attended school later on in the U.S.

She created a fund-raiser called "Krayon for Kids" that gather school supplies which are sent to the Little Bamboo Foundation, an organization that helps educate poor children in the Cebu City hometown of her father.

"My parents have always emphasized to us the importance of helping other people," said Reyes, who was accompanied to the event by her father Gerard, a businessman; her stepmother Angeli Badelles, a United Nations employee; and her younger brother Diego.

"We've always been exposed as youngsters to humanitarian works," she added.

"I remember my mom would even bring us every Sunday to a feeding program."

Diane Piraino Koury, president of RMHC-NYTSA, said the grant "seeks to invest in students who are exemplary role models in their communities and have the initiative to fulfill their education goals."

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"These are the future leaders of our nation that we are honoring," she said.

"They were selected from a record-number of applicants by a distinguished panel of judges."

The scholarships are distributed based on demonstrated academic achievement, financial need and community involvement, according to Telly Wong of IW Group, Ronald McDonald's PR and advertising partner.

Since 1992, Wong said RMHC-NYSTA has provided over \$10 million to local non-profit groups whose programs improve the well-being of children and their families.

Other 2012 scholarship recipients are Yanling Dong, 20, of Benjamin N. Cardozo High School in Bayside, N.Y.; Amanda Fong, 18, of Brooklyn Technical High School in Brooklyn; Jin Bin Lin, 20, of Franklin D. Roosevelt High School in Brooklyn; Bill Ling, 18, of Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan; and Jiayin Wu, 18, of Francis Lewis High School in Fresh Meadows, N.Y.

For the next RMHC scholarship search in the area, visit www.rmhcnytristate.org or call 973.287.1476.