

## Venisce, The Math Ace

• Shelamie L. Ayala

Competitions play a vital role in motivating learners to excel and offer a lot more rewards than just winning the prize.

The young pride of Dagupan City National High School, Grade 7 Venisce Elisha M. Rodriguez, once again made a name in the recently concluded international math competition, Copernicus Mathematics Olympiad, last May 15. Venisce bagged a Silver Medal, which made him ranked 13th globally, with his coach Mr. JunJun Soriano.

Venisce's mom Engr. Elizabeth M. Rodriguez, who is also a professional trainer for Mathematics and other academic competitions, expressed her gratitude to all the teachers and people who guided and supported Venisce in his journey throughout the competition.

She is incredibly proud of his son's achievements and could not find the exact words to describe another international math competition title won by Venisce.

The different awards the young Math Wizard received this school year brought pride to the school and the whole country.

His winnings include Gold Medal in Thailand International Mathematical Olympiad Heat Round 2020-2021, Gold

Medal in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area Mathematical Olympiad Heat Round 2020-2021, Silver Medal in Hong Kong International Science Olympiad Heat Round 2020-2021, Merit Award in HIPPO International English Language Olympiad 2021 and Silver Medal in Eurasian Spelling Bee Lexical Skills.

"As the concepts increased in difficulty, the subject became even more fun for me. The dedication and creativity required in advanced mathematics have only empowered my enthusiasm for it," exclaimed Venisce.

Competitions offer many more relishing rewards for learners, and the chance of winning matches can only be improved by honing skills and competing in various contests. These undoubtedly provide an opportunity for participants to gain substantial experience, showcase skills, analyze and evaluate outcomes and uncover personal aptitude.

With Venisce's positive attitude and proper training, it is no doubt that he will reap more successes -- for winning takes talent; to repeat, it takes character.

With the many achievements that he has acquired for the country at his young age, indeed, he is a Math Ace of the Philippines.



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## Charlene's Meat and Grit

• Katherine A. Meneses

“I still have so many things to learn, and that’s okay,” 15-year-old Charlene Taneo Cruz typed on her laptop when asked about her thoughts for being dubbed as a young achiever.

Charlene just came home from her training that afternoon as she was prepping for a Science Olympiad. She described herself as an enthusiast rather than an academic athlete and emphasized the importance of one’s willingness and persistence to learn. “You only learn when you listen and persevere to solve problems. If you don’t understand a concept, then ask. Never keep questions to yourself,” she continued.

Just as she practices what she preaches, through hard work and tenacity, Charlene recently added more feathers to her cap when she obtained the highest distinction (gold award) in the 2020 Big Bei Bay Hong Kong Math Olympiad; when she was recognized for a silver award in the Philippine International Mathematical Olympiad (PhIMO); and when she received a bronze medal on the PIMSO (Philippine International Math and Science Olympics) Math National Round 2021, and a silver medal in the 2021 Challenge for Future Mathematicians (CFM).

Asked about what preparations she usually does whenever she competes, she stated the importance of developing skills through constant

training. “I go over the questions I acquired and the problems I encountered from those training,” she said.

But of the many international feats she has had, one of the most memorable for her was the International Mathematician Wizard Competition in Indonesia back in 2018. “This was my first international competition. Not many people know I entered this competition. I re-entered this year and got Bronze, too,” she said.

Now and then, tarpaulins and social media announcements keep people posted about Charlene and her feats in Math and Science competitions. However, when asked if she could list down the most significant matches she’s entered so far, half of her list comprises writing and broadcasting contests. Her prowess in such categories flourished in her elementary years. She inclined to write before she got curious about what makes Pythagoras famous. Her pen and paper provide an outlet to communicate her opinions and express her feelings to understand herself better.

She added, “I liked English and writing way before Math. My younger brother won gold in his first international Math competition, and that somehow got me interested. He inspired me to strive better.”

And just as how her brother became her inspiration, Charlene’s parents are her steady sources of support and encouragement. “Our parents are nonchalant about competitions, which is advantageous for us since we wouldn’t feel



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# PRECEPTORS' VIEW



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pressured. ‘Ma, It’s difficult.’ That’s what we would always say. And our mother would always reply with ‘That’s okay. Did you eat already?’” said Charlene.

Every competition, hence, is an opportunity for her to showcase her best and gain experience to cherish and learn from.

“I try to do my best so that I would not have any regrets,” she continued. “Our parents always say ‘kung para sa ‘yo, para sa ‘yo.’ It’s a reminder that if an opportunity isn’t for me, then the next one maybe. Most people see the success, but never the frustrations. Not winning isn’t a failure; rather, it is a chance to progress - a lesson for me to do better. All I have to do is improve myself and try once more.”

Beyond this eagerness for self-improvement, Charlene, a consistent honor student with an exuberant personality, also puts value on time management. Many will cite inspiring yet intricate quotes, but hers will always be ‘time is gold.’

“It signifies how we value and prioritize things in our lives depending on their level of importance,” she stated.

And priorities for Charlene do not only include school and competitions. According to her, there is so much more beyond textbooks and studying. Her family, for instance, is her pillar of support who continuously guides her in making decisions. Her family molded her into someone who is not only open-minded but outspoken as well. “I grew up in an environment where I can express myself through words and actions without inhibitions. My family allows me to speak my mind freely and supports my individual choices,” she said.

Charlene added, “My mother will always share her ideas and perceptions on things in such a way that I

get a glimpse of the situation. I am interested in listening to people’s different perspectives – how they answer the same questions regarding a certain topic. This trains me to be respectful of others’ beliefs and become an open-



*Charlene bags Gold Award in the 2020 Big Bei Bay Hong Kong Math Olympiad.*

“minded person.”

Her open-mindedness at an early age is even apparent when she shared tips with fellow students inspired by her achievements. “We are all different, and choosing a path not similar to others doesn’t make you invalid. Strive and do your best in your chosen path and passion. But while you validate your decisions, listen to other people’s pieces of advice.”

Charlene then took a sip of her coffee and keyed in her ending statement before hitting the Send button. “Never forget that you aren’t alone. He is with you, always.”

The contributor stared at her screen as she read Charlene’s replies. She was left in awe by the learner’s sagacity. Those who have met Charlene in person can testify that she is a natural stand-out - the 15-year-old criterion of pretty, confident, and intelligent. The interview, though done virtually, was a chance to meet and know her at a more personal and greater depth. It proved indeed that Charlene is a young epitome of innate excellence, driven by her passion and self-motivation, and made consistent through her persistence, diligence, and grit.

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