

The Official Publication of the Local Government Unit of Gubat, Sorsogon

## Vibrant revivals paint town festival

Gubat, Sorsogon --- Tourists and locals alike could not help passing along the municipal government's compound facade without taking photos of the hanged vibrant umbrellas. The umbrellas' colors - red, yellow, green, orange, and blue are the festival's official colors that the municipal government

developed to tell the colorful story of the town and its people.

Through Ginubat Festival 2017's theme, *Pagdomdom, Pagsabuhay, Pagpadagos* (Cherish, Celebrate, Continue), the local government unit (LGU) brings Gubatnons especially the young

generations to a trip down memory lane in a series of activities from June 1 to 13 where old traditions, activities, and stories are being brought back to be celebrated on. One of the highlights of the celebration is the revival of the Ginubat street dance competition, a

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### Local surfers turn hobby into an eco-friendly enterprise



Photo: Lola Sayong Surf Camp FB Page Surfers pose with TV host Drew Arellano during the celebrity's visit in 2014. It took almost a decade for a surfers' group here to build a community-based enterprise that allows them to make livelihood out of surfing while maintaining a laid-back, environment-friendly camp by the beach. For 37-year-old Noli John Mercader, who leads Gubatnons for Adventourism, Inc. or GubAT, Inc., a community-based surfers' organization in Gubat town in Sorsogon province, sustainable eco-

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Photo: ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation video Rosario "Lola Sayong" Escandor, a small lady with a big heart.

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### Local surfers...

tourism works even at a time when the needs of the stomach rings louder than the need to protect the environment. Their advocacy, he said, can possibly happen without depriving people of livelihood opportunities.

Starting as a hobby, the surfers group capitalized on a mere scrap of plywood in 2008 that grew to an asset of 2.3 million and gross revenue of Php 45,000 in 2016. GubAT Inc. now supports about 60 part-time and 10 full-time members of the organization. Their members, mostly composed of youth, with ages 15-40 years old, find livelihood from activities the organization offers like surf tutorial, surfboard rentals, tour guiding, and other extreme water sports activities.

The group, originally composed of Mercader and his childhood friends, started building a nature-friendly camp in 2013 on a beachfront owned by 93-year-old Rosario "Sayong" Escandor

who was generous enough to lend a portion of her land to the young surfers, now more commonly known as Lola Sayong Surf Camp.

Mercader said that they agreed to name the camp after Escandor to immortalize her name as a ges-

"Our goal is to surf
while preserving the
natural beauty of the
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destroy the beach in
the long run"
-Noli

ture of gratitude for the old woman's kindness and generosity.

Said camp is situated along the 5-kilometer stretch of Gubat bay in Barangay Buenavista that faces the vast Pacific Ocean and San Bernardino Strait that border Sorsogon province and Samar Island in Visayas.

Mercader shared however that establishing the camp and evolving into a social enterprise did not come like a walk in the park. Until now, he said, that they still has to go through many struggles that would eventually strengthen their characters as individuals and as a group.

### Search for a perfect spot

Mercader and his child-hood friends started with skim boarding along Dancalan beach located in neighboring barangay of Panganiban in 2008. One day, they saw someone surfing, which aroused their curiosity to learn surfing and making boards through the internet.

As they do skim boarding and surfing, many bystanders and beach-goers took interest in the sport and started requesting for tutorials.

They also camped along Rizal beach in Barangay Rizal where tourists and locals frequented until their transfer to barangay Buenavista where the tides are ideal for surfing tutorials having waves measuring 3-5 meters. The waves swell up to 7 meters during the months of October to May by which according to Mercader is the best season to surf.

Starting from five huts made of nipa leaves and coconut woods, Mercader and friends established the surf camp by using their own money.



Photo: Lola Sayong Eco-surf Camp FB page
Eco-friendly cottages were built to complement with the nature.

"Our goal is to surf while preserving the natural beauty of the beach as our playground", Mercader said. "As much as possible, we avoid building permanent structures that would destroy the beach in the long run.", he added.

"We also implement camp rules for the guests and for ourselves such as not eating, drinking alcohol, smoking, and littering along the beachfront.", Mercader shared.

As of present, they already built 20 huts for guests, an event hall, kitchen and restaurant, and coffee shop made up of semi-concrete materials funded by the organization's own income.

### Livelihood and scholarship programs

John Eric Eva, 22, a surf instructor in the camp and member of GubAT, Inc. said that he enjoys doing surfing as his hobby while earning from surf tutorials. He shared that tutorial is priced at P350 per hour where P150 goes to board rental and P200 goes to the instructor.

He said that he makes use of his earnings as his school allowance and fund for his projects. He shared

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## Health professionals find passion in serving hometown

If most health professionals find success in their career in the city or overseas, Mari-Ann Kristine Quiring Pura-Ecleo and Rhodora Paula Fajardo Yuzon, consider success amid the simple life in this town by serving in the local government where they say they found their passion and worth as health workers.

Pura-Ecleo, 32, a licensed pharmacist and physician, and Yuzon, 26, a registered nurse, both graduated valedictorians from Gubat National High School Batch 2002 and 2006, respectively.

Yuzon heads Gubatourismo, the town's Tourism Office. Recently, an online Bicol travel magazine, Vibe.ph, has featured her as one of the youngest Tourism Officers that has ever been appointed and one of young Bicolanas who made marks in their own fields.

Though she takes on a task different from her field, she says she finds joy in knowing that she is at home and enjoys the privilege of serving the people she grew up with.

Pura-Ecleo, on the other hand, came from a family of doctors. Her parents own a pharmaceutical store in the town and her brother is a pediatrician. Most of her older kin likewise hold significant posi-

tions in the medical profession.

Due to her family background, some find it normal for her to pursue the same career, but she carved her own name by taking a different path, far from the grand perceptions of doctors by serving the underserved in the farflung villages of Gubat.

### Road to home

In the prime of her youth, Yuzon chose to stay in Gubat because she said that she "never liked the city vibe". She shared that her previous jobs as a nurse were only located nearby, one in the capital city and in the municipal health office of this town.



Bhem during the 2017 Ginubat Festival Street Dance

She recalled that even during her college days when she studied in Legaspi City in Albay province, she would always find time to go home on weekends or even for just a day only to stay away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

In 2016, upon the invitation of now town chief, Mayor Sharon Escoto, Yu-





(Left) Rhodora Paula "Bhem" F. Yuzon; (Right) Dr. Mari-Ann Kristine Pura-Ecleo .

zon agreed to serve as Municipal Nutrition Action Officer, and eventually as Tourism Chief.

She said that she considered the invitation as another opportunity and reason for her to serve town.

Meanwhile, Pura-Ecleo was a typical city girl. She spent most of her teen years in Metro Manila where she studied her undergraduate course and succeeding course in medicine. She said that she has always preferred the city life and went home only in time for family occasions.

However, in 2012, her "city girl" life took a quick turn when her uncle needed palliative care due to pancreatic cancer.

She recalled that she considers that instance as a defining moment of her life as it brought her to a career where she would not likely end up doing.

Not long after, her uncle died. As she was very close to him, she mourned his passing that it became difficult to leave at that time.

"It was an opportune time that there was a vacant position for a resident physician in Gubat District Hospital, so I applied and got hired. Then, I got married, had a child, so I never had a chance to go back to Manila.", Pura-Ecleo narrates.

### **Confronting challenges**

For Yuzon, being a child in a field where most people are veteran in the government, she found heading an important position like Tourism Head in a local government as challenging and sometimes daunting.

The most challenging she had so far, she says, was when she headed the 2017 Ginubat Festival. Ginubat, as a festival celebrated during the annual town fiesta, is one of the most

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#### Town Festival...

depiction of Gubat's folklore by which the town's name was derived through a vibrant street dance where barangay clusters compete.

the town's famous In folklore. local hero Mardawan along with three tribesmen defeated Tagulipnan, an invisible and nocturnal monster which feeds on infants and children. Through the help of schools of fishes mostly composed of bugiw (swordfish), malasugi (white marlin), tangique (kingfish), and buraw (long-jawed mackerel) that raided and pierced Tagulipnan to death, the heroes succeeded in protecting the early community. With the monster's death. the people exclaimed. "Gubat! Gubat! (Raid! Raid!)."

From that moment on as told by the townfolks, Gubat town came into being. Gubat is pronounced with a stress at the second syllable which means "raid" contrary to the usual pronunciation of gubat, a Filipino term for forest.

Gubat town chief Sharon Rose G. Escoto said that the LGU vows to spearhead said street dance competition every year so that the younger generations and other Gubatnons can retrace their roots, and celebrate the town's identity despite living in an ever-changing world. Said competition is supposed to

be held every year but postponed since 2014.

"We will not permit the passage of Ginubat festival without the street dance competition because it features the very reason why this festival came into being", Escoto said.

She added that she has requested the festival committee to ensure the conduct of said competition.

"When we went to the regional office of the Department of Tourism to check, Ginubat festival was almost removed from the list of Bicol festivals following its hiatus", Escoto continued.

Tourism Officer-Designate Rhodora Paula F. Yuzon shared that aside from the street dance competition, the LGU prepared other activities lined-up during the two-week festival.

The festival's series of activities also included salanigo exhibit, which features hand-woven slippers developed polio survivor Iosefina Epino from Manapao village. It is said to be indigenous in the town and being developed as Gubat's prime product. During the opening program, Epino was given a plaque of recognition in her invaluable contribution in cultural development.

Another major activity is the *Search for Gat Silo and Dayang Mara*, a pageant for young Gubatnons.

The LGU put a slight twist







to the usual Miss Gubat competition where it now includes competition for young men of Gubat. This vear's pageant name originated from the primary characters of musical the play reinterpreted by the late Salvador Españo, a local

artist and former Municipal Planning and Development Officer of the town, titled, *Si Gat Silo nan Bintolan*.

In the said musical play, *Gat Silo* is a local leader who led the early Gubat

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settlers against relentless attacks of Moro raiders. Whereas, Davana Mara is Gat Silo's wife and mother to the character of Bintolan. In the story, the shared couple the responsibility οf protecting the early community their and family.

Different civil society and people's organizations as LGU's active partners in developing the town's tourism, arts and culture, likewise conducted other fiesta activities such as Laro ng Lahi, Bugsay: Paddle Boat Race, Miss BarangGay, Grandma Queen, Boxing Competition, Duathlon, and Battle of the Bands.

To culminate the twoweek celebration, the LGU spearheaded the concert Manila-based '90s of alternative band. Rivermaya, through Kaogmahan sa Kapistahan held on June 13, the actual fiesta date. Said concert also featured Gubat's local bands and music artists.

Ginubat festival started in which originally 1994. to encourage aims Gubatnons from overseas to come home, then called Balik-Gubat. Various activities are being held thereafter every Iune that last for usually two weeks. suceeding The celebration culminates on June 13, the day that the town was established in 1764 and in time for the feast of the town's patron, St. Anthony of Padua. #

### HIGHLIGHTS OF ACTIVITIES: JULY TO DECEMBER 2017

Nutrilympics 2017: Mabaskog na Gubatnon para sa Mabaskog na Gubat

A month-long activity for Nutrition month celebration to promote healthy lifestyle for Gubatnons.



Serbisyo Publiko, Atbp.

September 28, in celebration of the Civil Service Month, different government agencies and financial institutions were invited for a one day public service.



Gubatnon Mahiguson: Trabaho, Negosyo, at Kabuhayan Fair

November 28, various local and overseas employment agencies participated in this event to open opportunities to our kabobongto who are in need of a good and decent job.



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**Gubat Public Market Opens!** 

August 20, marked the day for Gubatnons as the new wet market section opened. Construction of the C-Shaped market building also started.

E P E M В

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Distribution of Fiber Glass Boats Municipal Agriculture distributed

fisherfolk beneficiaries.

13 fiber glass boats from BFAR to



N O V E M B E R

D C М В

Municipal Youth Alliance launched

More than a thousand youths gathered on Dec. 2 during the launch of the Municipal Alliance of Youth Advocates for Development (MAYAD). They will be partners in development programs of the LGU.



### Local Surfers...

that he once stopped going to school due to financial constraints, but Mercader encouraged him to avail the scholarship program of the organization. Eva is currently enrolled in Mariners Polytechnic Colleges in Legaspi City taking up Marine Transportation. The organization provides Eva's lodging and food allowance.

Another surfer Janmel Domdom, 23, both a member and a beneficiary of the organization's scholarship program of the organization, shared that he took up a crash course in Horticulture from TESDA.

He quipped that they may be enjoying surfing now but they could not do just that forever.

"One thing that I learned from Kuya Noli and some of our older co-members is that we need to look farther, that we can always enjoy surfing but we have to learn from school and finish our studies. In that way, we can help sustain and improve the camp.", Domdom said.

Emil Edward Eugerio, 32, also a surfing instructor and pioneer member of the organization shared that their organization imposes a "no school, no surf policy" for their members who are still studying especially the kids.

"We would monitor their report cards every semester or grading period. They would have to at least pass all of their subjects, otherwise they would not be allowed to surf or use the camp's equipment and facilities.", Eugerio narrated.

### **Conflicts and resolutions**

A 7-member Board of Trustees, elected by the organization's adult members, manages GubAT, Inc. From them rests all decision-making and planning of the organization.

Celven Jasareno, a member of the Board of Trustees, detailed that all physical and financial activities of the organization start from the Board of Trustees where they sometimes engage in some bickering and bantering before its actual implementation.

"It is at the height of discussions when the best ideas come to light.", Jasareno shared.

He shared, however, that their organization is yet to mature. "Changes can never happen overnight especially behavioral change. Most of us are yet to learn a thing or two on technicalities of managing an organization and business", he further said.

### Weathering the storm

Aside from internal conflicts, the organization confronted another big wave that tested their faith and oneness as an organization. Only one cottage remained standing in Lola Sayong Surf Camp as typhoon Nona wreaked havoc in Sorsogon province in 2015. According to Mercader, most cottages were either unroofed or destroyed.

Their members, however, did not hesitate rebuilding the cottages and improving the structures they have started using the organization's income.

"Since then, we have continually improved the structures and arrangements in



Gina Lopez talks with Noli John during one of her visits in Lola Sayong.

the camp.", Mercader recalled.

## Assistance from partners and networks

Mercader reiterated that the community formed GubAT, Inc. and the Lola Sayong Surf Camp as both an organization and social enterprise. Many of their members, full-time and part-time employees come from different barangays of Gubat town, and mostly consisted of youth from the grassroots.

Their activities and accomplishments come from concerted efforts not only of their members but also through the help of partners from the local government and non-government organizations.

Gubat town chief Sharon Rose Glipo-Escoto said that the LGU recognizes the significant contributions of people's organizations like GubAT, Inc. in local development. She said that it did not only help in making Gubat carve its name in the tourism map but also generated jobs for the people in the community.

Former Environment and Natural Resources Secretary and ABS-CBN Lingkod-Kapamilya Foundation President and Founder Gina Lopez underscored during her visit among the crowd of Gubatnon volunteers the emerging success of Lola Sayong Surf Camp as a community-run enterprise.

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# Top 5 Under-the-Radar Eatery/Food that only Gubatnons will know

Ini an mga makalalangkag na pagkaon na sa Gubat mo hamok matatadihan. Kun medyo awat-awat wara pakauli, syerto nanggad na papanganaan mo ini. Mao na ini an insabi!

### 1. Linda's Halo-Halo and Eatery

Wara sin Gubatnon na diri aram an halo-halo kara Linda. Sayo ini sa mga kaonan na kinadakuan na sin mga batang '90s na hasta niyan yun pa man gihapon. Daghanon an mga suki, lalo na kun Domingo, pagkatapos san misa. Simple man lang an mga ayon san halo-halo kara Linda – may sago, gulaman na green nan red, condensed milk, minatamis na saging na saba, puffed rice, nan minsan may langka. Pero ambot man kay iba gud an una mo na natadihan, hahanap-hanapon man talaga an halo-halo nira. Orderan mo pa diretso sin bag-o luto na pansit, (asais man lang) nyan dagdagan mo pa duwa na donut, solb baga!

### 2. Tocino ni Dellomas (nan longganisa)



An maturutam-is nan mabagahon na tocino nan longganisa nira Dellomas na pag hinalo mo sa luto an prinitusan, turumi kita! Naka-package na ini na pang-1/4 kilo.

Diri matatapos an bakasyon na diri mabakal sin tocino o longganisa, minsan ngani mabalon pa. Kun di makauli, mapabakal na lang kara mamay nan ipadara sa pariente o kakila. Ayaw nanggad yun paglilimuti sa bus kay awat naman bag-o makatadi.

### 3. Bigajo - pinangat ni Escandor

Kun sikat an pinangat san Camalig, may pangtapat man dun an Gubat – an pinangat nira Escandor na base sa article ni Joseph Bautista na linuwas san Manila Times san Hunyo 27, 2017, na *Sorsogon's Best Kept Secret*, an pinangat kuno "...thicker, creamier and spicier than the rest offered in the region." Diri ini inpapalampas kun naguuruli sa Gubat. Kun mabalon pa-Manila o kun diin man, makabakal sini sin frozen. An pwesto nira sa plasa karayray san Office of the Market Supervisor, kaabay sin hingayadan sin mga sapatos ni Tyo Alvi.



## 4. Cassava cake sa Planta nan timitim sa hampang san munisipyo

Pirmi ini presente sa kada okasyon sa Gubat. Sa Planta ka sun itutukdo kun mapahimo ka—mao ini an "cassava cake sa Planta". "Masiramon, mahandab nan wara makairog" – mao an inuunabi sin mga nakatadi. Swerte mo kun natudaan ka. Mag-atab lang sa pag-order lalo na kun may okasyon kay mangno diri ka mahimuan.

An timitim san Gubat na pinabantog ni Lola Fe Camara san Balud del Sur, hasta niyan inhahanap-hanap ta. Masiramon ini pamerindalan, mayad man na pang-giveaway. Kun ruyag magkaon, naghihimo sini sa may hampang san munisipyo.

### 5. Pasawan ni Tya Aya

Sa mga wara na pakatuda sin iuruli hali sa parantukan nan pabaragahan sin mga amigo nan amiga, katunga lang bagaw na "happy birthday", mawawara na an hang-over. Da best ini kun may partner pa na bas-oy! Masiram an timpla, barato pa! Badaw na linaw!

Nya kamo? Nano an nalalangkagan niyo sa Gubat? Kun wara pakaupod sa listahan namo an iba pa na mga produkto nan kaunon na only in Gubat hamok, ayaw lang kay may masunod pa man. Aw nano pa an inhurulat ta? Hamus, uruli na! #

(Continued from page 3)

### Serving hometown...

anticipated events of the year for most Gubatnons, a time when Gubatnons overseas come home and, locals and tourists alike come to the town to experience the celebration.

"I found it difficult to organize a grand event like Ginubat with a very limited resources and modest support from some departments.", she narrates.

"There were also standard government procedures that sometimes delay or derail the implementation of some activities. As employees, we are bound to follow.", Yuzon adds.

Yuzon said that despite the challenging nature of conducting the festival, she discovered that small acts of help from people who work on the ground everyday when pooled would make events a great success such as Ginubat festival.

"These are the actual people who rendered big help and gave better than their best.", she quips.

While Pura-Ecleo says that, she considers her work today as a doctor-to-the-barangay as the most challenging and the most fulfilling job that she ever had.

She says that she could not explain the gush of feeling whenever someone's life is saved even with simple information that she shares that could improve his or her health condition.



Dr. Marian in one of her consultations in the barangays.

"People are also very appreciative of what we do. A simple "thank you" from them lightens the workload. Though every day's travel to far-flung barangays is risky, I have never ever felt fulfilled in my whole career as a doctor.", she says.

## Learning from experiences

Yuzon shared that her stay in the LGU has paved the way for her to learn in dealing with people inside the government. "When I served in the LGU, I learned that if only public servants will do their job genuinely, the government could always maximize its resources and deliver its best service to the people.", she says.

Unlike Yuzon who work in the LGU longer, Pura-Ecleo shared that she only started last August of this year, but she felt that she already found her passion or "calling" as she calls it.

She said that for the first time in her medical career, she could feel and fulfill the essence of being a doctor – to save life and inspire people to live.

"Since I started working in the LGU, I learned that there are still many people that needs the government even after doing so many initiatives.", says Pura-Ecleo.

She narrates that they have encountered cases in the barangay, which resulted to death only to know that their cases are just simple health issues that could be resolved by medical professionals, if only attended to earlier.

"Barangays need more attention so that more people could have access to government's basic services especially those concerning our health.", she says.

### **Long-term plans**

Both Pura-Ecleo and Yuzon have agreed that anyone who was born and raised in Gubat would feel that apart from the sea and the breeze, it is the feeling or the idea that one is home that makes Gubat very special.

Pura-Ecleo adds that sim-

ple life in Gubat makes it very special. "As a Gubatnon, it makes one long for it especially for those who have been away for quite a time.", she further says.

Both of them also concur that they would rather choose having modest careers here in Gubat than pursue careers that offer lavish salary elsewhere.

Though she loves her job as a Tourism Officer, Yuzon however shared that she still wants to expand and improve her education as a nurse in order to serve the town better.

She said that she looks forward to the day that she could find an apt position for her to apply her profession as a nurse.

While Pura-Ecleo said that, she plans to work in the LGU for good. "I love my job here even as contract of service personnel at the moment, but still I look forward to having job security since I already have a family", she says.

"I also pray that all initiatives and health programs that are good for Gubatnons would sustain. I think the solution rests on education, information, and awareness drives for the people. If the local government could do that, maybe, many Gubatnons will find hope to live and take good care of their health.", she further says. #

### Local Surfers...

"We only helped them a little and they groomed this (the camp) many times over.", she added.

That day was only one of her many trips to this town since 2013. She shared that the people and community mean so much to her that is why she keeps coming back.

In 2018, GubAT, Inc. plans to introduce new sports activities in the camp that visitors and locals could enjoy such as kayaking, snorkeling, and introduction to scuba diving.

However, for them, it is important that their members and the visitors to become responsible for the environment.

"We also want the new members, especially the kids to care for the environment,



because this is our playground. We need to preserve it so that many other generations of future surfers and beach-goers can experience the waves and the beach", Mercader said.

GubAT, Inc. recently won the People's Choice Award and adjudged as one of the top 20 Social Entrepreneurs of 2017 in the Philippines from the Bank of the Philippine Islands Foundation (BPI Sinag).

It has also consistently collaborated with ABS-CBN Lingkod Kapamilya Foundation Inc., and an active member of the local

development council and other committees of the Local Government Unit of Gubat concerning People's Organizations. Both NGO and LGU gave cash and inkind assistance to the organization throughout the course of their initiatives. #



### **Ligtas Gubatnon Hotlines launched!**

Numbers can save lives! This is what the LGU-Gubat aims in launching the Ligtas Gubatnon hotlines, a 24/7 public safety hotlines last November 15. Every household, business establishment and public utility vehicles should have these hotlines stickers in case of emergency.

Partner agencies are the Salvador H. Encinas District Hospital, Bureau of Fire Protection, Municipal Police, 31st Infantry Battalion, DILG, MDRRMO and the Ligtas Gubatnon Community-based Support group.

The Gubat Emergency Response Team or GERT likewise conducted emergency drill to rehearse anticipated scenarios during emergency and disasters.

With the conduct of the drill, the LGU further calls on Gubatnons to get involve in ensuring the public safety.

Stay safe, be safe, spread the numbers. #

#LigtasGubatnon

LGU-GUBAT would like to thank the following

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