

The Impact and Future of Promoting Health and Wellness in Dumaguete City, Negros Island Region, Philippines

Dr. Sonia B. SyGaco

Negros Oriental State University

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ABSTRACT

The modern lifestyles of Filipinos, having poor food choices and lack of exercise, have resulted in unhealthy living. Alarmed with unlikely deaths of young and old residents, the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), in collaboration with the Local Government Unit of Dumaguete City, fostered an extension program of the *Forward Newsletter Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends* (bi-annual issue), which promoted healthy living lifestyles. The *Forward Newsletter* was produced from June 2019 to December 2020 and was circulated through the Facebook page. The study employed a qualitative questionnaire designed by the Extension Program of NORSU with seven major questions, and sixty-seven reader respondents answered the online poll. The demographic composition was females (74%), and most of them belonged to the 18-25 age group. Based on the survey, they expressed that the *Forward Newsletter*, having released two publication issues, was highly relevant, useful, and satisfying, showing their interest in sports, health, and wellness. With these developments, they had been aware of what was happening in the city. The respondents further declared that they felt satisfied with the content of the newsletter on sports, health, and wellness and found it credible with its good grammar, formatting, and layout. With this, the reader research respondents were hopeful that the *Forward Newsletter* extension program would continue in the future.

Keywords: community, health, lifestyle, sports, and wellness

INTRODUCTION

The high reliance on online food delivery services acquired through mobile transactions via Grab and Foodpanda has increased ready-made meals. Filipinos' poor food choices of taking in sugar overload, too much carbohydrates, and protein are factors that contribute to diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular conditions (Arias et al., 2024). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021) and the World Health Organization (2022) posit that if this unhealthy food intake and the lack of exercise are not addressed, it may result in a higher health risk of obesity. Likewise, individuals should be watchful by embracing health education and wellness in their daily lifestyles.

With these health concerns, the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) created an online newsletter that would provide awareness to the community readers on health and wellness programs.

The *Forward Newsletter* was a semi-annual newsletter of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of the College of Arts and Sciences of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) in collaboration with the Local Government Unit of Dumaguete City along with mass media practitioners and young enthusiasts.

It had been documented a year before the pandemic. During the contagion, it served as an extension program for the Journalism and Mass Communication Department and the Dumaguete City Government. This extension undertaking was able to create two publication issues, raising awareness in schools, colleges, and universities, including private businesses, government agencies, and residents of Dumaguete City, on the benefits of sports, health, and wellness programs. The city's local government unit provided wellness programs through its online platform service.

It also motivated Dumaguete residents to have healthy living and lifestyles at home.

The first issue of the *Forward Newsletter* (June 2019-December 2019), which the LGU Dumaguete should have printed between February and March 2020, was put on hold since the funds of the city were allocated for COVID-19. It was only circulated through the Facebook page. Now, with the onset of the pandemic, the editorial team moved the timeline of gathering news stories, extending it until December 2020.

First Issue (June 2019-December 2019)

The inaugural issue of the *Forward Newsletter* spotlighted the transformation of Rizal Boulevard, a vital project aimed at enhancing Dumaguete City's iconic landmark. The banner headline detailed the rehabilitation efforts, which included the construction of eight volleyball courts spanning 1,024 square meters, the installation of 36 lamp posts, a 234.26-square-meter containment or sea wall, and open spaces featuring 16,691 square meters of paved pathways.

Complementing this was a write-up on the much-anticipated opening of the National Museum in Dumaguete City, a milestone in preserving the city's cultural heritage. Adding to the excitement was the growing popularity of dragon boat racing, with the Dumaguete waters hosting the 4th Dragon Boat Competition, reaffirming the city's reputation as a premier sports tourism destination in the Philippines.

A key moment for the newsletter was its launch, held in partnership with NORSU proponents and local government officials. This collaboration underscored the commitment to fostering a vibrant and informed community.

The succeeding pages reflected the lifestyle and wellness themes, featuring Zumba sessions, beach volleyball tournaments, and Teiji—a Chinese martial arts-inspired exercise. The issue also highlighted environmental advocacy, showcasing posters and a feature on International Coastal Clean-Up Day.

A stunning photo gallery captured the life of Dumaguete, showcasing the mayor's engagements with national officials and the finalization of the sister-city agreement with Yeongdong-Gun, South Korea. The gallery also included snapshots of the city's cultural events: performers from the Sandurot Festival, a competitive cooking showcase, the coronation of a beauty pageant queen, and the lively celebration of the 4th Nutrition Month and Nutri-Fest held at Perdices Coliseum.

The first issue showcased progress, culture, and wellness, showing a vivid picture of a city on the rise while staying deeply rooted in its traditions and community spirit.

1st Issue of the Actual *Forward Newsletter*

FORWARD
Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends
Journalism and Mass Communication Department, College of Arts & Sciences, Negros Oriental State University, Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, 6202

Vol. 1 Number 1 June-December 2019

Rizal Blvd rehabilitation starts

Julius Jay T. Lubiano

Dumaguete City starts the rehabilitation and improvement of Rizal Boulevard with an area of 17,715 square meters near the Press Club. It has an initial budget of P13.6-million. On July 31, an additional budget amounting to P17-million was approved by the Dumaguete City Council. City Councilor Manuel Arbon affirmed the project is necessary because it is "mandated by law to provide open spaces." Thus, it provides a way for shoreline protection, venue for beach-related sports activities and promenade.

Project components comprised eight units of volleyball courts with an area of 1,024 square meters; 36 lamp posts; containment wall or seawall with an area of 234.26 square meters; and open spaces which include paved pathways with an area of 16,691 square meters.

Despite the project having benefit to the community, there are still citizens concerned about the ecosystem of marine biodiversity.

To Page 3

National Museum in Dumaguete opens soon

Marie Jay Q. Alvarez

The Dumaguete Presidencia or City Hall was recently declared by the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) as an Important Cultural Property due to its original structure and history. It was originally designed by Architect Juan Arellano in 1937.

With a budget of P49-million, NMP decided to convert the Dumaguete Presidencia into a branch of the National Museum. The restoration and conversion of the Presidencia started on January 19, 2018. Site Foreman Aurelio Montijo and the restoration and conversion of the building is currently 85 percent with 16 CCTV's installed and one elevator built exclusive for Persons With Disabilities (PWD's).

Dumaguete City Tourism Officer Jacqueline Veloso-Antonio said although there is no official date yet for the opening of the museum since it is a project under the National Museum of the Philippines, they are hoping to open it to the public probably end of December.

To Page 3

Dragon Boats Steer the Dumaguete Waters

Stella B. Sy-Gaco

It's not row, row your boat but a synchrony of strong paddles to cruise the splashing waves, it's the teamwork that moves the dragon boat to its destination. Next summer of 2020 will be the 4th dragon boat competition that the Dumaguete City Government is looking forward to host.

"We are sports tourism destination (over) the past three years. Last year, the Local Government Unit (LGU) won Sports Organizer of the Year. Mayor Ipe Remollo's vision is to continue having sporting events in Dumaguete because sports is an equalizer in all cultures that it brings together people from all walks of life," Dumaguete City Tourism Officer Jacqueline Veloso-Antonio shared in a report written by the Philippine Information Agency.

Last April 2019, ten dragon boat teams from Negros Oriental raced against teams from Visayas, Luzon, and Mindanao. It was officiated by the Philippine Canoe Kayak Dragonboat Federation (PCKDF) and declared the winners. *(See Below)*

Meanwhile, Michele Jona D. Valbuena member of Team Hilera expressed, "Being the ultimate team sport, a dragon boat team is the most difficult to train to win. It calls for a good mix of personality characteristics that makes the team work together. Most importantly, the value of 'teamship' should be strong in each paddler. It is not advantageous to the team if a paddler wants to feel superior in one's own team. So, if the 'teamship' is strong, it makes it easier to train the team to win."

There are 22 participants in every challenge and the composition of a dragon boat crew includes one (1) drummer, six (6) pacers, eight (8) engine, six (6) rocket, and one (1) steersman. The drummer or the signal beats the drum and the pulsation is considered as the heartbeat of the dragon boat. The first set of paddlers called the pacers set the pace and are accountable for synchronizing the strokes with each member. The middle eight paddlers known as the engine are assigned to the heavier and stronger paddlers whose roles are to dig deep into the water to achieve a sturdy stroke. On the other hand, the back six paddlers or the rocket/turbo allow them to go deeper and longer, drawing them near to the hull and not pulled into the open, circular return. Lastly, the steer/helm controls the direction of the boat. During the competition, three strokes are being used by the paddlers which are normal forward stroke, backstroke, and a draw stroke.

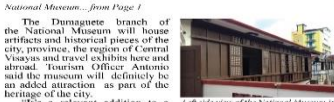
Dragon boat started from southern Guangdong Province in China along the Pearl River Delta and was officially declared as a modern international canoe-sport in Hongkong in 1976 and adopted in Dumaguete in 2017.

Photo PIC Dumaguete

Women's Small Boat	Men's Standard Boat	Mixed Standard Boat
Rank 1- Umagu Dragon Boat Team	Rank 1- Boracay All Stars	Rank 1- Boracay All Stars
Rank 2- Kaway Tiger Dragons	Rank 2- Kaway Tiger Dragons	Rank 2- San Jose Banani
Rank 3- Black Manta Warriors	Rank 3- Calindagan Twin Paddlers	Rank 3- Boracay Dragon Force
Rank 4- Sughu Mighty Dragons	Rank 4- Boracay Dragon Force	Rank 4- Umagu Dragon Team
Men's Small Boat	Mixed Small Boat	
Rank 1- Team Hilera	Rank 1- Boracay Dragonforce	
Rank 2- Boracay All Stars	Rank 2- Hotel Essencia Yellowlins	
Rank 3- Hotel Essencia	Rank 3- Boracay All Stars	
Rank 4- SB Banani	Rank 4- Umagu Dragonboat Team	

Launch of FORWARD Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends

The formal launching of Forward Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends through a Memorandum of Agreement signing between the Journalism and Mass Communication Department of Negros Oriental State University represented by Vice President...



In the City Administration Lounge... Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo...

The Dumaguete branch of the National Museum will house artifacts and historical pieces of the city, province, the region of Central Visayas and travel exhibits here and abroad. Tourism Officer Antonio said the museum will definitely be an added attraction as part of the heritage of the city.

It is a relevant addition to a university town. One of the places you go to when you visit is the local museum, so you'll learn more about the place. A lot of people have that habit. So now, we finally have our own museum. It's not just an ordinary museum. It's a national museum, Antonio said.

The National Museum in Dumaguete is a project of the National Museum of the Philippines in partnership with the City Government of Dumaguete. All proceeds will go directly to the City of Dumaguete.

Rizal Blvd... from Page 1

"The issuance by the DENR of the ECC, I believe would allay the apprehensions of these so-called environmentalists in the City, Arbon stressed.

Local Government Unit (LGU) of Dumaguete City, represented by Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo was granted the Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) on June 18.

Vendors in the boulevard area see the project as favorable on their part as more people are engaging in the beach course.

"Sa wala pa ni maabot ang proyekto, lahi among income, gamay. Pag-abot din na ni income, juo," said Joe Abrasado, a vendor for more than 15 years.

Jovenito Sobrigna, fisherman for more than 30 years shared "Ginabalut na sa among dalubharian diri, kanang bahatangon ang gamit ba, hantang sukayan. Sige mit maabuhin-bahuhin."

"Wag na makaba diri [fish near the shore], unyo sige pal sabuhing ang alagor nungang unyo sige. Sinaubak nila" he added.

"With the caveat and alert under being lifted by the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA), the project is expected to be completed in a matter of few months.

"Walking is best possible exercise. Habituate yourself to walk very far".

-Thomas Jefferson

Shake up to Shape up the Dumaguete Way

Dumaguete City, the world's best place to relax is known as a melting pot of artists from different fields in the arts. Both locals and tourists enjoy Dumaguete's arts scene. Furthermore, the city has been positioned into a sports hub in the central Philippines by organizing and hosting national events.

Hence, it is not surprising to find that the City Government-initiated activities offer a variety of sports and recreational activities from sunrise to sundown. According to *Business Mirror*, Dumaguete City Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo is building the momentum for the city to emerge as a sports tourism capital.

For the Dumaguete working class and locals who find a hard time to play sports, the City Government is an alternative way of staying fit. In Dumaguete, schedules are set during the evening which makes it convenient for the working class, students and other people who get busy during the day to participate.



Zumba enthusiasts dance to the beat of Latin music at Quezon Park. - Photos by RJG

Go for It: Beach Volleyball

It is an ordinary day at the boulevard of Dumaguete City. Cars and motorcycles drive past, and foreign tourists are seen grabbing a quick bite at a local restaurant nearby. Street food vendors begin lining up to lure in hungry customers with the delicious and familiar taste of *halu* and *tempura*. Nearby, travelers are seen up and about, occasionally stopping for a photo opportunity at the city's landmarks and signage. At the end of the boulevard, athletes and rookie players play a game of beach volleyball. Beads of sweat trickle down their foreheads, but they are too invested in the game to even notice.

In April 2019, the country's top 20 teams in beach volleyball played for the summer edition of Beach Volleyball Republic (BVR) here. De La Salle University and Ateneo de Manila continued to be competing rivals of the University Athletics Association of the Philippines (UAAP).

As a hub for sports tourism in the Philippines, Dumaguete welcomes beach volleyball enthusiasts to play daily but for an exclusive practice in the beach court, they need to reserve it at the Dumaguete LGU office. Beach volleyball in Dumaguete started three years ago and is now played and enjoyed by many locals. It is also the Dumaguete Boulevard coastline, where beach volleyball courts are the competitions sponsored by the city.

Because beach volleyball tournaments have multiplied, it's clear that it transcends mere athletics. This is manifested in how players never take a notice of the sweat dripping down their bodies, or how they don't seem to care about the blazing heat. For them, when you fall in love in the art, the only thing that matters is to send it over the net.

Taiji

To stay healthy is everybody's wish. This is a fact. But, when you hear, "I wish my weight stays light" or "I wish I still have that slim figure two decades ago," these seem to be the crazy wishes?

If you are so eager to stay healthy, you may be keeping fit by engaging in slow motion shadow boxing called *taichi* (pronounced *tau-chi-chow*), popularly known as *taiji*, pronounced *ty-ty-ty*. Sometimes, it is spelled as *tai-chi* or *tai-ji*.

If you are familiar with the Daily Dozen Exercise we learned in college during our physical education classes, most of the steps are quite similar, but the movements are done in a very slow, gentle and graceful manner. While doing the movements, patience and concentration are very important. After doing *taiji*, one would really perceive even though the movements are done in a very slow manner.

Taiji is basically a form of exercise, but it is also an art and is one form of Chinese martial arts, according to the book, *CHINA: A travel guide* by the Lonely Planet Publications. The book stressed that *taiji* is not a form of self-defense but its movements are similar to *kung fu* or *jeet kune do*. However, *kung fu* is performed at much higher speed. *Kung fu* also employs weapons.

Aside from keeping fit, most Chinese do *taiji* to help cure medical problems or health away

Sports, health, wellness - elements of a lifestyle change

These days, people of all ages are searching for a better quality of life - less traffic, less pollution, less stress. And we reasonably aim for a happier, healthier lifestyle, with more time to bond with family and friends.

Part of seeking a happier, healthier lifestyle is getting rid of toxic and negative people, bad memories and circumstances. These spill our zest for life and weak nerves on our emotions. The sooner we do it, the better for us.

Thankfully, there are many ways we can do this, through sports, social dance like Zumba or other Latin Dance, yoga and meditation, spiritual reflection or going for a whole body massage (Osteo and diabetics, we can always pray. This is our hotline to God and the line is always open, 24/7.

Recently, the Dragon Boat Race was held at Rizal Boulevard with participants coming from different parts of the country. And on June 20, the biggest Taekwondo Show in the Visayas featuring local Martial athletes, Rommel Pahala, the undefeated Asian Games Gold Medalist and challenger and Pamplona's MMA Fighter Arvin "Animado" Chan. They will be two of the athletes to fight against international rivals and other

Environmental Awareness

The City Government under the leadership of Mayor Felipe Remollo, has recently built a beach volleyball area where people can play games. In some areas of the city, regular Zumba classes are held several times a week. And guess what? They're free for the public. For a small fee, there are massage therapists on hand to soothe tired bodies and exhausted feet. No wonder, both tourists and residents feel the relaxed pace of life.

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Students of NORSU produce communication campaign posters to inform a clean environment. (Photo by RJG)

NORSU in Action: International Coastal Cleanup Day 2019

In celebration of International Coastal Cleanup Day 2019, the Development Office of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) in Mian Campus conducted a coastal cleanup activity in Buntayan, Sept.

The International Coastal Cleanup Day is an annual celebration started by the Ocean Conservancy in 1986 and celebrated every 21st of September by a cleanup activity worldwide. The different bodies of water around the globe. The NORSU Division Office had conducted a field study of the Silliman Beach since August. The river, located in the southern part of the beach being the center point of the cleanup as it is the primary carrier of the different kinds of garbage in which the river is connected to nearby barangays.

Meanwhile, last 21st of September, three units of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) namely the Philippine Army, Philippine Navy and Philippine Air Force of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) conducted a similar event in line with the celebration of the International Coastal Cleanup Day 2019.

People enjoying a game of Beach Volleyball at the Rizal Boulevard. - Photo HJO Dato

Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo in August spoke before Secretary Leonor Briones and with DepEd Regional and DepEd Assistant Secretary Revere A. Encabado.



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Living Taiji at Quezon Park, Dumaguete City. - Photo RJG

Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo with the delegation of Dumaguete City Office visited Hong Kong in August and was welcomed by Mayor Park So-hoi as they finished the historical moment of the city.



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HEALTHY DANCING PROGRAM

1. Aerobic Dancing Program	Monday-Wednesday-Friday (5:20 PM - 6:20 PM) M.L. Quezon Park, Dumaguete City
2. Zumba Dancing Program	Tuesday & Thursday (5:30 PM - 6:30 PM) Saturday (6:00 - 7:00 AM) Panatwan H. Rizal Boulevard, Dumaguete City
B. LARO-TAYSA SA PARKE (PLAY & LEARN PROGRAM): Every Saturday/Whole Year Round	
1. ZUMBA	6:30 - 8:00 AM (KIOSK - M.L. Quezon Park)
2. ARNIS, BOXING, CHESS, BOWLING, SPMAL, KARAOKE, KARATE, TAGWONDO & TAICHI	3:00 - 5:00 PM (M.L. Quezon Park, Dgite. City)
3. BEACH HANDBALL & VOLLEYBALL	3:00 - 5:00 PM (Beach Court, Rizal Blvd.)
C. ARNIS-KAL-ESKRIMA PROGRAM: 6:30 - 8:00 AM (M.L. Quezon Park, Dgite. City)	

EDITORIAL BOARD

This is a semi-annual newsletter of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department, College of Arts and Sciences of Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) in collaboration with the Department of Government Unit of Dumaguete City with mass media practitioners and young enthusiasts.

Team Leader: Dr. Joy C. Perez
Editors: Agnes Shari Ina-Aliwan, De La Cruz, Shigella Geaton, Julie Rose Cardina, Jazze M. Ocaso, Michael Toldan, Arnon Kettera, Paulo Resto G. Gallardo (ROG)
Photographer: Dr. Sami M. Khayat

The Forward logo designed by Aaron Tercera embraces the spirit of Dumaguete City. The logo stands for Dumaguete while the top slove is the network with the head symbolizing the boulevard's beautiful marine and the bottom half is a leaf to represent care for the environment and to promote an alternative that Dumaguete is beside the sea. The Cultural Seal of the City is also a significant symbol of the city. Lastly, in the middle, you can see the Dumaguete or Dumaguetean emblem, the sports, health, and wellness programs offered by the city.

Second Issue of the Forward Newsletter (January 2020-December 2020)

The second issue of the *Forward Newsletter* captured the early onset of the pandemic and the lockdowns that reshaped daily life. As families adjusted to a reality where an identification card granted only one member permission to step out for essentials, stories of resilience and adaptation emerged.

Amid these challenges, the newsletter highlighted significant milestones, such as the expansion of Dumaguete Boulevard under the reclamation project and the transformation of the old *Presidencia* near City Hall into a museum. However, the pandemic's impact was unmistakable: the ASEAN School Games were put on hold, and local festivities transitioned to virtual platforms.

In the midst of uncertainty, the issue showed the destinations of Negros Island like the iconic Bell Tower in Dumaguete City, Sidlakang Negros, Balinsasayao Twin Lakes, Manjuyod Sandbar, Port Royale Waterpark Resort, Dumaguete Painitan, Chosen Café in Valencia, and the Rock and Rabbit Kampground. These places served as a reminder of the island's enduring charm, even in difficult times.

The newsletter also explored the pandemic's ripple effects, spotlighting local businesses grappling with challenges and sharing practical advice on staying fit, safe, and mentally resilient. A feature on home gardening offered readers a therapeutic escape, while stories of virtual Zumba sessions and online celebrations provided a sense of community and joy.

Amid the ambiguity, the newsletter posed thought-provoking questions about the lockdown's duration and its unexpected silver linings. As nature began to heal in the absence of human activity, the pandemic revealed the earth's remarkable capacity for renewal—a subtle reminder of hope during a challenging chapter in history.

Through it all, the *Forward Newsletter* chronicled not only the trials but also the triumphs of a community determined to adapt and thrive.

2nd Issue of the Actual *Forward Newsletter*

FORWARD
Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends
November and First Construction Equipment, Cover of 18 Sections, 100% Printed with Dumaguete City Government
Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, 6200

Vol. 2 Number 1 January-December 2020

Dumaguete Boulevard Expands its Reclamation Project

Micha A. Barabara

The Dumaguete Boulevard is one of the masterpieces of the city as it expands its coastline near Silliman University. The project costs Php 15 million which was taken from the budget office.

Sometime in June 2019, Dumaguete Mayor Felipe Remollo decided to rehabilitate the Dumaguete Boulevard using 17,715 square meters of land so to be reclaimed. The project intends to provide a sports ground for sports enthusiasts. It will house eight volleyball courts, tennis courts, kump posts, walkways, and a promenade.

Photo by D. Democello

Mayor Felipe Remollo on the boulevard's reclamation program - *Photo by D. Democello*

Dumaguete's Regional Museum Opens Soon

Kathleen D. Barabara

The Old *Presidencia* in Dumaguete City, currently located at the City Hall, has been converted into a regional museum. Denis Key Democello, Dague City Public Information Officer shared during an interview via phone.

The creation of the museum will be declared by the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) as an "Important Cultural Property" because of its history and social impact.

National Museum of the Philippines and Dumaguete City government signed a joint agreement to allow the NMP to take over the Dumaguete City Hall's original portion. The Old *Presidencia* was built in late 1916 and designed by Juan M. Arellano, one of its greatest architects.

The agreement was signed after a meeting with NMP archaeologists and architects, and the city officials. The City Council granted Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo the authority to sign the deal for the restoration project costing Php 50 million.

The museum will be the home of all "panamanian," cultural heritage, and other wonders, including travel exhibits. As a local museum, people in Dumaguete, Negros, or even Cebu can see whatever the people in Manila are seeing.

The Old *Presidencia* building is almost completed and will be inaugurated soon. No date has been scheduled as of this writing.

See Photo at P. 7

Project costs: **Php 50M**

ASEAN School Games Postponed

Rosemarie Koro-Jabal

City Public Information Officer, Denis Key Democello in an interview said the ASEAN School Games will be postponed to 2021 instead of November 2020. There is no alternative host. It will still be Dague City, Democello explained.

Prior to the scheduling of the ASEAN School Games, the Department of Education observed that the Philippines will hold the 12th ASEAN School Games (ASG) in Dumaguete City on the 7th to 15th of November 2020, with theme "Inspire, Play, and Experience."

About 2,500 student-athletes from ten nations in Southeast Asia namely: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam will participate. The competitors will take part in various sports events such as archery, athletics, badminton, and table tennis, as well as volleyball.

Dumaguete City Mayor Felipe Antonio Remollo and Negros Oriental Governor Rosel Bayag Daguera are in close consultation with DepEd Secretary Leonor Maglaña-Briones for the preparation of ASG 2020. The responsible officials from the central and regional provinces conducted site inspection of available hotels, resorts, and playing venues so that all the needs and requirements in hosting the international tournament will be met before the annual event starts.

According to Secretary Briones, "We are fortunate to be chosen as the host of this big event but along with it, COVID-19 brought drastic effects on economic and social including academic, health and sports, and religion, as the "country's pride is at stake."

In late 2019, a coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was identified in Wuhan China, which now turned into a global pandemic. Countries all over the world implemented some form of lockdown to fight and alleviate it. COVID-19 brought drastic effects on economic and social including academic, health and sports, and religion, as the "country's pride is at stake."

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The project costs Php 15M

Micha A. Barabara

Dumaguete Boulevard... from P1

After the so-called "stop" of the project, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources under Sec. Roy Cimatu has signed the approval of the "area clearance" for Dumaguete's reclamation project as of December 16, 2019. The project is estimated and projected to be completed this year.

Photo by K. Barabara

Ongoing construction of the boulevard project - *Photo by K. Barabara*

The boulevard's reclamation program - *Photo by D. Democello*

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It's Even More Fun in Negros Island

Lonella Castro

If you are a budget traveler, Negros Oriental offers a variety of places and exciting journeys to travel. Although it is sad that the COVID-19 pandemic has heavily affected the tourism industry, it never stops local travelers to revisit these places.

The Bell Tower

The Bell Tower, known as the oldest landmark of Dumaguete, was built in 1754-1756 which is the site of the tower's clock. Now it is a little further in the Dumaguete Boulevard, one of the most popular sites in the city where residents stroll to catch street food or to witness a busy night for the vendors.

Photo courtesy of: Egan Thomas

Balinsasayao Twin Lakes

Meanderlike, you can just size or row your boat at the Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park which covers an area of 8,016.62 hectares across the municipalities of Valencia, Sibulan, and San Jose.

Photo courtesy of: Dumaguete.com

Manjuyod Sandbar

Taking you further is the Manjuyod sandbar covered with white sand in an umbrella form which has hot tub and captivated many sea lovers and dubbed it as the "Maldives in the Philippines."

Photo courtesy of: Tripadvisor.com.ph

Port Royale Waterpark Resort

Port Royale Waterpark Resort in Manjuyod Dumaguete has an outdoor swimming pool and view where guests can enjoy sportsmanship meals in the restaurant or drink in the bar.

Photo courtesy of: Photo.Azula.com

Chosen's Cafe

Another stopover is the newest attraction, the Chosen's Cafe in Zamangue Malabon. Since Briones in Valencia where tourists can savor the mountain view, the landscape and scenic view, the shop serves from the family name of the owner which is a vision of the word for "Chosen." *Photo courtesy of: TheCafeThomson*

Rock and Rabbit Kampground

One can also take a visit at the Rock and Rabbit Kampground in San Jose in Zamangue Malabon in Valencia which is surrounded by trees a perfect avenue to relieve stress.

Photo courtesy of: Facebook

FORWARD
Dumaguete Lifestyle Trends
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Local Businesses Hope to Catch up After COVID

Marc Anthony Ramirez-Guarano

Small local businesses and owners in Dumaguete City lose 70% of its daily profit due to COVID-19 pandemic. Food and hotel businesses in the city have been greatly affected because of COVID-19 leading others to stop its operation temporarily.

In an interview with some of the local food vendors in Rizal Boulevard and in the streets of Dumaguete City, they share the same sentiments of losing almost half of their profit.

Marjorie Geminio a street food vendor in Rizal Boulevard said that they are having a hard time to gain decent amount daily since the pandemic.

"*Local karon karon nga may COVID-19 kay wala nyo mga estudyante og mga turista kayayo sa Boulevard;*" she said.

Photo courtesy of: adriancompuad.com

Street food vendors of Rizal Boulevard setting up their stalls. *Photo by K. Barabara*

When asked to compare their profit before and in the new normal, here's what Geminio explained, "*Dalo kayo ang alibertaya kay atong mga COVID-19 maka-halim man mig kwatros (4,000 pesos) kada gubno, unya karon man na tanang sa 1,000 pesos lang mado buenas 1,500."*

Nancy Clarita, a senior citizen, peasant and water vendor in Rizal Boulevard experienced the same daily loss in her earnings. She shared she lost almost sixty to seventy percent of sales.

"*Medyo menos karon ang halim kumpara sauna. Sauna kay maka-halim pa man ko ng 700 (to) 800 kada gubno (P1M - 11PM) karon kay 300 saabang 500 bang wala gyud kayayo mo palit,*" Nay Clarita added.

Dumaguete Festivities

Michelle Barabara

On Nov 25, the "Feast Day of Sta. Catalina de Alejandria" will light up the community Christmas tree at the Dumaguete Plaza. As instructed by the local finance committee and the City's Leadership, the decorations recycle the decorations from last year. They reuse the previous Christmas trees and 652 lanterns. Lighting up the plaza is a way of giving thanks to the community, government, and all the different organizations that work together.

Meanwhile, Mayor Felipe Remollo discouraged "big events," stressing that people should be careful and cautious to the local transmission of Sarsangpinan. Kabataan will have a small parade with the participation of different organizations in Dumaguete.

fest day, but there will be a patrol and a checkpoint in the boundaries of Dumaguete City. For Christmas, the usual weekly program and the choir competition will be postponed and events next year. Mayor Remollo further expressed that corporate partners will sponsor fireworks and will be shown online as residents at home welcome the New Year. On the other hand, Antonio stated that the budget will be allocated next year only giving, they will go back to normal. "Maybe this is not the best time to do these public events" according to Antonio. People should follow the social distancing protocol and wear face masks for the safety of everyone.

5 Zumba Lifts Spirits Amidst the Pandemic

Shake your body with the music, sway here, and swing with passion! Zumba dancing in Damaguetas has become a lifestyle trend. It is a dance for all ages and gender; you don't need a lot to prepare. It is synonymous with doing a workout in the gym, but this time is coupled with dancing groove.

Zumba dancing started at the Macias Sports Complex. Over in 2009 with few members but has expanded to different areas in the City, including Rizal Boulevard, Quezon Park, and Robinsons Place Damaguetas. As time passes, the crowd grew and Damaguetas have become accustomed to do regular exercises, making it a daily habit.

Amidst the occurrence of COVID-19, Zumba dancers continue to perform their dance habits and encourage more enthusiasts to join the Zumba dancing. Exercising is advisable for everybody to boost the immune system so that it will withstand any health crisis. Currently, only Rizal park is allowed to perform the dancing activity and continues to follow the city's protocol.

Zumba is listed as one of the best exercises that your body can do aside from its challenging workout. It is a routine of dance moves that covers switching fast and slow actions that will match the tune and rhythm.

The Zumba programs' location is permanent and the schedule is always updated.

Every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at 8 a.m. for registered Zumba members with all levels of high intensity including Latin rhythms. Every 4:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays are the weekly sessions for those registered members in a private class, all levels with high intensity and Latin rhythms.

What makes Zumba different from other workouts is that it is fun while others feel caged in their own homes. Proactively physically and mental well-being will make you withstand the changing lifestyle.

In these challenging times, we must learn how to take good care of ourselves by drinking plenty of water, doing home workouts, reading good books, and learning new skills or hobbies to mitigate the stresses unfolding before us.

Meanwhile, sleep is also essential in achieving a healthy life but eating healthy food, do proper hygiene, follow restrictions will keep us safe from any health issues. While the world is put on hold, let us help each other, especially our front liners, by staying fit, staying home, and staying safe.

Be Fit, Be Safe, Fight COVID-19

Being fit amidst the pandemic is the ideal goal of stay at home working individuals. By trimming their bodies yet staying healthy allow them to feel motivated and inspired. Biking, jogging, swimming in the pool, playing badminton, doing physical fitness in the gym, or other creative ways to boost the immune system are avenues people go to avoid depression and melancholy.

Among the activities that have preoccupied Negronians is daily dancing. Nholih C. Adriano, a MAPIH graduate from Negros Oriental State University advises maintaining physical fitness can be done by dancing Zumba. Zumba is not just an ordinary workout but this aerobic dance can boost our heart health and decrease negative emotions. Not only will it promote strong muscles and bones but improves cardiovascular health as well. YouTube dance tutorials according to Distrito, allows individuals to perform Zumba exercises at home.

And how she manages to be faithful to her exercises despite the restrictions. As a captain ball in school, she works her lifestyle by doing their daily routine such as jogging around their house, doing high knees, flanking, making push-ups, and jumping jacks, or performing sit-ups. She adapts these indoor exercises to avoid local transmission, and if infected with the virus, her body can withstand the deadly whip of COVID-19. Pajulas elaborates that while doing these exercises, she couples it with a five-minute break of eating one boiled egg.

This pandemic has dramatically affected not just our immune system but also the mental health of many. The daily routine we are accustomed to having been altered, some people

and their jobs while others feel caged in their own homes. Proactively physically and mental well-being will make you withstand the changing lifestyle.

In these challenging times, we must learn how to take good care of ourselves by drinking plenty of water, doing home workouts, reading good books, and learning new skills or hobbies to mitigate the stresses unfolding before us.

Meanwhile, sleep is also essential in achieving a healthy life but eating healthy food, do proper hygiene, follow restrictions will keep us safe from any health issues. While the world is put on hold, let us help each other, especially our front liners, by staying fit, staying home, and staying safe.



Courtesy of <http://30seconds.com> Courtesy of <http://www.talzinusa.com>

6 How to Beat Mental Stress and Depression During the Pandemic

It becomes an unforgettable part of history as the pandemic continues to take lives. Children have been juggling the blended learning modes, dreamers let go temporarily of their ambitions, and many lost hope and faith since opportunities were never undertaken. The highest uncertainty that 2020 brings is that no one feels safe from the local transmission.

Combating all these, several of us have experienced mental health. It is normal to feel anxious and stressed during these difficult times. If you feel sad, alone, and hopeless, or you have any thoughts of harming yourself, you better talk to a health professional or to a friend, you can easily talk and trust.

We feel more alone because we are quarantined. We can't go out freely anymore. The best option is to connect with our loved ones through social media, telephone, or many ways to decrease our loneliness.

There are healthy ways to cope with stress.

- (1) Know what to do if you are sick.
- (2) Know where and how to get help.
- (3) Take care of your emotional health.
- (4) Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media.
- (5) Take care of your body.
- (6) Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- (7) Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- (8) Exercise regularly.
- (9) Get plenty of sleep.
- (10) Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.

and are concerned about COVID-19. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.

(2) Know where and how to get treatment and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy (in person or through telehealth services).

(3) Take care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs.

(4) Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.

(5) Take care of your body.

(6) Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.

(7) Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.

(8) Exercise regularly.

(9) Get plenty of sleep.

(10) Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.

Series of Questions : New Normal, What the Future Await

In times of uncertainty what should we expect? We currently exist in an era where Prada is not a statement but a fact because of this pandemic and about 34 million been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 worldwide, we are frozen. We are in a freezer called home. People shivered not with the cold winter chills but by financial constraints.

In a country like the Philippines where human power is part of the economic development. When everyone is locked up or restricted from their daily routines, habits, and norms, how are we going to redefine our world, our system, and our future?

The pandemic does not care about your social status. It hits everyone, it kills, and deprives us to many opportunities. Careers and dreams are shattered. Businesses and economy have plunged down. Sadly, public health system and education system are not ready. Do we still have a future in this new normal? Is this the new normal? How will you describe it to your kids?

If I will describe new normal to a kid I say that it is a phenomenon where uncertainty is certain. When you are a prisoner in your own home. Where your nation's leaders are arguing about red tagging and terror bill and not about how

to save its people from the virus. What do we have in this new normal? Nothing. What year about to close? What year about to be infected? Does gearing yourself with a mask, a face shield and an alcohol enough? How about if this pandemic runs for the next two to three years? Can it save us from the possibilities of being infected?

Our public health system, our educational system, our food and supply chain, and most especially our environmental system - we need to redefine them. We need to recalibrate them. Equip them with proper necessities and armor them with critical thinking personalities.

We do not need guns, armored tanks, and other armaments to combat this pandemic. The country doesn't need retired generals to lead us in a health crisis. Hence, we need more health professionals.

New more than ever we need leaders rather than government officials. We need catalysts for change. We need to lead that change.

We do not need new normal, we just need to bring back our old normal with redefined outlook.

Blessing in Disguise

In just one unexpected circumstance, the entire world changes. A novel transmissible disease with human to human transmission was spotted in Wuhan, China in the tail end of December 2019. This now becomes a worldwide pandemic and serious threat to human health. This threat halts the economic, social, and spiritual activities. COVID-19 pandemic has brought to people unexpected situation that drowned them in fear and unpredictability about their future.

Despite that, COVID-19 is somehow a kind of a blessing, where pollution has been diminished and nature is healing itself. Countries and states all over the world have implemented lockdowns, curfews, quarantine to minimize infection and widespread transmission of the virus.

Recent data released by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) and ESA (European Space Agency) indicates that pollution has reduced up to 30% in some European such as China, Italy, Spain, USA, etc. During the lockdowns period, the entire population is facing several difficulties but so are the words, "Every action has a some and opposite reaction."

Despite the ongoing threat, lockdown has some positive effects on natural environment such as the pollution level of air is spectacularly decreased. The COVID-19 lockdown has led to cleaner air. It also resulted in a big improvement in the air quality. There is also a trend of decrease in the level of concentration.

Second, clear visibility of the blue sky. Since the industries, vehicles, airplanes, and ships have stopped running, there is an absence of smog and carbon dioxide gases in the air. Due to this, the visibility range has increased. The sky is returning to its ancient glory with chirping birds and dazzling stars.

Third, pollution level in water is also greatly diminished. Since the noise pollution stopped, birds started to fly dimlylessly. Due to lockdown and minimal noise pollution, the birds did not experience disturbances. As a result, birds were spotted in different places. Animals roaming freely and fearlessly due to lockdown.

Finally, according to Shyloshah Rajan an environmentalist, "It is lockdown for people but freedom for birds and animals." COVID-19 is a pandemic, yet

a great opportunity. Just as a Chinese proverb once said, "Misfortune may be a blessing in disguise." One positive after effect of the pandemic is, it helps you build genuine relationships and having quality time with your family.

Every family can turn COVID-19 pandemic into an opportunity to grow together and strengthen their bond among all its members. Sincerely conversations build stronger family relationships and also encourage more in-depth communication. Spending time together is one of the greatest gift families can give to one another. Not only the quality time strengthens and builds family relationship, but it also provides a sense of belongingness and certainty for everyone in the family. Strong family relationship also encourages better behavior in children, improves educational performance, and strengthens parent-child relationship bond. It is also offering an opportunity for parents to strengthen family values, build a strong foundation for every child and helps them to make better choices. There is a saying that goes, "Sometimes blessings come in ugly wrapping paper."



The restored Old Presidential building of the Damaguetas City Hall. - Photo by K. Barabas

Gardening at Home

During this pandemic, it seems the traditions of garden making has become popular. Gardening has become an important part of us because it breaks the daily grind and keeps us busy. The benefits of gardening allow us to relax, help reduce stress. Because having a garden at home is therapeutic, and fun at the same time, below are common garden plants. With this plan collection, our flower gardens will look exciting and beautiful. By being preoccupied of managing a garden, we will be away from stress and depression.

<p>Prayer plant The true name of this plant is <i>Miscanthus</i>, the reason why it's called prayer plant because the leaves curl and signal its prayer position. This plant symbolizes gratitude.</p> <p>https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/indoor-plants/prayer-plant.htm</p>	
<p>Elephant Ear This is a perfectly heart-shaped and bi-colored leaves, varying in red, pink, and white.</p> <p>https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/indoor-plants/elephant-ear.htm</p>	
<p>Hosta will be a survival sensation to a beautiful and perfect indoor plant because of its ease and low maintenance. Hosta is covered in a curve bract.</p> <p>https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/indoor-plants/hosta.htm</p>	
<p>Money plant has an oblong, shiny, and healthy leaves which exude abundance, happiness, and wealth.</p> <p>https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/indoor-plants/money-plant.htm</p>	
<p>Spider plant It has an evergreen, arch-shaped, long, thin, upright. This plant attracts gardeners because it pulls toxins from the air every day and also releases oxygen at night. According to NASA, this is an ideal bedroom plant that helps regulate humidity in the room.</p> <p>https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/indoor-plants/spider-plant.htm</p>	

EDITORIAL BOARD

This is a newsletter of the Journalism and Mass Communications Department, College of Arts and Sciences of Negros Oriental State University (NOSU) in collaboration with the Local Government Unit of Damaguetas City, with various media practitioners and young enthusiasts.

<p>Team Leader Filipino Writers</p>	<p>Dr. Sonia D. Sy-Gasco Dr. Sonia R. S. Gasco Micaela A. Bahler Kathleen D. Barabas Lorella C. Carino Marc Anthony R. Guarino Brysonne Kenia M. Bernal Krisza Marie Nungay Jazelle Mae Ocasio Aron Torrico Dr. Stella M. Krayat</p>
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The Forward logo designed by Aurora Tercera embraces the spirit of Damaguetas. The Forward logo stands for Damaguetas while the top view is to the horizon with the flag symbolizing the boulevard's beautiful sunrise and sunset. The bottom left is a leaf to represent care for the environment and below is a palm tree to showcase that Damaguetas is beside the sea. The Cathedral Hill tower can also be seen as a significant symbol of the city. Lastly, in the middle, you can see the Damaguetas or Damaguetas enjoying the sports, health, and leisure practices offered by the city.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Health and wellness are particularly important for Filipinos because they are essential to maintaining a high quality of life, supporting familial and community relationships, and preserving cultural traditions. It is therefore suggested that Filipinos maintain good health to be able to fulfill their roles in passing down traditions of being breadwinners or carers to their elders. Having poor health can affect family dynamics and result in financial hardships in the family (Yap et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, being known for Filipinos' collective efforts in the Bayanihan, it is important to take collective action to promote health and wellness in the community. By having healthy members in society, volunteer work becomes more feasible (Carandang et al., 2020). Henceforth, the Forward Newsletter serves to fulfill its purpose of promoting a culture of healthy Filipinos.

Among the many issues that the *Forward Newsletter* covers is the fusion of traditional and spiritual practices into their wellness routines, such as herbal medicine and faith healing. It is considered that articles must contain health, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects in the newsletter (Tan, 2019). Knowing that the Philippines is prone to natural disasters, Filipinos should be vigilant about health and wellness as part of the community building in the city (Bankoff, 2021).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research initiative was born from the extension program of the Journalism and Mass Communication Department under the College of Arts and Sciences at Negros Oriental State University (NORSU) in collaboration with the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Dumaguete City. Following a preliminary needs assessment, the absence of sports, health, and wellness-focused content within the community was identified, sparking the conceptualization of the *Forward Newsletter*.

Once the articles were written, the project extended its reach to the community through a dedicated Facebook page, inviting engagement and feedback from readers. A research-extension survey was conducted to assess the newsletter's impact and relevance, employing a quantitative methodology.

Respondents included students and faculty from the Bachelor of Arts in Communication program at NORSU, who were also members of the *Forward Newsletter* Facebook page. The survey utilized an online questionnaire designed with seven key questions derived from the NORSU Extension Program. It gathered demographic information such as age and gender and encouraged respondents to evaluate the newsletter's relevance, usefulness, content, and potential for continuance, as well as provide recommendations for improvement.

The frequency method was applied to analyze the data, yielding insights into the newsletter's impact and areas for enhancement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Age

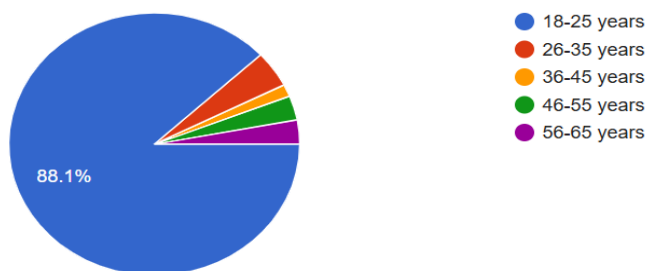


Figure 1 on Respondents' Age

The survey results indicated that the *Forward Newsletter* predominantly attracted readers aged 18–25 years, accounting for a substantial majority of 89.45%. This was a clear indicator that the newsletter demonstrated well with a younger audience, likely due to their active engagement with digital platforms, particularly social media, where the newsletter was disseminated. The smaller proportions of older age groups, such as 4% for 26–35 years, and even smaller percentages for 36–45, 46–55, and 55–65 years, suggested that the newsletter's content or medium of distribution may not be as appealing or accessible to older demographics. This age-specific readership could be leveraged for targeted content creation while exploring strategies to engage older audiences.

Gender

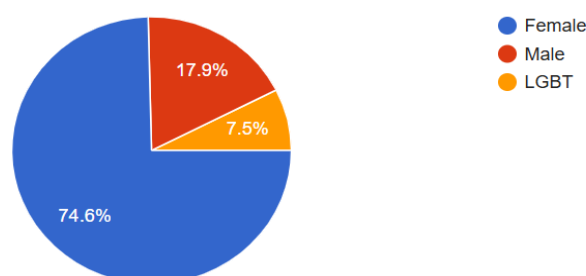


Figure 2 on gender

The survey revealed that the majority of readers were female, representing 74.2% of respondents. Male readers comprised 18.2%, while individuals identifying as part of the LGBT group were 7.6%. The significant proportion of female readers could reflect their particular interest in the newsletter's topics, such as sports, health, and wellness, which may align with their preferences. Meanwhile, the representation of male and LGBT readers, though smaller, indicated the need for more inclusive content that catered to diverse audiences. This data underscored an opportunity to expand the newsletter's reach by tailoring stories or features that resonate with underrepresented groups.

Relevance

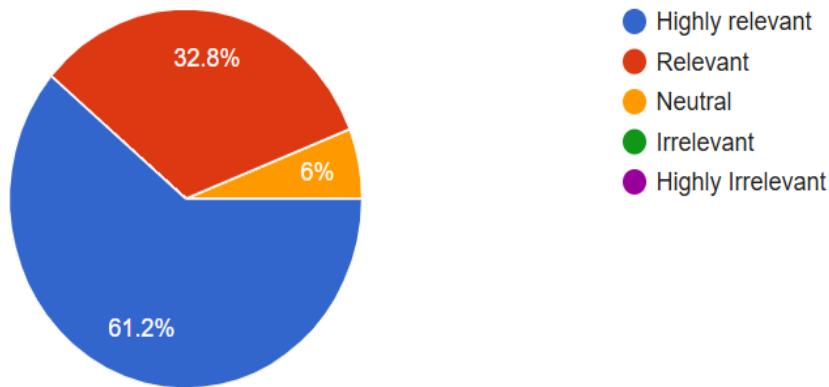


Figure 3 on relevance

The newsletter was deemed highly relevant by 62.1% of respondents, with an additional 31.8% considering it appropriate. This combined 93.9% positive perception indicates that the newsletter successfully meets the informational needs of its readers, particularly by keeping them updated on local events, sports, health, and wellness topics. The remaining 6.1% of neutral respondents suggest there may be a minority of readers who felt the content could be improved or tailored further to align with their expectations. These findings affirmed the value of the newsletter while highlighting areas for potential enhancement in engagement strategies.

Usefulness

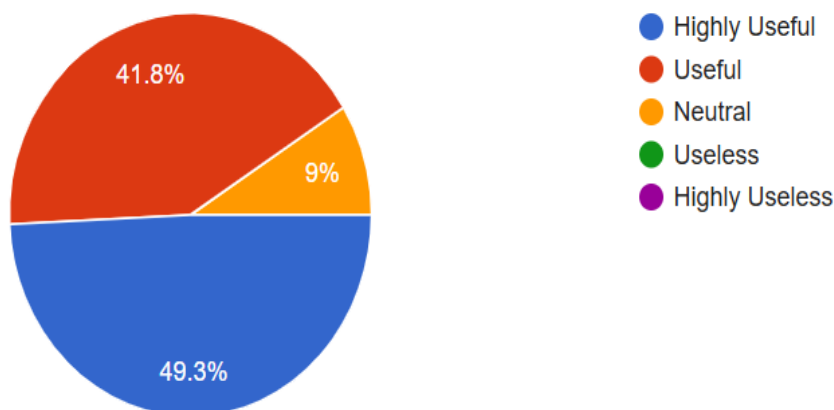


Figure 4 on usefulness

Half of the respondents (50%) found the *Forward Newsletter* to be highly useful, while another 40.9% deemed it helpful for staying informed about city affairs. A smaller portion, 9.1%, expressed neutrality, indicating room for improvement in conveying the newsletter's utility to all readers. The high usefulness ratings suggested that the newsletter was fulfilling its role as an informative medium. Still, the targeted feedback from neutral respondents could provide insights into additional features or topics that would enhance its practical value.

Content

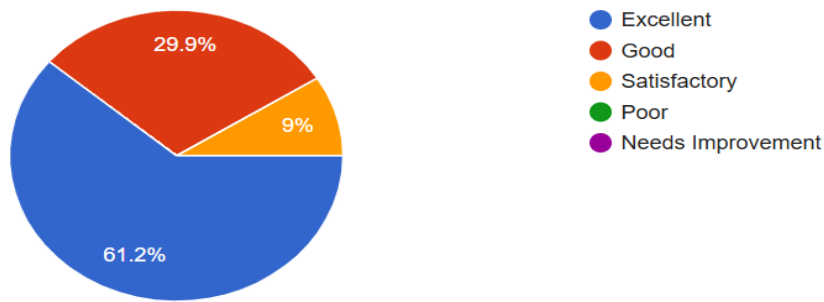


Figure 5 on content

The newsletter's content was rated excellent by 62.1% of respondents, with another 28.8% rating it as useful. A smaller segment (9.1%) found it satisfactory. This overwhelmingly positive feedback reflected the success of the newsletter in delivering engaging and relevant content. However, the small proportion of satisfactory ratings could indicate minor gaps in addressing specific reader expectations, such as diversity in topics or depth of coverage. Continuous content evaluation and reader feedback mechanisms could further refine the quality of the newsletter.

Priority Level

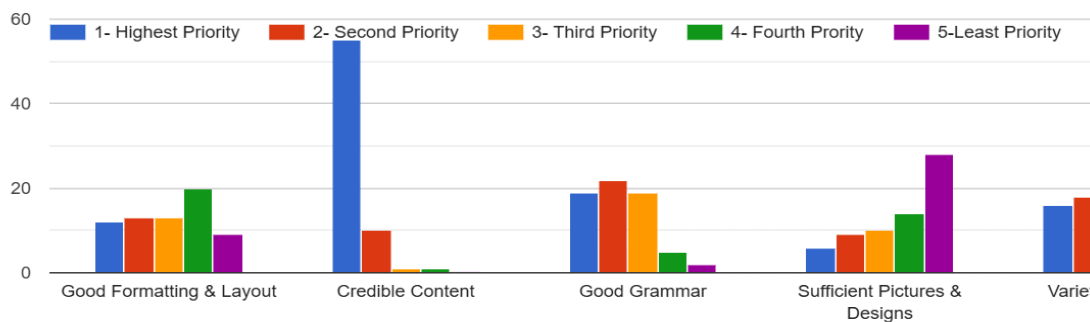


Figure 6 Respondents' Level of Priority

The survey identified "credible content" as the highest priority for readers, emphasizing the importance of trustworthiness and reliability. Secondary and tertiary priorities included good grammar and appropriate formatting and layout, respectively. Interestingly, the least important factor for readers was the presence of sufficient pictures and designs. This hierarchy suggested that readers value substance and clarity over visual elements. While design improvements could enhance the overall reading experience, the focus should remain on delivering high-quality, well-edited, and informative content.

Should the Newsletter Continue?

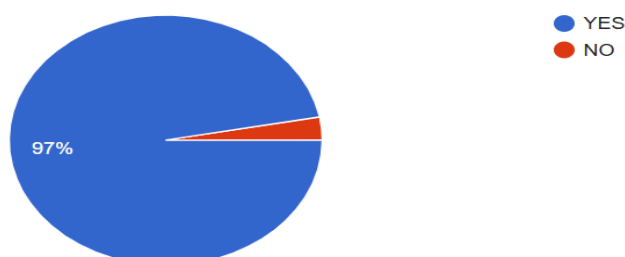


Figure 7 on the Newsletter's Continuance

An overwhelming 97% of respondents supported the continuation of the *Forward Newsletter* as an extension program, highlighting its perceived value and relevance to the community. The minimal opposition (3%) suggested negligible dissatisfaction, affirming the newsletter's role as a vital communication tool. This near-unanimous approval provided a strong mandate to sustain and potentially expand the newsletter's reach and impact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

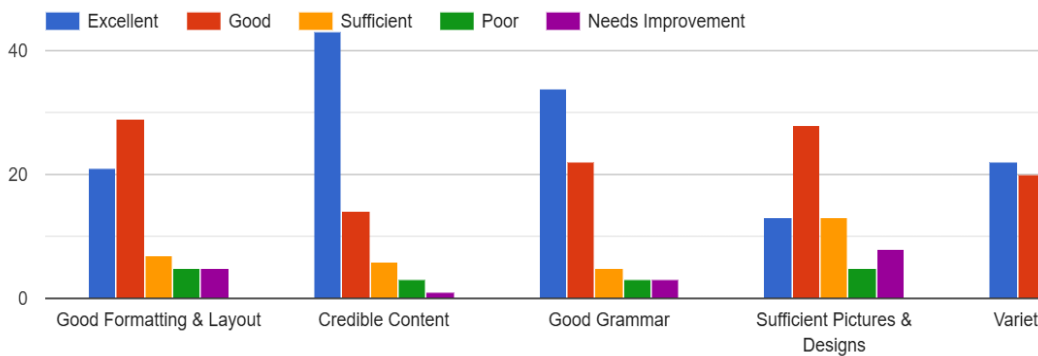


Figure 8 Recommendations

The survey responses highlighted several key areas for future enhancements to the *Forward Newsletter*. First, maintaining and enhancing the credibility and diversity of stories was crucial to meeting the varied interests of readers. Second, meticulous proofreading and editing were essential to uphold high linguistic standards. Third, optimizing the layout was necessary to improve readability and overall aesthetic appeal. While visual elements were not a primary concern, incorporating well-chosen images and designs could complement the content and enhance visual engagement. By addressing these recommendations, the *Forward Newsletter* could continue to evolve as a valuable and impactful resource for its readers.

CONCLUSION

The *Forward Newsletter*, a health and wellness extension publication program in Dumaguete City and the Dumaguete City Government showcased articles on dragon boating, Zumba, Taiji, fitness routines, strategies for managing mental stress, and stories of keeping a healthy lifestyle. With survey applicants of more women than men, the newsletter was highly relevant, useful, and satisfying. It allowed them to be updated on what was going on in the city and the government's activities of promoting health and wellness. With the news and feature stories being credible, the respondents assessed the newsletter as credible, with good grammar, formatting, and layout. Because the project was designed before and during the pandemic, it then served as an avenue for readers to be updated on the government's health programs and activities. Thus, Dumagueteños subscribers of the *Forward Newsletter* opted to continue the extension program as it had encouraged them to sustain a balanced and healthy conscious lifestyle.

Funding: No funding was involved as it was published online.

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