

MUSIC

Central Jersey-based UPA&FR, a community mainstay

Since 1992, the University of the Philippines Alumni and Friends Rondalla (UPA&FR) has been propagating the Filipino native string ensemble (rondalla) tradition, highlighting the instruments bandurria, laud and octavina here in the United States and abroad.

This year, the UPA&FR performed Philippine music for diverse audiences at:

- Annual Carteret (N.J.) Ethnic Day Festival
- Annual Juneteenth Festival at Edison (N.J.) Job Corps sponsored by the NAACP and New Brunswick Cultural Center
- International Day at Chubb in Whitehouse Station, N.J. organized by the Diversity and Inclusion Council of this Fortune 500 company
- Unity Night sponsored by the Filipino-American Association of St. Magdalen Flemington, N.J.

A community mainstay, UPA&FR is a consistent recipient of annual grants from the Middlesex County



UPA&FR members by the lake at Thompson Park, Monroe Township after a performance at The Gardens at Monroe. From left, Rudy Reyes, Cesar Valencia, Diane Valencia, Lee Clemente, Teya David, Lena Gonzalez, Lito David and Leon de Lara.

Cultural and Heritage Commission/NJ State Council on the Arts. The group used its 2015 grant funds to bring its programming to audiences who are unable to go to regular concert venues, namely, the residents of The Gardens at Monroe (N.J.) Healthcare and Rehabilitation, as well as at JFK Hartwyck in Edison, N.J. Other outreach concerts were held at St. Joseph's Senior Home in Woodbridge, N.J. and Roseland (N.J.) Solano Assisted Living Facility.

An annual performer for over a decade at Arts in the Gardens celebrations at Jersey Gardens Mall in Elizabeth, N.J., the UPA&FR was one of the honorees at a reception by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders in celebration of National Arts and Humanities month in October.

The UPA&FR recently held elections for its 2016-2017 Officers: President - Diane Valencia, Vice-President - Estrella David, Secretary - Russell Kelner, Treasurer - Magdalena Gonzalez, PRO - Jose Ma. Clemente, Archivist - Rodolfo Reyes, Auditor - Matilde Chua, ADA Coordinator - Cesar Valencia.

The group is an active supporter of the Pagyamanin Likas Musika (PLM) rondalla instruments program for underserved school children in the Philippines. More than 50 children's rondalla groups have been established through this program. A nonprofit organization, the UPA&FR offers free weekly lessons in Linden, N.J. for all age groups (school children to retirees) at all levels (beginners/intermediate/advanced) interested in playing a rondalla instrument.

For further info, visit www.upafrondalla.org or call 732.317.3364 or e-mail upafr.president@gmail.com.