



SEASONS GREETINGS PACC-DC MEMBERS

The holiday season is just around the corner and we hope that you and your family are safe and in happy holiday spirits!

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at our Ugly Sweater Meet & Greet and Celebration of Life on December 3rd for Eugene Cunanan, our Vice President and Director of Membership who recently passed away. Please dress in your best ugly sweater and come for a festive celebration. Eugene would have wanted it that way.

Evaluating the PACC-DC's Mission and Vision for 2020, I would like to reiterate the organization's commitment to advocating for Filipino-American interests in business and entrepreneurship. There continues to be so much room for growth in this organization. If we change our mindset and unite for a collective Filipino-American voice, we can work together for the benefit of the Fil-Am community and beyond. "Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." - George Bernard Shaw, writer.

This is a call for Fil-Am business owners and professionals to step up and join the chamber. Let's stand united, become models for success and mentors for others. Let's be proud of our Filipino-American heritage. PACC-DC will waive membership fees for a year but you have to sign up on or before December 31, 2020. If you want to serve as an officer for the organization, please send your profile to paccdc.eboard@gmail.com and would love to have you join upon review and board approval.

To the current officers and members of PACC-DC, thank you again for being the best team one could ask for. Your energy and persistence has driven PACC-DC to fulfilling its vision and goals. I want to sincerely thank you despite 2020 being a challenging year for all of us personally and professionally. Let us stay the course. Big dreams, small steps - let's do it together.

Sending Christmas wishes to you and your family. Have a great and exciting holiday season!

Cristina Sison
PACC-DC President

FROM THE EDITOR

The pandemic has been extremely hard on businesses – some are thriving, many more are hanging on by their fingertips and an untold number have had to close their doors permanently.

This edition features businesses who have been able to keep their doors open and they tell us how they are able to do so. Hopefully these articles will provide some tips and a measure of hope for the rest of us.

We are thankful to our volunteer writers who contributed to this issue, freely sharing their ideas and tips. More power to all of you! I'd also like to give other members a shoutout for keeping their doors open, adapting to the new normal and continuing to serve our community.

Olma Inocentes



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **PACC-DC: Meet & Greet and Celebration of Life**
December 3 – 6:00 pm EST
Zoom
- **PHC/NaFFAA: Tulong Sulong (Send Help, Move Forward)**
December 12 – 8:00 pm EST
Zoom
- **PACC-DC/POLO-WDC: Online Kantiktok sa Embahada (Online Singing/ Tiktok at the Embassy)**
December 13 – 4:00 pm EST
Zoom
- **PACC-DC/ Phil. Embassy: Updates on Philippine Consular Services and Travel Regulations**
December 17 – 4:00 pm EST
Zoom

POWERING THROUGH A PANDEMIC

BY RODNEY SALINAS

The economic recession triggered by the COVID-19 quarantine has wreaked havoc on businesses large and small. As part of the executive team that leads a food tech start-up, I've seen first-hand how the ensuing shutdown has especially devastated restaurants and independent chef operators. Here are a few things to remember as we all power through this unprecedented pandemic.

Stay Positive, Focus on What You Can Control

With all the bad news coming from TV, it would be easy to focus on all the negativity and fall into a rut. But our peers and employees are looking to us for leadership and guidance. So, in the midst of all the “noise,” it is important to stay positive and optimistic. Personally, I always strive to surround myself with people who project positive energy and I specifically stay away from nay-sayers and those with negative chi. Reading daily success quotes and affirmations always helps too. While the forces of the pandemic swirl around us, I choose every day to focus on what I can control for my own sanity and for all of the people who count on me for their own livelihoods.

It's OK to Fail

Not since the Great Depression has the world experienced such a rapid and tremendous economic downturn. And while we each take great pride in the businesses that we have built over the years, given all of the current global conditions, we have to remind ourselves that it is OK to fail. Although our culture often places shame (hiya) on failures, we must all find ways to overcome this deeply ingrained sentiment, accept it and move on. Our ability to remain more resilient than ever is what will allow us to find a future path to success in a post-COVID world.

Be Compassionate

Everyone has been affected by the pandemic in some way or another. The rapid change in the economy has forced all of us to tighten our finances which unfortunately has led to furloughs and/or layoffs. But as business leaders, we have a responsibility to be transparent and compassionate to those affected. In doing so, we can be empathetic to our employees and colleagues in the hopes that we can rebound our businesses and welcome them back at a later date when market conditions improve.

The challenges before us are massive and have never been experienced on this scale before. As business leaders in the Filipino-American community, our skills, talents, expertise and experience are even more valuable now than before. Thankfully, organizations like the Philippine-American Chamber of Commerce of Metro Washington DC (PACC-DC) exist so we can work together – with our bayanihan spirit – to persevere and succeed together!

As Vice President for Membership, I ask you to please consider joining the PACC-DC today. Your first year of membership is FREE if you sign-up before Dec. 31, 2020. For more information on membership benefits and to sign-up, please visit: PACC-DC.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rodney Salinas is the National Sales Director at the award-winning food tech start-up HUNGRY based in Arlington, Virginia. In November 2020, HUNGRY was recognized as the #1 fastest growing tech company in the Washington region over the last three years by Deloitte (ranked #18 nationwide). For more information, visit www.tryhungry.com.

PLATINUM FLOORING: PIVOTING WITH PASSION

BY JUDITH MITCHELL

In 2012, I co-founded a flooring company in McLean, Virginia. For over eight years, I provided flooring solutions with the right combination of aesthetics, value and performance for homeowners, real estate professionals, buyers, property managers, architects and general contractors in the Washington DC area.

I truly love my work and my particular passions are Design Consultation and Product Selection. Inspired to expand my personal brand and dependable service to the entire metro area, I established my own company, Platinum Flooring, in July 2020, despite the impact of COVID-19 throughout the construction industry.

Fortunately, we are considered an “essential” industry and have been permitted to operate continuously despite the shutdown beginning in March. However, as a brick-and mortar retailer, we had to embrace a digital-first strategy. Happily, our customers have responded enthusiastically. They browse products from our online catalogues so we can pin down the overall look they want. At our in-person meeting, we practice safety protocols as we measure and evaluate the client’s space.

We’ve had to step up our creativity during the pandemic. Meeting clients in their garage (with the garage doors open) or on their back patio, with a folding table where we lay out the samples. The clients examine the products and then step back, and I do the same, practicing social distancing with our masks on. They are at ease about their final choices, since they can see and feel the samples before deciding. Of course, we sanitize our sample boards after every meeting.

One interesting project was the “rescue” of an investment property. The home, in a prime location, was over 100 years old and had clearly settled; everything seemed to be leaning to one side. The investor-owner had recently installed new hardwood floors himself. I told him what needed to be done and he refused, considering all the time and money he had put into those floors. After six months, he called back, saying there had been no offers. He was almost in tears watching us demolish his floors. We put in a new, level subfloor and installed new hardwood. Two weeks later, he invited me to a nearby steakhouse; the house was sold.

While we’ve had to pivot during this pandemic, we continue to provide the same products and services as always: carpet, hardwood floors, luxury vinyl plank, and expert refinishing and restoration of existing hardwood floors. We stock a wide range of products in our local warehouse for a rapid, professional turnaround.

One of our core principles at Platinum Flooring is value. We evaluate how our products can fill our clients’ needs, communicating the added benefit and explaining why a product is the right choice. We offer Good, Better, and Best options, always finding a way to meet the client’s price point. We purchase directly from manufacturers and carry many product lines to fit any budget.

Our second core principle is integrity. It’s never about the sale or transaction. Every day, customers come to me with a flooring problem, and my goal is to provide a solution. That’s what I’ve been doing for the past 8 1/2 years.

For Platinum Flooring, as a brand-new company, this year has been an opportunity as well as a challenge. Very soon, businesses will reopen, and the economy will revive. But for me, 2020 has been a time to hone my business, reflect on my core strengths and values, and come back stronger and more efficient.

Call Platinum Flooring for a no-obligation consultation at your location.

The composite image consists of three parts. On the left is a business card for Platinum Flooring. The card has a black background with the company logo in white. The text on the card includes the name 'Judith Mitchell', a phone number '240-475-4031', an email address 'platinumflooringDC@gmail.com', and two addresses: '7621 Provincial Drive, Unit 108, McLean VA 22102' and '7701 Southern Drive, Suite R, Springfield, VA 22150'. Below the card, it lists services: '[carpet resilient hardwood refinishing • restoration]'. At the bottom of the card is the website 'www.platinumfloorsDC.com'. In the center is a black and white portrait of Judith Mitchell, a woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned blouse, with her arms crossed. On the right is a color photograph of a bright, modern living room with light-colored wood-look flooring, a dark wood coffee table, and a large TV on the wall.

80 YEARS AND COUNTING

BY JOEY LIM



Crest Advanced Dry Cleaners is a nearly 80-year-old business with approximately 180 employees and when the pandemic struck earlier this year and lockdowns began in March, it changed the face of our business. We have never had to endure the depth of pressure and stress that then ensued. Like most businesses, we wondered how we would survive the next few months (which now could be years). Because we are a company who is committed equally to our employees and our customers, we had to figure out a way to remain open with the goal to keep providing income to the families that are dependent on our company and to continue serving our customers, including the doctors, nurses, and First Responders who would need help with their garment cleaning more than ever.

It isn't hard to understand how deeply our business has been affected by the pandemic just by looking at your own dry-cleaning requirements over the last nine months. Just think, few of us are going to work and those who are, are not wearing suits or dry-cleaned shirts. None of us are attending conventions, weddings and other social events, or indulging in fine dining. Business definitely slowed down but Crest Advanced Dry Cleaners did not close! We kept our doors open and retained as much staff as possible. We were not only the government's definition of an "essential business", we realized that we ARE an essential business.

We thought of ways that we could possibly pivot our business to keep providing our high-level garment care to our customers. We made sure to let existing customers know and inform new customers that we could provide the highest level of social distancing possible. We pick up and deliver their garments right to their front doors with no hand-to-hand or face-to-face interactions, AT NO ADDITIONAL CHARGE. We are even still providing Same Day Service, six days a week, for the customers who need it. In our stores, we installed sneeze guards and social distancing markings (on the floor). We also have PPE and disinfecting supplies on hand.

We made sure to let existing customers know and inform new customers that we could provide the highest level of social distancing possible.

Because of the major reductions in revenue, we have had to reduce our hours slightly and to close on Sundays, to minimize excess hours that were not popularly utilized by our customers. We have trimmed everything that we can, while making every effort possible to shelter our staff who are working in the stores. We made ourselves available to every employee and customer who needed our help, and we remain committed to go after any government aid that is available to companies like ours. We feel it is our duty to remain alive as an organization to make sure that we are not adding to the unemployment numbers in the DC Metropolitan Area.

We know we are not out of the woods yet and our business remains at the mercy of the pandemic, but we remain hopeful that we can weather this storm for both our employees and our customers. We also remain hopeful that our government will make the right decisions to slow the spread of the virus, but also allow people to go back to work and our children to go back to a safe school environment. And although we may be somewhat at the mercy of the pandemic, there is no company that will fight harder to stay open for our employees and to survive to serve our community. The first 80 years may not have all been easy, but we want to remain viable to serve our community for at least another 80 more years! If you need professional garment care, please remember that Crest Advanced Dry Cleaners remains open to serve you, now and post-pandemic.



www.crestadvanceddrycleaners.com

ARE YOU GAME?

BY JO-JO VALENZUELA

I have been bartending in the DC metro area since 1997, evolved into a beverage consultant, and now also a cook and entrepreneur. I have worked, helped open, managed, and consulted for more than 50 restaurants and bars in the area, as well as the Philippines.

It is every bartender's dream to open their own bar. After more than two decades in the hospitality business, my dream finally came true. Oscar Guardado, of popular late-night place, Rose Bar, gave me the opportunity to be his business partner in opening a two-level bar, with the intent of eventually turning the upper level into a completely different concept.

Three months behind schedule due to construction and permit delays, The Game Sports Pub finally opened its doors on February 3, 2019 -- Super Bowl LIII. We have the most TVs per square foot in the DC metro area. It was a very busy opening weekend, but sports fans know there is nothing to watch after Super Bowl. The menu was international pub fare but weeks later, we decided to add more Filipino food, hoping business gets better without us having to wait until we turn the upper level to a different concept. Luckily, we got good reviews and write-ups from different local media sources, and a strong support from restaurant industry people.



With the predicament of being able to only serve at half capacity, the city gave us permission to put tables out on the street. It was a blessing in disguise as we are now finally attracting foot traffic!

Overnight, The Game Sports Pub turned into a destination spot with people driving from all over DC, MD, and VA and visitors from other states, including PA, NJ, NY and CA, and the friendly neighborhood watering hole to restaurant people getting off work late at night. The only thing lacking was the high-volume foot traffic Adams Morgan was known for 20-years prior and has significantly changed since. It was a very quiet start, and then March Madness happened, the mecca of every sports bar! It was three weekends of full capacity.

July 2019, we changed the 2nd level into a tiki bar, called Tiki on 18th. The specialty tiki cocktails are made with premium and fresh ingredients and the food menu was a mix of contemporary tacos and Luau food. We removed all the TVs to create a completely different vibe. As expected, business was great during the warmer months, but slowed down as soon as it got colder. January 2020, with March Madness right around the corner, we decided to install a scroll down projector screen to get Tiki on 18th ready to be The Game Sports Pub's private/back-up space

February 2020, Super Bowl LIV happened, and we turned 1! A great milestone, as some bars and restaurants do not survive past 6 months. As we reflect our first year of blood, sweat, and tears -- business was just ok; we barely survived. We invested a lot of money in upgrading all our systems getting ready for March Madness, so we can make it all back in 3 weeks, just like the previous year. And then it happened: Covid-19.

All sports were cancelled, most notably, March Madness. With everybody's safety in the forefront,

we had to close down for 5 weeks. Our staff were more terrified than guests, such that half did not want to come back when we decided to reopen. With safety in mind, we slowly reopened from twice a week, doing different set menus and hand delivering some orders, to doing five times a week. Then phase 1 and 2 happened, where restaurants open only with 50% capacity. Majority of restaurants are never going to reopen again under this scenario as it is not profitable enough to pay staff, utilities, and rent.

With the predicament of being able to only serve at half capacity, the city gave us permission to put tables out on the street. It was a blessing in disguise as we are now finally attracting foot traffic! The thing is, we may now be getting more volume than pre-covid, but we are also working less efficiently because it now takes a lot longer to get the food and drinks from point A to point B. We are also all working three to four times harder as we cannot afford to pay for more labor.

We recently had to shut down for two weeks after some of our staff tested positive with the virus. We followed all safety guidelines and sanitized the whole restaurant, until we were permitted to reopen. We reopened the week of the elections: great weather + people celebrating a new POTUS = our busiest week of all time. It may not mean much as we continue to work significantly harder and come out just surviving -- but it still makes us lucky, as not many can say that.

www.thegamedc.com

OPERATIONAL SHIFT: TEAMBUILDING AND EXECUTIVE COACHING IN 2020

BY JONI RAE



Wow what a year 2020 has been! We all have been through extremely unexpected turns. Using a couple of client examples, here is a summary of how I pivoted my leadership coaching and strategic communications firm:

1. Executive Teambuilding Retreat: Shifting from in-person to remote sessions

The Mindset Group developed a culture transformation program for an association to address lack of communication and low morale. We conducted small group coaching and morale-boosting activities such as recognition programs.

Prior to Covid-19, our team facilitated an all-staff teambuilding session in-person, and then shifted to zoom coaching sessions once the Washington, DC area moved to working remote.

Throughout Covid-19, our team facilitated a series of executive leadership sessions 100% remotely, which was the first time for us. The purpose of these sessions was to align expectations and develop next steps towards the company strategy.

Moving to a remote setting definitely had its challenges, but we made sure that the client still ended up meeting all of its goals to increase morale and communication.

2. Executive Coaching: Helping my client through unimaginable issues that 2020 endured

For my executive coaching client, the Human Resources Vice President of MGM Hotel and Casino, each of our coaching sessions included problem solving, especially during unprecedented enterprise-wide changes.

Together, we worked through:

- Executive coaching: which helped her to see her role from a new perspective and take new actions. I kept her accountable to take care of her health and well-being, so she could best serve the team and organization.
- Leadership messaging: Saying the right things that would resonate for the various audiences she would speak to.
- Team productivity: Setting everyone up for success despite the current changes.

As a senior executive accountable for people's livelihoods, having a sounding board was critical for her success, especially during these unprecedented times.

We have certainly experienced challenges for most of 2020 like other companies; however, moving successfully to remote teambuilding sessions and doing our best to stay positive and creative helped us to overcome these challenges.



www.yourmindsetiseverything.com

MAXIMIZE YOUR ONLINE SALES TODAY!

BY ADJO GONZALEZ

We at AHG Direct have not only kept our doors open during this pandemic, but we have actually expanded our services. Let me tell you how we can help you do the same for your business.

Did you know that the fastest growing distribution channel is the direct-to-consumer online ordering model? With the new environment, more and more customers are turning to online ordering for most convenience products.

Even though retail success for luxury and experiential products continue to grow offline, there is growing awareness of brick and mortar store inherent limitations on space, stock availability and recently the vulnerability to lockdowns. Because of this, an online alternative is becoming a must have.

Here are some tips to grow your online business. Your online store can be designed to enhance your sales on the floor. Additionally, non-converting customers who visit the stores can be channeled to an incentivized online direct-to-consumer ordering option as they leave!

AHG Direct helps brand owners deliver products and services directly to the consumer. We are the result of combining a sophisticated digital marketing agency with a high-tech logistics company. Our strategies allow us to increase brand awareness to maximize online sales while also vastly improving your company's supply chain efficiency and visibility.

We work with brand owners on these areas:

- Develop a customized marketplace strategy that accomplishes your specific goals.
- Ensure your brand and products are getting in front of more potential customers than your competitors.
- Incorporate logistics that works and is efficient.
- Attract the ideal customer when your brand's mission is perfectly articulated on the world's most influential retail marketplace.
- Expand market share by letting our team of experts increase the traffic and conversion for your products on Amazon.
- Share with you honest and direct feedback and insights from us and from your customers.

If you are a brand owner overseas, we at AHG Direct can be your local partner. We can help research competing product performance; look for a warehousing solution; and launch and maintain your distribution channel.

Let's walk through this, step by step:

First, we want you to **Regain Control** – Unauthorized sellers? MAP Breakers? We know how frustrating this can be as it ultimately damages your brand integrity. We help you regain control of your distribution channels to identify and eliminate gray market sellers.

Then we Optimize – To be the best, you have to look the best. After identifying and eliminating unauthorized sellers and MAP breakers, the next step is product optimization. To outperform your competition, you have to convert better, and to do that, you need the highest converting keywords, title, bullets, description, and professional product images. We offer all of this to each of our select partnered brands.

Reach More Customers – Lastly, we drive traffic to your now fully-optimized product listings via aggressive PPC advertising using those perfect keywords we found in step 2 to find the most relevant customers. The end result is more customers seeing and buying your products.



Our market is mainly USA but our products are also visible in Canada and Mexico. We are currently working to expand in the Middle East. We now carry some Philippine brand products and are looking to add more!!! Proud to be Pinoy!

We thank PACC-DC for allowing us to share how we can help brand owners and retailers in their fight to keep their doors open. We can be reached at www.AHGDirect.com.



PACC-DC

Our Vision

To expand and strengthen Filipino-American entrepreneurship and business development activities in the greater Washington, D.C. area, and to become a meaningful force in the growth and development of communities within the region.

Our Mission

To develop programs, seminars, and events that have a positive impact on the business community; to connect and foster open and consistent communications across communities; to support and augment all our members; and to foster community outreach initiatives that benefit the entire region.

MEMBERSHIP

Eugene Cunanan

Son, brother, uncle, partner, mentor, and friend. Generous, hard-working and responsible but he was also a little boy at heart.

He loved to eat. He enjoyed cooking and grilling. He laughed a lot. He valued family and friends. He touched the lives of many people, including most of us in PACC-DC.

He was our VP of Membership because he loved connecting with people. He made us proud and he will be sorely missed.

Rest in peace, our beloved friend.



Please join us on **December 3, 2020 at 6:00pm EST** for an ugly sweater-themed meet & greet networking event (Eugene's idea before he passed). We will also be celebrating Eugene's life during the event.



Membership Fees are waived if you register by 12/31/2020

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

Member Name	Business
Edward Usita	Edwards Travel
Kenneth Apple	Compassionate Community Builders
Janet Hixson	Keller Williams
Adjo Gonzalez	AHG Direct Products and Services, Inc.
Aileen Subido	Kung Fu Tea—Woodbridge
Cathy Cleveland	Cathy Ebrada Atelier, LLC
Carissa Cruz Evangelista	Bella Trading and Services
Allija Tria	1st Merchants
Robert Wolgamotti	World MediaNet Studios & Broadcast Center

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