

Before I moved to Kodiak, I remember serving my *Lola* a freshly boiled cup of green tea every afternoon before she watched her favorite show, Wowowillie. Today, I find myself serving elders their preferred beverage while they are watching *The Price Is Right*

Participating in the Certified Nursing Program has been a privilege and an eye-opening experience for me. It has allowed me to deepen my passion for serving our elders and spreading humanity within our communities. These experiences have not only broadened my understanding of the healthcare system but have also filled me with a profound sense of purpose. Because of these reasons, I have chosen to pursue a Bachelor's of Nursing and Public Health. I feel a strong commitment to follow my heart—not only to support Filipino families who are encouraging their children to pursue careers in medicine but also to embrace altruism across diverse backgrounds.

During my clinical hours, I established a routine that involved not just serving meals but also assigning engaging activities like crossword puzzles and coloring books. I often played Monopoly with the residents, filling the dining room with bursting laughter and cheerful giggles. One afternoon, I was assigned to a group of residents I had not yet met. The activity director told me that they had one Filipino resident with whom she could barely have a conversation. I realized that my bilingual skills could help me connect meaningfully with their daily life.

As I nervously knocked on the resident's door, I prepared myself to speak Tagalog. “Hello *Po, ako po si Gillian at isa po akong CNA student sa high school,*” was the first sentence I uttered. The resident greeted me with a warming smile that wrapped me with a sense of belonging as if I was back again with my *Lola*.

As the conversation unfolded, my initial nerves melted. Our discussion ranged from their high school days to getting married, having children, and immigrating to the United States. I sensed a strong longing in their voice to return to our homeland—a feeling too that hums in my heart. Though our time was brief, I felt fulfilled in brightening their day. Connecting with the Filipino elder reminded me of the strong ties that unite us, regardless of where we find ourselves.

Being a Filipino is not solely defined by our beautiful customs, such as using our hands as a measurement tool when cooking rice or getting told by our parents to “*Lagyan mo lang ng yelo o Efficasent Oil,*” whenever we get body aches, but it is about having empathy and respect

for others and having an ambitious mindset that will continuously transform us into a hard-working individual.