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Dr. Marianito “Mark” Asperilla, 2008 TOFA Awardee

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 6 (PINOYGLOBAL) - Dr. Marianito “Mark” Asperilla is unanimously selected as one of the 2008 *Twenty Outstanding Filipinos Abroad (TOFA)* by the TOFA Panel Board of Judges of the *Filipino Image Magazine (FILIM)* and the *Pinoy Global Online News (PGON)*, and the *Roxanne Andrea Mendoza Memorial Foundation (RAM)*. The TOFA was initiated in 1990 and the bio-data and photographs of the 320 Past TOFA Awardees found in the *PGON* web site: WWW.FILAMIMAGE.COM.

The 3-day 15th annual event starts on Thursday, Sept. 11, 2008 with an informal get-together for the 2008 awardees; followed by on Friday with a VIP Luncheon at the hotel. At night is a reception at the Philippine Embassy. The following Saturday morning, a VIP Photo Opps at various historic spots, and a luncheon. At night is the formal gala Banquet and Ball Award Ceremony; capped by the traditional Filipino breakfast immediately after the ball. All 2008 TOFA Awardees are Special Guests of Honor to all the activities. Guests wishing to attend any functions are asked to donate entrance fee. *As a tradition since 1990, net proceeds to all the TOFA functions are donated to charitable Filipino organizations.*

When the White House called the office of Dr. Marianito “Mark” O. Asperilla, his staff thought it was a prank – and hung up. After the third attempt, they realized it was no joke. President George W. Bush wanted to co County since 1989, for his efforts to combat bioterrorism – in person! This honor that few natural-born American citizens can claim was well-deserved by a doctor who has been publicly hailed as a “treasure” by a fellow physician, labeled a “Hometown Hero” by one area newspaper, recognized by another as one of the 100 most influential people in the community, and honored by Charlotte County government by declaring April 12, 2005, as official “Dr. Mark O. Asperilla Day.”

In 2007, the doctor was honored by being named Grand Marshal of the Punta Gorda Christmas Parade. In 2008, the doctor was included in the “Top 50 Power Players of Southwest Florida” by Gulfshore Business Magazine. Dr. Asperilla was born in the Philippines, and attended medical school at the University of Santo Tomas in his home city of Manila. He completed his internship at Makati Medical Center in Manila before moving to the United States in the 1970s to complete residencies in internal medicine at Frankford Hospital, affiliated with the Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and Atlantic City Medical Center in Atlantic City, N.J., where he was named associate chief resident. Dr. Asperilla received his



DR. MARK ASPERILLA
Pride of Charlotte County, Florida
“Citizen of the World”

fellowship in infectious disease at Chicago Medical School and Albany Medical College of Union University in Albany, New York. At Albany, he received an appointment as instructor in medicine from 1988-1990, and performed bench and clinical research. As a board-certified physician, he has served as Chief of Medicine at Bon Secours-St. Joseph Hospital, on the Executive Boards of three hospitals. He has also been Chairman of the Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee at Fawcett Memorial Hospital and the Infection Control Committee at Peace River Medical Center. Dr. Asperilla sits on the Board of Directors of the Charlotte County Medical Society, as well as its past President and Scientific Program Director; and was a delegate to the Florida Medical Association, where he was recently named to the Political Action Committee’s Board of Directors. He is currently a Clinical Assistant Professor at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine in Bradenton, Fla., and is a fellow of the American College of Physicians and the International College of Physicians. He has made presentations at national and international medical organization meetings, and published articles in a number of journals, and added his expertise to abstracts, editorials and textbooks. In 2007, he was added to the Doctor’s Digest’s advisory editorial board. He is listed in the Marquis 2007-08 editions of “Who’s Who in America” and “Who’s Who in America in Medicine and Health Care,” as well as in Strathmore’s Who’s Who. The doctor has also been named a lifetime member of the American Registry of Outstanding Professionals.

When Dr. Asperilla sees a need in the community, he automatically responds. This has led to his founding numerous patient support organizations. Upon learning that Charlotte County had the highest rate of disability in the state, Dr. Asperilla founded Southwest Florida Disabilities – an organization providing social activities, wheelchairs and computers for more than 300 disabled persons and their families – in 1993, to which he has donated more than 2,500 volunteer hours. A year later, he started the Charlotte County HIV Charity Clinic, which has provided more than \$2 million in free medical services to those suffering from HIV/AIDS. When that clinic was destroyed by Hurricane Charley in 2004, the doctor opened a trailer to serve these patients. Dr. Asperilla founded St. Vincent de Paul Pharmacy, the only freestanding charitable pharmacy in the state of Florida, thus far dispensing more than \$4 million in free medications to the poor. He also serves as medical director, and has rallied the support of 120 volunteers and 6 volunteer pharmacists to staff the facility. In addition, he was responsible for the pharmacy’s expansion, opening four additional satellite branches in neighboring communities.

Due to the growing needs of the uninsured in Charlotte County, Dr. Asperilla opened the St. Vincent de Paul Charity Clinic, for which he serves as Medical Director. Through a partnership with Volunteers in Medicine, the clinic is staffed by about 30 volunteer physicians. Dr. Asperilla also donated a 1,000 square foot office facility for the clinic’s use. He has also been able to raise at least \$1 million for a permanent clinic, and secured the land for this planned facility.

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush dubbed Dr. Asperilla a “Hurricane Hero” when presenting him with a state Points of Light Award. Although Charley severely damaged both his home and his office, Dr. Asperilla immediately and selflessly began providing for the needs of other victims. He began an emergency prescription service, then battled red tape for months in order to make Charlotte County’s FEMA trailer park the first FEMA park in the nation with a freestanding medical clinic, serving 1,500 homeless residents. He was also appointed fundraising director of the hurricane-damaged St. Charles Borromeo Roman Catholic Church, raising \$3.2 million for repairs, with he, himself, donating \$50,000.

When revealed that substance abuse rates among school-age children in Charlotte County were among the highest in the state, Dr. Asperilla founded the Peace River Boxing Club, which provides youth with athletic competition, counseling and drug abuse prevention programs, and HIV testing. The club has “graduated” about 500 young men and produced 12 state champions. Dr. Asperilla has donated countless hours as a certified ringside physician, as well as publishing articles in boxing safety books for the International Olympic Committee. He is currently a member of the USA Boxing Association. Most recently, Dr. Asperilla founded the Hope Clinic to serve the ever-growing number of hepatitis C patients in Charlotte County. He often donates the thousands of dollars in stipends he receives as a speaker at various medical functions to fund some of his charitable works.

After 9/11, Dr. Asperilla recognized the need for a concerted, unified response team to deal with the threat of bioterrorism. Involving health care professionals from various disciplines and area law enforcement

and emergency management agencies, he created a multi-county bioterror response group, for which he received a special citation from the Florida Secretary of Health, as well as the Presidential Service Volunteer Award and personal visit from President George W. Bush in 2003. This was followed by former President George H. W. Bush presenting the doctor with one of two national Points of Light Awards he would receive for service to American society. Dr. Asperilla remains the Medical Coordinator for the Medical Reserve Corps serving Southwest Florida.

Dr. Asperilla has served as volunteer physician and medical advisor to the Charlotte County Homeless Coalition, and to the International Red Cross. He has volunteered his services to the Care-A-Van and the Clinica de Ayuda (bringing medical care to the poor, mostly migrant workers). He has also served on the Board of Directors of the DeSoto Juvenile Correctional Complex, Edison Community College Foundation and the Knights of Columbus Council 5933. He is presently head of the committee on international medical services for Peace River Rotary International, heading a medical mission to Colombia in 2006. He is a founding director of the Volunteer Way (a volunteer center) of United Way, which is coordinating the volunteer activities of more than 100 nonprofit agencies in Charlotte County.

In 2006, Dr. Asperilla received two national honors from the American Medical Association – the Excellence in Medicine “Pride in Profession” Award and the AMA Foundation Leadership Award, which was highlighted in the nation’s newspaper USA Today. In addition, the doctor has received the Charlotte County Medical Society Service Award for three consecutive years, the Florida Medical Association President’s Humanitarian Award, Most Outstanding Alumnus of the Year 2004 by the University of Santo Tomas Medical Alumni Association, and Port Charlotte Rotary Club “Service Above Self” and Paul Harris Fellowship (humanitarian) awards, as well as being named “America’s Top Physician” by the Consumer Regional Council of America in 2003. In 2007, Dr. Asperilla received the Charles Donnegan Award for Volunteerism from the American College of Physicians. The Charlotte County Chamber of Commerce honored him with its prestigious Pacesetter Award in 2006 – the same received the Man of the Year Award from the Cultural Center of Charlotte County.

A true “citizen of the world,” Dr. Asperilla co-founded ACCESS Care Inc. in 1994, a nonprofit organization that sends teams of doctors to impoverished areas of Central and South America, treating to date more than 10,000 patients. Before that, in the 1980s, he headed numerous medical missions to the Philippines. He has also provided scholarships for needy students abroad and in the United States (one student, in the Philippines, was able to complete medical school through this program). After the 2004 Pacific typhoon, he provided medical supplies, scholarships and 30 new homes for people suffering in the Philippines through the Gawad Kalinga homeless program. In turn, the charity named the village – located in Tower Ville, Bulacan – after Dr. Asperilla. He also served as President (2000-06) of the Filipino-American Society of Charlotte County, helping to promote cultural awareness and encourage community service, receiving that organization’s Community Service Award in 2003. Dr. Asperilla is a shining example of compassion – and compassionate service – to both the United States and the Philippines.

Dr. Asperilla co-founded Tarpon Coast National Bank, which was sold in 2006 to Busey Bank, for which he sits on the Board of Directors and serves on the compensation committee. He sits on the Human & Health Care Committee of the National Small Business Association of America based in Washington, D.C. He recently opened an 86-room Microtel Inns & Suites hotel in Port Charlotte, with two more to follow in Lehigh Acres (to be completed in 2008) and near the Fort Myers Airport (to be completed in 2009).

Dr. Asperilla was a pioneer in having the largest commercial pommelo grove in Florida, growing 180 acres of fresh fruit. He opened the grove in 1992. He is also bringing the Charlotte Harbor Queen, a 150-passenger paddlewheeler, which will provide tours around Charlotte Harbor. He is president of Emerald Venture Realty, Dr. Asperilla was a pioneer in having the largest commercial pommelo grove in Florida, growing 180 acres of fresh fruit. He opened the grove in 1992. He is also bringing the Charlotte Harbor Queen, a 150-passenger paddlewheeler, which will provide tours around Charlotte Harbor. He is president of Emerald Venture Realty, which owns numerous commercial properties around Charlotte County, as well as residential and duplex apartment complexes.

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For information and comments: PINOY GLOBAL ONLINE NEWS : nonoymendoza@filamimage.com

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