

Cooking

Continued from Page 19

him questions, and he was kind of like, ‘uh, I can’t give you my secret away,’ she said in jest.

The competition took place in a working kitchen that prepares meals for elementary school cafeterias, giving students first-hand experience in large-scale food service operations.

“One of them walked in and he was like, ‘Whoa, this is so big,’” Rodriguez said.

Renewed interest

For some students, the experience sparked long-term culinary ambitions. Rodriguez said Blas already plans to continue training in cooking.

“She has really expressed that she loves cooking and she plans on going into culinary,” she said.

Rodriguez said the dedication shown by students competing during their spring break signals renewed interest in cooking among younger generations.

“We have Jessica [Aninzo] from Manang Pika, Ryan [James] from Guam Grillz,” she said. “I think that, like those people that are coming in here are like big influences on the kids, because I feel like a lot of the generations lost that love of cooking, and it’s so easy to go get takeout. But the fact that they’re here on their spring break wanting to do this, I feel like it really shows something.”

Rodriguez said she wants to expand the program to reach more students across the island.

“I do hope this program continues. I honestly wish we can get a better or bigger venue to host more students, and then especially get out there,” she said.

Rene Saruda, district manager for Sodexo Guam, said the program allows children whose talents may not fit the usual school



spotlight to shine.

“I think that it says that this is a great place for a kid who has a talent with something like this, right? Maybe they’re not the sports kid or the big academic, but this is something they love, and it gives them a chance to nurture their passion, their talent,” she said.

The finalists reflected Guam’s mix of cultures. Of roughly 60 submissions, 10 were fried rice recipes.

Judges aimed to select a broad representation of international cuisines.

One finalist could not compete due to illness, but organizers prepared the student’s chicken adobo in his honor.

“We did eight recipes. One of the kids actually was sick and couldn’t perform the chicken adobo. We decided to go ahead and

make his food, even though he couldn’t be here,” Saruda said.

Saruda noted that students’ tastes have grown bolder over the years

“You see, kids are getting more and more into spicy and hot foods,” she said. “When I was a kid, Hot Cheetos were not a thing... and now they’re everywhere so it’s great to see.”

Nationwide, the Future Chefs program has already helped some students pursue professional culinary training, even as Guam’s participants are just beginning to reach high school, Saruda said.

The initiative offers young cooks a platform to develop skills that can carry them into culinary careers in the future.

“In my previous role, I was in Washington State,



Yvella Dabu, a 4th grader from Ligan Elementary School, competes in the 2026 Sodexo Future Chefs Challenge on March 31, 2026, honoring her grandparents in the U.S. by making kimchi fried rice from Korea. She loves the dish and is inspired by her grandparents’ fondness for it.

JULIANNE HERNANDEZ/PACIFIC DAILY NEWS

GUAM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ligan Elementary School 4th grader Hersean Stephan, center, wins first place with his Italian lasagna, while Wettengel Elementary fifth graders Makoa Meluat, right, who prepared spaghetti and meatballs from Italy, and returning contestant Hailyrae Blas, left, who made chicken panang curry from Thailand, take second and third place, respectively, at the 2026 Sodexo Future Chefs Challenge on March 31, 2026.

she’s proud to pass the program to Rodriguez.

“This will be my last time...to attend after four years, so I just really tried to step back and let them do it,” Saruda added. “She’ll run this program so well.”

Contact reporter Julianne Hernandez at jhernandez@guampdn.com or (671) 483-1429.

Department of Public Health & Social Services

GUAM BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS

Health Professional Licensing Office
194 Hernan Cortez Avenue,
Terlaje Professional Bldg. Ste 209,
Hagatna, Guam 96910-5052

REGULAR BOARD MEETING Thursday, April 09, 2026 at 3:00 P.M.

Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85183238137?pwd=Xd363H7DalwaK9dwwKPkbgq7QQDLnx.1>

Meeting ID: 851 8323 8137
Passcode: 137930

MEETING AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- IV. TREASURER’S REPORT
- V. COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - A. Rules and Regulations (Proposed)
- VI. NURSING EDUCATION
 - A. University of Portland School of Nursing & Health Innovations
- VII. EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT
 - A. Elections
 - B. Complaints
 1. GBNE-CO-20-007/1, 2, 3, 4, 6)(G. Woodard)
 2. GBNE-CO-2025-006 (G. Ramos)
- VIII. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. Pending Application(s)
 - B. GCC CTE Nursing Assistant 50 Hour Clinical Summer Session
- IX. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Board Resolution
 - B. Adoption of Written Policy
 - C. Settlement
 - D. GCC CNA and ADN-RN Programs
 - E. Approved Applications
- X. NEXT BOARD MEETING
Tentative for May 14, 2026
- XI. ADJOURNMENT

To view the names of the applicants being considered go to:
<https://guamhpl.org/gbne>
LIVE Streaming Link:
https://govguam.tv/video_details/gbahe/gbne-live-stream

This advertisement was paid for by DPHSS/Health Professional Licensing Office – Local Funds. For more information or to request for special accommodations, please contact the Board Office at (671) 735-7404/9-12 or email hpl@dpshss.guam.gov.

GUAM BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK REGULAR BOARD MEETING Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 2:00 PM

194 Hernan Cortez Avenue, Terlaje Professional Bldg, Suite 209, Hagatna, Guam 96910-5052

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84897481427?pwd=0srYKgN6W4f18a8wSdB9AEJiJiQyHuk.1>

Meeting ID: 848 9748 1427
Passcode: 346667

MEETING AGENDA

- I. CALL TO ORDER
 - A. Confirmation of Public Notice
- II. DETERMINATION OF QUORUM
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA
- IV. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- V. HPLA ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT
- VI. CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT
- VII. COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - A. Finance & Budget
 - B. Statutes, Rules, and Forms
- VIII. OLD BUSINESS
 - A. Complaint: GBSW CO-2024-002
 - B. Complaint: GBSW-CO-2026-001
 - C. Consideration of Applications for Initial Licensure
- IX. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Consideration of Applications for Renewal of Licensure
- X. NEXT BOARD MEETING
 - A. The Guam Board of Social Work next regularly scheduled board meeting is tentative for Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 11:00 AM.
- XI. ADJOURNMENT

To view the names of the applicants being considered go to
<https://guamsocialwork.org>
LIVE Streaming link
https://go.opengovguam.com/meetings_list/gbsw

This advertisement was paid for by DPHSS/Health Professional Licensing Office-Local Funds.

For more information or to request for special accommodations, please contact the Board Office at (671) 735-7404/07-12 or email hpl@dpshss.guam.gov.