What is collaboration? As defined by Merriam Webster is to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor. Collaboration is a working practice whereby individuals work together to a common purpose to achieve benefit. Collaboration enables individuals to work together to achieve a defined and common purpose.

From January 25 – 26, 2019 in Davao City, Philippines nearly 300 hundred nurses and allied health workers have converged for the 5th International Collaborative Conference with the theme: Quantum Leap the the Future: Pathway of Quality into Education and Practice organized by the Philippine Nurses Association of America Foundation in partnership with Ateneo de Davao University School of Nursing represented by Dr. Patria V. Manalaysay – Dean, and Philippine Nurses Association – Davao Chapter headed by Patrick Simon Soria, President in cooperation with Camox Philippines Inc. Such convergence @ SMX Hall 3, SM Lanang has exemplified how nurses from all over the world work jointly in an intellectual endeavor to achieve a common purpose and vision.

Day 1.
Hon. Sarah Z. Duterte, Mayor of Davao City represented by Hon. Councilor Jesus Joseph Zozobrado III of District III welcomed the delegates by showcasing the City’s commitment towards the realization of the Duterte Health Agenda: Health for all, All for Health. This was followed by series of welcome messages by the President of the PNAAF, Merlita Velasquez who on her last year has hosted 3 collaborative conferences in Roxas City, Capiz; Legazpi City, Albay & Davao City. Synergize, Explore and Share: Moving Vision to Reality as her mantra for the past 4 years, she highlighted among the audience of the realization of the LEGACY BUILDING which was formally inaugurated and turned – over last July 2018 in New Jersey during the Annual PNAA convention with no less than Immediate Past President Dino Doliente III and President Madelyn Yu in attendance. She ended her message with this quote: “Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward
organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.” Dr. Patria V. Manalaysay & Pres. Madelyn Yu of PNAA also formally welcomed the participants.

Dr. Francisco Duque III, DOH Secretary represented by Undersecretary Roger Tong – an, the first Filipino Nurse to be appointed in the said position delivered the keynote address with the theme: “State of Health in the Philippines.” Important points he shared pertinent to Ambisyon Natin 2040 & Universal Health Care on how nursing is moving forward are: (1) Strategic Framework and Implementing Guideline for FOURmula One Plus for Health (F1+); (2) The DOH will further expand the DOH Nursing Certification Program implementation to more DOH Teaching and Training Hospitals and pool certified trainers and assessors to augment the production of competent nurses in various specialties. (3) Installation of a Chief Nursing Officer in the DOH to oversee the nurses engaged in public health and hospital practice; (4) Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM); (7) Proposed Qualification Standards for various Nursing Positions in all hospitals of the Department to ensure consistency and uniformity.

Former Chairperson of the Board of Nursing Carmencita Abaquin and Current Member of the Board of Nursing Carmelita Divinagracia led the opening salvo of the morning plenary session. Dr. Abaquin shared her thoughts on the topic: “Transformative Philippine Nursing Education”, on the other hand, Dr. Divinagracia focused on “Outcome Based Curriculum Update. Important points they have shared are: (1) transformational leadership as “a process by which leaders raise the aspirations and motivations of others to higher levels by appealing to higher ideals and values; (2) Transformational leaders work to make tomorrow better. They do this by working towards a noble vision; act with authenticity and honesty; adopt a growth mind set and promote creativity and new ideas; (3) 2012 National Nursing Core Competency Standards - Board Resolution No. 24 Series of 2012; (4) values voting on OBE: attitude – 100 points; (5) Outcome Based Education 101: an approach that focuses and organizes the educational system around what is essential for all learners to know, value, and be able to do to achieve the desired level of competencies; (6) OBE needs a Paradigm shift; (7) Curriculum mapping; and (8) Assessment and CQI cycle.
Camox Philippines Inc., our major sponsor - a POEA accredited recruitment agency, had been the leading land-based manpower recruitment service provider in the Philippines as early as 1993 relentlessly offering career opportunities to hard-working Filipino workers. With over 25 years of customer-centric service, Camox Philippines, Inc. has gained trust and established credibility in the local executive search and overseas employment industry geared with vital licenses and permits to undertake recruitment activities in accordance with the law of each concerned country. They had their product presentation during lunch break. We also opened the different booths provided by our minor sponsors namely: Ayala Land, Bayani Nurse Consulting Network, St. Bernadine Placement and Consulting, Regency Nursing and Rehabilitation Centers, C & Publishing and German Language Academy and Review Center.

The concurrent sessions for students, educators and hospital based nurses were converted into a plenary session. Each topic presented has a panel of reactors making it more innovative and interactive. Mr. Arthur Cantos, Director of Bayani Nurse Consulting Center & Mrs. Madelyn Yu, current President, PNAA Inc. spoke on Leadership Advocacy & Communication Competency with Trisha Isabel F. Guioguio of Ateneo de Davao University as reactor; Ms. Nancy Hoff, PNAAF Secretary and Council of Trustees and former Dean of Nursing West Coast University shared her expertise on the topic: Effective Learning Experience thru Skills Acquisition with no less than the National Vice President of ADPCN, Dean Edna Imperial of Philippine Christian University as reactor; and Miss Victoria Navarro, 17th PNAA President, Former Director of Clinical Quality of John Hopkins International Medicine introduced us to the new concept of Advancing Practice, Evaluating & Complying with Contracts Avoiding 2nd Victim Syndrome with the Chief Nurse of Southern Philippines Medical Center, Dr. Vilma L. Comoda & Hospital Administrator of Davao Medical and Research Center,. Dr. Linell G. Malimbag as reactors.

Two young health innovators shared their life-changing and dream-enabling stories. Dr. John Michael Dellariarte, an awardee of the The Outstanding Students of the Philippines and Gawad Geny Lopez Bayaning Pilipino, is the creator of a water-disinfecting solar reflector which uses the sun’s energy to disinfect drinking water in rural communities. He is a co-founder of the Yellow Boat of Hope foundation which provides school boats to school children who have to swim just to go to school in...
island communities in the Philippines. His love for innovation has positioned him as a promising technologist in dermatology inspired by great technologists in their field like Steve Jobs and Elon Musk. His innovating spirit has led him to co-create the DellaGroup Corp., a technology and IT-based company, developing dermatological innovations to protect people’s skin from the sun, aging, and disease. Their first innovation is the Della Solare which are high-end umbrellas scientifically proven to screen out all harmful rays of the sun with its TRI-SCREEN TECH. It is proven to screen ultraviolet radiation, visible light radiation, and infrared radiation. He also developed a novel invention that improves the transcutaneous epiluminescence which uses visible light and pattern recognition to detect cancer. He is also the Dr. Mike. D, the Cosmetic Dermatologist of the NEU Advanced Aesthetic Center, executing laser precision treatment with his PiQo4, which is the most powerful pigment laser in the world, addressing issues like melasma, freckles, solar lentigo, unwanted tattoo, acne scars, genital hyperpigmentation, skin aging and wrinkles. Mr. John Paul Maunes, CEO Philippine Accessible Disability Services Inc. (PADS), an ASHOKA fellow share his advocacy on empowering persons with disability, in developing them as independent, integrated and empowered citizens. Recently, awarded as one of the Ten Accomplished Youth Organization during the 16th TAYO Awards held at GSIS Theater in Pasay City.

Wrapping up day 1, is the talk given by Atty. Arnedo S. Valera, the legal counsel of PNAA & PNAAF on “Nurses Without Borders: Global Ambassadors and nation – Builders at Home”. His presentation covered “Immigration options in the United States for Filipino Nurses” and “Proposals for Nurses’ Legal Protection overseas, in particular against the frequently complained issue of liquidated damages, as well as substitution of contract s by employers. He also talked about the advocacy of PNAA & PNAAF whose twin goals is to (1) further help their members; (2) promote much – needed changes in existing health care systems in the US and in the Philippines. Dr. Chris Sorongon was tasked as the Officer of the Day; Dr. Patria Manalaysay as time – keeper and Dr. Maria Rosario Gonzales, PNAAF Education Chair as master of ceremony.

Atty. Arnedo S. Valera, Legal Counsel of PNAA and PNAAF with PNAA President Madelyn Yu and PNAAF President Merlita Velasquez
Day 2.

Day 2 of the collaborative conference started with a recap by Dr. Chris G. Sorongon, Conference Committee Co–Chair. Dr. Annabelle Borromeo, Former Senior Vice – President for Operation of St. Luke’s Global led the opening of the plenary session on the topic: “Pathway to Quality Nursing Education through Transformational Leadership”. Her sharing truly made an impact to all the participants as they were awed by her leadership by example and “walk the talk.” Salient points of her talk were: (1) Transformative vs Transformational differentiated; (2) “What’s your Why?”; (3) 4 steps to Transformational Leadership: (a) clear vision; (b) build character; (c) connect thru storytelling; (d) be not concerned with who takes the credit; (4) Key take away: Leadership transformation is deeply dependent on context. Everyone follows his own path, has her own story. An interactive forum followed with Dr. Carfredda Dumlao, member of the Professional Regulatory Board of Nursing representing Dr. Glenda Arquiza, Chair led the discussion on the present “State of Nursing in the Philippines”. A lively and well participated open forum followed with other Nursing leaders present joining the discussion.

Clockwise from top: Dr. Annabelle Borromeo & BON Member Carfredda Dumlao receiving their certificate and plaque of appreciation from Dr. Patria Manalaysay, Dr. Maria Rosario Gonzales & PNAAF, Inc. President Merlita Velasquez; PNAA Inc. Immediate Past President Dino Doliente III delivering his closing address and Dr. June A. Kiblasan II, Dean of Nursing, MPSPC receiving his certificate and cash prize as grand winner of the Research Paper and Poster Presentation together with PNA Education Chair Past President Peter Reuben Calixto.

Immediate Past President Dino Doliente III of PNAA Inc., led the closing ceremony with his closing address entitled: “Let us Get Gritty – The Power of Passion & Perseverance”. He shared on how to develop grit: (1) develop a fascination; (2) daily improvement; (3) have a growth mindset; (4) grow
from outside in; (5) greater purpose. He also told us the significance of the “Parable of the Bricklayers.” Furthermore, he challenged all of us with the following statements: (a) “work on stuff that you like and you’re passionate about”; (b) know where your heart is; (c) what do you want to be when you grow up.

All is well that ends well. Region XI governor of the Philippine Nurses Association, Jessica Mae Dela Pena – Alaban, MAN, RN formally deliver her closing remarks to end the 1 ½ days collaborative conference. Officer of the Day; Dr. Maria Rosario Gonzales, PNAAF Education Chair as time – keeper and Dr. Chris Sorongon as master of ceremony.

On My Reflection. (Dr. Chris G. Sorongon)
“The Because of a Nurse”
Because I am a Filipino Nurse first and foremost, and that’s how I first fell in love with service and to this only country we have. Because being a Nurse is not just an art, but it has a heart. Because being a Nurse is not just a science, but it has a conscience.

Because when you are a nurse, you know that every day, you will touch a life. But I hope, as we gather in this 1 ½ day of international collaborative conference, life will touch yours. Someone’s story which will remind you of your why – why you chose to be a Nurse.

Please allow me to sum up in 2 words my reflection: The first beautiful word is “collaboration”. If it takes a village to teach a child, it takes a nation of Filipinos, not citizens, to build the future of this country. Combining passion, excellence and service, these change-leaders of PNAAF Inc. and PNAAF have created innovations that challenged status quos, built communities and transformed lives. Among these are the Outreach and Extension programs organized, funded by members going home to their respective hometowns or in their adopted communities. These worthwhile endeavor have made the difference in the lives of many thru their medical, dental, surgical missions; feeding programs; livelihood assistance; giving of reading glasses; distribution of school supplies and a lot of humanitarian related activities.
They taught us that to build a nation of communities is a collaborative and multi-disciplinary process. They did not only make us feel Filipino, but inspired us through their remarkable examples and overwhelming love for the Filipinos. More than the art of collaboration, they taught that for us to truly build this nation, we have to be our own E-D-G-E or everyday great examples. After all, actions speak louder than words.

The second beautiful word is “dream”. According to Pope Francis, “when you lose the capacity to dream, you lose the capacity to love, and the energy of this love is lost.” More than an actualization of a Filipino dream, our being a nurse is also an expression of love to the Philippines and to fellow Filipinos, a love that knows no geography. My personal dream for all of us is that we never lose our passion to be the best Filipino Nurse for and with the Philippines.

Owning a permanent home and headquarters has been a long time dream of the Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) and the Philippine Nurses Association of America Foundation (PNAAF). Last year, 2018, the dream became a reality; a legacy to the Filipino Nurses. The headquarters is located at 1346 How Lane, North Brunswick, New Jersey, 08901. The blessing and ribbon cutting ceremony was held July 29, 2018 under the leadership of Ms. Merlita Velasquez of PNAAF, Inc. and Mr. Dino Doliente III, PNAA, Inc. President. The Legacy building will house the permanent corporate address and headquarters of the PNAA and PNAAF. It will be used as the address when applying for funding and grants. Due to the proximity and location, PNANJ and its subchapters may conveniently use it for their meetings and inductions, continuing educational programs and other related functions. Likewise, other Regional and State Chapters have this option too. It will be a place to keep the PNAA and PNAAF historical documents, items, materials, and records.
And to make sure we never lose sight of this dream, we should always remember our why, our because. We might have diverse and different answers but I know, in the deepest crevices of our hearts, that we chose to be because we wanted to make sure that the future is bright and healthy. In doing so, we do not only unleash our dream through gift-giving, but we unleash our dream through self-giving. To be a Filipino Nurse is probably one of the best things a Filipino can be. And to be a Nurse is probably one of the most beautiful decisions to make in life. Because, we work with all our heart and might in the present to make sure that the future of the world we live in is well and healthy.

Let us continue to be Filipino Nurses for the last, the lost and the least. To be a nurse is not just an AMAZING RACE but an AMAZING RAISE. We raise self, raise meet – ups, raise passion, raise time and raise commitment in order for us to raise our stories to people we have served, to those we have and will make a difference and be the inspiration.

History in the Making.
The 5th International Collaborative Conference has achieved its many firsts: (1) First conference to be held in Mindanao at the very least to say at the Home City of Pres. Rodrigo Duterte – Davao City; (2) First conference organized in partnership with Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing and PNA - Pambansang Samahan ng mga Nars ng Pilipinas. As most conferences are organized in partnership with PNAAF and partner nursing school; (3) Has featured 2 former chairpersons of the Professional Regulatory Board of Nursing: Hon. Carmencita Abaquin & Hon. Corazon dela Pena; (4) First conference to be attended by more than 50 nurses who are members of the PNAA/PNAAF Inc.; (5) First conference to have organized a grand medical – surgical and dental missions in Davao del Norte (Municipalities of Braulio E. Dujali, Santo Tomas & Carmen as well as City of Panabo) under PNAAF Inc. in partnership with Medical Surgical Mission of Texas.

(This article is written and collated by Dr. Aniceta Vista, PNAAF Executive Director & Dr. Chris G. Sorongon, Faculty of University of San Agustin College of Health Allied and Medical Professions and PNAAF Coordinator of Medical Missions and Collaborative Conference in the Philippines.)