

Fundraiser for the Philippines planned for Saturday

Helping flood victims | Dec. 17 flash flood killed 1,200, has left thousands homeless for months

By **ADAM BOWIE**

bowie.adam@dailygleaner.com

Members of the local Filipino community will host a fundraising dinner this weekend for the victims of last year's flash-flood disaster in the southern Philippines.

More than 1,200 people were killed in the Asian country's second-largest and easternmost island after a Dec. 17 flash flood rushed down city streets and landslides brought mud, trees, rocks and other debris raining down on unsuspecting citizens.

The tragedy has disrupted the lives of more than 335,000 people, forcing many to take up residence in emergency shelters or sleep on church floors.

Many are still displaced nearly four months later, their lives put on hold as they rely on essentials from aid agencies and relief organizations.

Roland Moreno, president of the Filipino Community of New Brunswick, said it's been a difficult time for the Philippines and many members of the diaspora feel as though they

have a responsibility to help.

"We saw the devastation on TV. We saw it on YouTube. We heard from our friends. As a community, we shared our concerns and came up with the idea to do something for them," he said.

"Some of our members, from other parts of New Brunswick, are directly affected by this. There are four or five of them — some are temporary workers who are working here — and they've been devastated that this happened in their area. So we want to do something."

Local residents will be able to help by attending the Disaster Relief Fundraising Dinner taking place at 5 p.m. Saturday at the Grace Memorial Baptist Church located at 536 Northumberland St.

The event will feature a traditional Filipino meal of rice and vegetables and barbecued meat as well as a silent auction, a 90-minute music and dance performance co-ordinated by members of the Multicultural Association of Fredericton and fun activities for children.

Organizers will also present information about the devastation back home.

Tickets cost \$12 per person and people will be able to receive a tax receipt for donations of \$10 or more.

All donations will be accepted by the Ca-

nadian Red Cross on behalf of the Filipino Community of New Brunswick.

Moreno said this isn't the first time his organization has raised money to help an international disaster, adding it helped with relief efforts following disasters in Pakistan, India and Haiti.

"I talked with some of the other cultural groups and we said, 'You know, we have to do something. Let's do something for them,'" he said.

"We contacted the Canadian Red Cross, because we're not a (registered charity). We were able to partner with them."

He said it'll be a chance for Filipinos across New Brunswick to gather and pay tribute to the thousands of lives lost in their homeland and send positive vibes to those who survived the 2011 tragedy.

"We'll have people from Cap-Pele, Moncton, Saint John and Miramichi. We've spread the word and people from all over are going to come together," he said.

"Some we will meet for the first time. Others, we'll get to see them again."

Moreno said it's his experience that capital region residents have always been willing to support a good cause.

"We're just hoping they will come and donate," he said.

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