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***“THE TEN OUSTANDING YOUNG MEN (TOYM) FOR 2008”***

***By Ambassador Albert del Rosario***

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***(Remarks delivered during the TOYM Press Conference to introduce 2008 Awardees on December 16, 2008, being Chairman of the Board of Judges of TOYM)***

**After one long year of undertaking a nationwide search and an additional two months to complete the screening and judging process, on behalf of the Board of Judges, we are delighted to introduce the five TOYM Awardees for 2008, making the 50<sup>th</sup> year since the founding of TOYM.**

**As you may appreciate, TOYM is widely accepted as the country’s most prestigious recognition of the truly outstanding young men and women whose exemplary achievements in their career have moreover resulted in benefiting our country and its people.**

**This year’s five TOYM awardees, which we understand is the fewest in TOYM’s history, will join the elite club of over 400 awardees before them. From countless aspirants, we are honored to present them as follows:**

**ANTONIO ANDRES ALFONSO (Food Science and Technology). Dr. Tony Alfonso is currently the head of the Philippine Rice Research Institute’s (PhilRice) Plant Breeding and Biotechnology Division. His remarkable contribution to science resulted in the successful cloning and functional characterization of a plant gene called “Restorer of Fertility” (Rf) to Cytoplasmic Male Sterile Petunia. At PhilRice, he is constantly applying new knowledge on the nature of Rf genes to fast-track the development of superior hybrid rice varieties in the Philippines. A**

**passionate biologist and geneticist, he is the president of the Philippine Society for the Advancement of Genetics and the Philippine Phytopathological Society.**

**REX ADIVOSO BERNARDO (Community Service).** Despite being stricken with polio at a very young age and having been denied the privilege of early education, Rex Bernardo was determined to overcome his physical and psychological obstacles and eventually emerge victorious over his personal struggles. Even without formal elementary and high school education, he was able to complete his tertiary education in psychology and even successfully push for the creation of an enablement and empowerment program for the disabled in his college. He was granted scholarships at three prestigious universities, earning him three separate Master's degrees in developmental management, human resources management and industrial relations. He is currently the director and professor of Mabini Colleges and engages in volunteer work to Gawad Kalinga in Camarines Norte.

**CHRISTIAN JOSEPH RILI CUMAGUN (Agricultural Science).** Dr. Christian Cumagun is one of the country's most accomplished experts in agricultural science of his generation. A dynamic researcher and scientist, he made several landmark achievements in the field of agricultural research, such as being the first to molecularly characterize Philippine *Trichoderma* strains, a bio-control agent fungus against several plant pathogens, as a means of reducing pesticide use in agriculture. A dedicated academician, he is one of the few resident educators who have been appointed to the rank of "U.P. Scientist" in the University of the Philippines System, an honor of great prestige in the academic community.

**KRISTIN KAREN LISING DAVILA (Broadcast Journalism).** Karen Davila is currently a news anchor and investigative journalist in ABS-CBN. In almost two decades of being immersed in the media spotlight, she was able to marshal her beauty, talent and drive in using mass media – both television and radio – as a powerful tool

**for education and as an instrument for change. As an advocate, she sees herself as a vessel for empathy and positive action. Off camera, she walks her talk, using her celebrity and influence for advocacy work for global institutions, such as World Vision and Habitat for Humanity.**

**JOSEPH FELIX MARI HOTCHKISS DURANO (Ecological Tourism).** Ace Durano is currently the Secretary of the Department of Tourism. Since assuming the post in 2004, the former Cebu Congressman has rationalized the country's tourism drive, formulated well-focused campaigns, and launched ecological tourism programs that market the vibrancy and natural endowments of Philippine travel sites. Under his leadership, the Philippines' tourism machine is now rated as the best-improved and performing in Asia.

**In closing, I believe it was Mahatma Gandhi who said that the difference between what you do and what you can do is enough to solve most of the world's problems. I think we all agree that only we, as individuals, can make moral decisions; that only we, as individuals, can bring about change when change is needed; and that we can and must help others to achieve our shared goals.**

**The five TOYM awardees are cited for different disciplines in which they have served to demonstrate excellence, but they do have one thing in common – all of them have endeavored to reach beyond their grasp and succeeded in doing so.**

**To our dear awardees, we therefore proffer to you our congratulations, our admiration and our respect.**

**Please realize that your journey has just begun, however, as we fully trust that you will continue to provide us with your most inspiring leadership, which our people so badly need. END**