



Respect Works Here

Community Champion

It's easy to see why **Bernie and Maylene** took the top prize in Community Futures 2015 Enterprize Challenge: they are dedicated, hard working, business savvy, and deeply committed to making the Rollin' Spring Rolls food truck a big success. In fact, they don't want to just stop with the food truck – they want to change Vernon's street food culture, one street at a time and then move on to opening a bricks and mortar restaurant.

"It has been our dream to have a restaurant," says Bernie glowing. "Maylene is a fantastic cook and I watch a lot of FoodNetwork so we thought this would be a great start."

They found an old bus, gutted and renovated it by hand, bringing Bernie's design skills to use. Now the fun, colorful truck is a distinctive feature at the Market and special events and is a perfect 'test kitchen' for getting started in the food business.

"We love sharing our Filipino culture this way," says Bernie smiling. "We love bringing new flavors to the street dining experience and believe that the food truck culture can add a lot to the community."

Being part of the community is essential to Bernie and Maylene and

they got engaged as volunteers as soon as they arrived.

"When coming into a community, one should make an effort to reach out to the community," says Bernie. "If you wait, things will happen slowly. I want to be able to transition quickly. So I take an active part in becoming part of the community and helping to shape it."

Bernie and Maylene left the Philippines in 2001 because of its unstable economy.

"We wanted to create better future for our kids and we came to Canada," Bernie says simply.

Although his job was in Kelowna, when it came time to buy a house, the couple decided Vernon and its small town feel was a better fit for them. At first it was very hard and there was a culture shock for Maylene, who felt alone looking after two young toddlers. Today, these memories keep her committed to volunteering.

"I have compassion for mothers, especially those who feel isolated and for new immigrants and the struggles they have," says Maylene.

The warmth, compassion and positive energy this couple exudes is palpable and their smiles are powerful as they sweep you up with their enthusiasm for life.

“You can either surrender to your problems or laugh at them.”

- Bernie and Maylene Ramis

"If you go to the Philippines you will find smiles all around you," says Bernie. "It's not because life is easy. We've learned to live in the face of adversity."

"We've learned that you can surrender to your problems or laugh at them," continues Bernie. "You need to face things and live one day at a time. This has really helped us with the business. It isn't always smooth sailing, there have been difficulties."

Fortunately for Vernon, they are persevering and adapting as they go, and most importantly, they are succeeding ... one day at a time.

