

LOCAL

Friday, May 21, 2010

Alumnus McPhetres keynotes NMA graduation



The seniors of Northern Marianas Academy graduated on Wednesday night at the Multipurpose Center, and the event was keynoted by one its successful local alumni, Seattle-based architect Samuel Manglona McPhetres.

McPhetres described how he felt "overwhelmed" when he first moved to the city of Seattle: "It was my first time living in a city. And of course it was the first time at a major university. UW at the time had more faculty, staff, and students than the population of the Northern Marianas combined."

McPhetres' speech touched on his personal journey through the initial frustrations and fears of being on his own and of culture shock, his discovery and eventual love of architecture and improving communities through design.

All throughout his personal and growth as a student, said McPhetres, he referred to a building on the UW campus, called the Ethnic Cultural Center, as his "second" home.

Like fate, said McPhetres, his firm, Rolluda Architects, got the job to work on the 25,000 square foot, three-story building. "[Rolluda Architects] went for that job and we were up against larger firms. But we had three team members who understood the Ethnic Cultural Center, what it meant, what it could be," said McPhetres. "This was my dream. .It is proof that all the work, all the sacrifices, meant something."

McPhetres told the graduating seniors that his experiences taught him some things that he wanted to impart to the graduates. "University will be hard and work in the real world will be hard. There are a lot of challenges that you will see and experience and you may question it," he told the graduates.

He assured the graduates, though, that "[it] will be worth it."

Calling himself an "island boy" McPhetres closed with his message to "take care" of the world and community and to "go anywhere and achieve anything."

"This is your world and community you are inheriting. Take care of it. Embrace it. Give back to it. Leave it better than you found it. And it will treat you in kind," he said.

McPhetres is currently an architect in the Seattle firm Rolluda Architects and is a LEED-accredited professional. After graduating from NMA and NMC in 1997, he went to the University of Washington where he obtained his bachelor's degree in communications in 1999, and his graduate degree in Architecture in 2007. McPhetres is the son of Agnes McPhetres and Samuel McPhetres. (PR)