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Kapamilya club at Dominican focuses on community, support

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Kapamilya club at Dominican focuses on community, support

In Tagalog, Kapamilya means family. At Dominican, Kapamilya is family.

Creating and maintaining an inclusive, supportive community is at the heart of [Dominican's popular Filipino student association](#), which in recent years has almost doubled to 115 members.

"Kapamilya is our home away from home," says club president Stephanie Abrenica '17. "It's our second family."

The support begins early with the Ate Kuya Ading Program. Each new member becomes an Ading (a younger sibling) and is assigned either an Ate (sister) or a Kuya (brother). All Kuyas and Ates mentor their Adings through college and often beyond.

"We look out for our younger members," Stephanie says. "We take the time to encourage them and to support them. All our members know that they have each other to fall back on if they need someone."

Justin Paraoan '17 heard about Kapamilya while still a high school student in Sacramento.

"My best friend from home was at Dominican and told me about his experience with Kapamilya," Justin says. "I thought how cool it was that there was that kind of a support system at Dominican, so I knew that I would want to join the club."

Now, as a senior, he sees that the support goes both ways.

"A lot of us who are seniors see Kapamilya as something that is bigger than us, and we work together on the common goals for the club."

Justin Perez '18 has served in leadership positions since joining Kapamilya as a freshman. The club has helped him make friends, memories, and moments he will cherish long after college.

"Being part of Kapamilya has made me love Dominican even more, Justin says.

While formal meetings typically are held every other week, Kapamilya members are frequently working together preparing for an event or club fundraiser. The two largest events are the [Friendship Games](#), a gathering of Filipino-American Student-led Associations from more than 40 public and private universities, and Pilipino Cultural Night (PCN), is a night of Filipino arts and culture designed to spread awareness of the Filipino culture.

Kapamilya's recent success at the 31st Annual Friendship Games serves as a great example of the Kapamilya can-do spirit.

The Friendship Games, held at Cal State Fullerton, is day of friendly but competitive picnic games and performances. Teams come from public and independent colleges of all sizes throughout California, Nevada, and Arizona.

Justin Perez and Rond Allen De Leon '17 served as this year's head coaches. Working with assistant coaches Mirabella Mercado '19 and Veronica San Felipe '17, they oversaw three practices each week beginning in September to develop the players into competitive team.

Their efforts paid off, as Kapamilya triumphed during the day-long event. Despite being one of the smallest teams in the games, Kapamilya placed first overall at the Friendship Games.

"This year, we made history, as this was the first time in Kapamilya's history that we won [first place overall](#) in the games," Justin Perez says. "Hearing Dominican University get called for first place is an

unforgettable moment, and to share that moment with our entire family, the rest is picture perfect.”

Training for the Friendship Games took on Olympian proportions. The coaches took attendance, filmed the three-times-a-week practices, studied the videos in order to better develop their game strategy, and even created a binder to serve as a handbook for all the games.

“Our philosophy is that if you dedicate the time to the team by attending practices regularly and give an all-out effort, you will earn a spot on the team based on dedication,” Rond Allen says. “Kapamilya has definitely left their share of blood, sweat, and tears on Dominican’s fields preparing our championship team.”

Perez concurs: “I take pride in Kapamilya because we were one of the smallest schools at Fullerton during Friendship Games, but I believe we had the most heart.”

The next major event on Kapamilya’s calendar is the PCN, which will be held in April in Angelico Concert Hall. The performances are a way for Kapamilya members to share their culture with their Dominican peers, Justin Perez says.

“PCN always brings back great memories because we get in touch with our culture through singing, dancing, and acting,” he says. “It is a great feeling to express yourself through your culture, and as I learn more about my culture, others learn about it too.”

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