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# **Banilad: A Sanctuary of Hope**

Tucked away in the heart of Cebu City (Philippines), amid low-income urban communities, something extraordinary unfolds in an unassuming building: the Banilad Center for Professional Development. These are three stories from 2024-25 graduates who worked through the challenges of life towards a promising professional future.

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In 2024–2025 school year, BCPD celebrated the graduation of 19 senior high school students, 29 Hotel & Restaurant Services trainees, and 14 Health Care Services students. Lives are being transformed on campus, not through headlines or great fanfare, but in the voices of teachers, staff, mentors, and the school community, who support one another in the path to second chances.

### **A granddaughter who carried a legacy**

One young graduate stepped onto the stage with memories stitched into her words: recollections of early mornings when her *Lolo* fetched water from a far-off well, just so she could bathe before school. Of *Lola* preparing food and cheering her on at every event. Of a mother working overseas and a father toiling in Manila, their love sent through video

calls, tuition fees, and small *pasalubongs* packed with hope.

“I stand here because they stood for me,” said Honey, a grade 12 graduate, paying tribute to those who raised her with sacrifice and unconditional love.

She began her journey at the school with uncertainty (new faces, unfamiliar routines) but over time, it became her second home. From panicking over skill tests to passing the National Certificate Level II Assessments in Bread and Pastry Production, Cookery, Housekeeping, and Food and Beverage Services, she found strength not only in herself but in others who shared the same fire.

She brought St. John Paul II's words (“Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep”) to life in her senior high school years. Now, she sets her sights

on college, ready to begin a new chapter at the newly opened National University in Cebu.

## **A big sister (“Ate”) who refused to let go of her dream**

One graduate stepped forward with quiet strength. Her childhood was marked by a fractured family and early responsibility, becoming a second parent to her younger siblings while grandparents, an aunt, and an uncle lovingly cared for their daily needs.

Despite being a consistent honor student, college once felt like an impossible dream. The family's limited means forced her to consider giving it up. But a teacher's kind recommendation changed everything. That moment led her to BCPD... And so a door she thought was shut swung wide open.

“God used my teacher as an instrument,” she said, her eyes shining. At BCPD, she found more than training. She found a home, a sense of purpose, and a path forward.

She expressed deep gratitude to the director, management staff, her teachers and trainers, her mentor, and the non-teaching personnel.

“You turned BCPD into a sanctuary of hope,” she said. And for students like her, that hope is everything.

Yvone, now a graduate of the Hotel and Restaurant Services program, completed 960 hours of on-the-job training at Plantation Bay. On her final day, moved by her grit and excellence, the resort offered her a job on the spot. She was awarded the *Silver Medal*, the highest honor in her batch, at Commencement.

**A mother who defied the odds**

Then came Cherlien Monte: 36 years old, a mother of four, a full-time employee, and now a proud graduate of the same institution that once trained her younger sister in Hotel & Restaurant Services.

With tears in her eyes, she recalled the week she nearly gave up. Her grandmother, her “number one fan,” had just passed away. “I was so down... but I gained back my strength and faith in God when I was in BCPD,” she shared. “I know she’s proud of me at this very moment.”

As a member of the pilot batch for the Health Care Services course, Cherlien faced rigorous return demonstrations, late-night study sessions, and the demands of managing a household. But she pressed on, fueled by the encouragement of the staff, the mentoring program, and the spiritual support she found at BCPD.

“The 960 hours of on-the-job training at one of Cebu’s top hospitals (Velez Hospital) was a dream come true,” she said. “BCPD made me believe that age and poverty are never hindrances to fulfilling dreams.”

She graduated as the sole *Outstanding Student* for her excellent academic and practical performance. Today, she proudly works at Cebu North General Hospital.

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