

Uno Hit Chamorro education project

The Che'lu organization in San Diego adopted the Uno Hit project a little more than a year ago, and it is now an established cultural resource for the San Diego community and beyond.

Che'lu is known for its Chamorro Cultural Fest and Sakman Canoe project. For the 2013 Chamorro Cultural Fest, board members hosted the Inetnon Gef'pago dancers from Guam. The group did a free workshop for the community, which nearly 40 students came out to participate in. From that, a seed of an idea began to grow: San Diego needed to offer Chamorro dance instruction.

Fast forward to today. Classes of between 30 and 60 students

are held weekly throughout the year. The project is called "Uno Hit" which means "We Are One" in the Chamorro language. It refers to the desire to unite the Chamorro people in their culture, wherever they live. The program is tuition free.

Uno Hit is sometimes the first cultural education the stateside students receive. It has included guest instructors like Mario Borja on the Sakman, Father Eric Forbes on Chamorro history, and Peter Onedera on Chamorro language. It has also helped to launch GVB's Guam Chamorro Dance Academy in the mainland, introducing its young dancers to dance master, Frank Rabon in March of this year.

Uno Hit's dedicated instructor is Heidi Quenga, director of the 21-year-old Kutturán Chamoru Foundation in Long Beach. Heidi and her husband and co-director, Joey Quenga have taken Uno Hit under their wing, sharing opportunities to perform at major venues including the Pacific Islander Festival (PIFA) in San Diego, and the Guam Liberation picnic and reception in Washington D.C.

Says Heidi, "I am humbled and honored to stand alongside the parents, apprentices and committee in ensuring the Chamoru culture is not forgotten. My work with Uno Hit has given me the opportunity to engage 100+ participants in just 14 months, and I appreciate all the love and support."

Uno Hit also serves their local community, performing at local fiestas, medical fundraisers and cultural events. The Sons and Daughters of Guam Club in San Diego provides Uno Hit invaluable support, offering their facilities for classes and

events.

Uno Hit has been influenced by some of the finest Chamorro cultural educators, including the newly designated master, Vince Reyes. With the Festival of the Pacific Arts coming up on Guam in May of 2016, the students now have their sights set on returning “home” to experience this unprecedented cultural opportunity.

“Uno Hit has influenced me to not only embrace my culture but also demonstrate my culture through song and dance,” says MaryAnne Santos, who has been a student with Uno Hit from the beginning.

It is no secret that this cultural dance education has been my pet project. Additional committee members are Brienda Diaz and Loling Cepeda.

The enthusiastic students are what fuel the passion for the work. It only takes seeing a young Chamorro exhibiting their pride in their culture to get hooked.

For more information on UNO HIT, please see www.UnoHit.org.

To keep the project tuition-free, Uno Hit accepts tax deductible donations through the Che’lu organization. [See the UNO HIT donation page here.](#)

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