

## Networking Organization for Uptown Artists Hosts a Winter Benefit

By Carolina Pichardo ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/carolina-pichardo](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/carolina-pichardo)) | December 11, 2015 4:34pm

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Artists networking for the Higher Ground Meet and Greet at Coogan's.

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Higher Ground

UPTOWN — Calling all uptown artists, musicians, dancers — and even magicians.

Higher Ground, a group that promotes the arts uptown, is hosting its Winter Rise festival on Saturday. It's both a fundraising and networking event to promote the work of artists from Washington Heights and Inwood and to encourage them to collaborate.

“This event reflects our artistic community,” said Temple Kemezis, a dancer and founder of Higher Ground, “to celebrate our artists and to give them a show.”

The Winter Rise will feature live music, performances and refreshments, according to the event's website.

The money raised will help fund Higher Grounds Premieres, a June event that showcases the collaborative artwork of uptown artists as part of the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance's Uptown Arts Stroll.

Kemezis, who's lived uptown since 2009, came up with Higher Grounds' collaborative concept last year when she realized there were so many artists in the neighborhood.

“You see everyone on the A-train,” she said, “and I thought, ‘We should all come together, to help each other out.’”

She shared her concept with her partner Pablo Francisco Ruvalcaba, who's the principal dancer at the Limon Dance Company, who started working out the details of the organization.

She then reached out to different local organizations, and forged a partnership with NoMAA.

“We do a big open call towards the end of the year,” Kemezis said. Artists who answer then fill out an application and come to meet-and-greets hosted by the group.

Of the 70 artists that applied for 2015's Higher Grounds Premieres, 45 were selected to participate, Kemezis said.

The open call is going on now until Friday, Feb. 12, 2016. Meet-and-greets are currently being scheduled. Artists applications will then go to the festival board, Kemezis said, where artists are selected and provided with a \$500 stipend and tools from the Materials for the Arts (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/mfta/html/home/home.shtml>).

All artists are encouraged to apply.

*Higher Ground Winter Rise (<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/higher-ground-festival-winter-rise-tickets-19496811488?aff=es2>) will take place Sat., Dec. 12 at the Cornerstone Church/Our Savior's Atonement Lutheran Church at 178 Bennett Ave., between 189<sup>th</sup> and 190<sup>th</sup> Street, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.*

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# Anthony Urena's Family Remembers College Student as 'Strong' and Ambitious

By Carolina Pichardo ([//www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/carolina-pichardo](http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/about-us/our-team/editorial-team/carolina-pichardo)) | December 31, 2015 2:57pm  
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Family Remembers Anthony Ureña

UPPER WEST SIDE — When Anthony Ureña (<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/people/anthony-urea>) went missing in early November (<http://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20151201/inwood/relatives-of-man-who-went-missing-inwood-last-month-beg-for-aid>), his family wanted nothing more than to find him and bring him home.

But on Christmas Day, after months of searching, the Hoboken Police Department found his body (<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20151230/inwood/college-student-who-went-missing-inwood-found-dead>) along the Hudson River in New Jersey — ending any hope that he would return.

“I still don’t believe it,” Judith Lopez, Ureña’s mother, said Wednesday from the apartment they shared with three of his siblings in the

Frederick Douglass Houses.

“I’m still expecting him to walk through the door.”

Although the family was only notified of the discovery on Dec. 29, the cause of the 23-year-old's death is still unknown.

Ureña was last seen on Nov. 14 near West 204th Street in Inwood after leaving the club Cliff at 440 W. 202nd St., police said.

On Wednesday night, his family gathered with friends at the apartment, which was filled with flowers and pictures of Ureña that his sister, Ashley Lopez, 19, put on display to remember him.

There were photos of a 3-year-old Ureña dressed as the Red Power Ranger with his brothers for Halloween. Another showed him sitting on a storage bench, holding his chin and looking unsure of whether to pose or smile.

“[Anthony] is strong, handsome and respectful,” said his aunt, Kenia Garcia, who cared for Ureña when he was a baby.

“The bike rides, for me and him, that meant something for us,” added his childhood friend Ransel Bonilla.

Bonilla, who was one of the last people to see Ureña alive, said the two would bike together after school or work, sometimes riding for 20 miles “in freezing weather.”

His family remembered the Lehman College student as someone they could always turn to.

“I confided in him a lot,” his sister said. “He was easy to talk to, always said the right thing.”

His brother, Christopher Ureña, 25, described him as strong and stubborn, “but in a positive way.”

“I’m glad he’s the way he is,” his mother added, “because he was always straightforward.”

The memories his family shared united them around “Moreno,” the nickname Lopez gave him when he was born.

“I remember when I brought him home, he came out looking around,” his mother said, widening her eyes to show how curious Ureña was, a trait she noted would take him places as he got older.

Ureña was studying full time to become an accountant, a profession that interested him from a young age.

“Always the saver,” Christopher said. “He barely spent a dollar. In his mind, he knew what he was going to do with all that money once he could. [He was] goal-oriented.”

His family is now making preparations for the wake and funeral, as well as trying to find the perfect red casket, Ureña’s favorite color, Lopez said.

They will be alerting friends and family with details via Facebook, as well as through the Lehman College community, representatives of which Lopez met with Wednesday morning.

For now, though, Ureña mother said she finds comfort with her son's dog Sam, who she's embraced as an extension of him.

"He's the new Moreno now," she said, with tears in her eyes. "The second Moreno."

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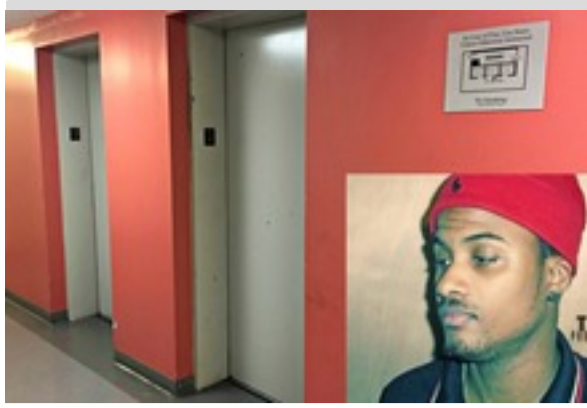
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Swimmers enjoyed warmer temperatures for the annual tradition.

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The two babies were born at the exact same time in Coney Island and New Hyde Park, officials said.

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