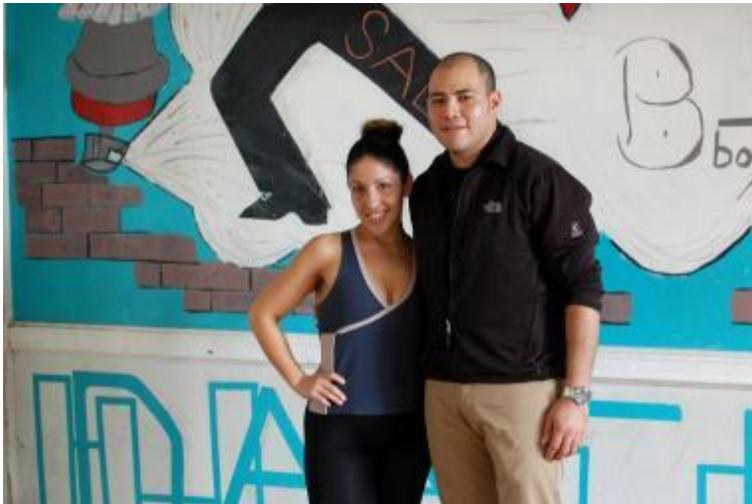


# Jackson Heights Dance School Helping Kids Take Step in Right Direction

By [Katie Honan](#) on February 3, 2014 7:38am



Owners Lily Urzua and Roberto Leon pose in their dance studio.

JACKSON HEIGHTS — Inside a bright, second-floor studio, Juilliard-trained instructors teach ballroom, ballet and even Zumba to the next generation of dancers.

But this studio isn't near the bright lights of Broadway. It's inside the [The Urzua Center of Performing Arts](#) on Roosevelt Avenue, near 82nd Street, and is the dream of Lily Urzua, who came to New York from Mexico to pursue her dream of dancing and teaching others her art.

Now, ahead of its year anniversary, the studio is hoping to get off on the right foot with an online fundraiser to buy more equipment and introduce the school's wealth of programs to a new audience.

Urzua and her boyfriend, Robert Vargas Leon, opened the center last February after the couple met at a Halloween party in 2012. The pair quickly bonded over their shared hometown of Mexico City, a shared birthday and common goal of starting a business involving children.

After the owner of the Jackson Heights dance school where Urzua had been teaching classes for months decided to sell, the pair bought it, renovating the center and revamping its programming and mission.

"Nobody has what we have," Urzua, 31, said, noting the [variety of classes](#) — from acrobatics to "yogalates" and Zumba — and the experience of its instructors who've been trained at [The Julliard School](#) and [Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater](#).

This schedule makes it more unique than some of the neighborhood's other dance schools, she said.

The [fundraiser](#), which the school has organized with help from the [82nd Street Partnership](#), will help buy new equipment — including ballet barres and mats — and enroll more students, the owners said. They hope to raise \$2,500.

"The idea is to make a difference for kids and people — to bring a space for people to do something positive in Jackson Heights," said Leon, 30.

Leon, who works as a waiter and a taekwondo instructor, handles the school's business while Urzua — who trained in dance, the circus and gymnastics all over Mexico, the United States and Canada — teaches classes including acrobatics and Zumba.

Packages are available, but people can also drop in for \$10 a class. Performing arts classes range from \$60 a month for an hour a week to \$310 a month for 15 hours a week.

"We want to take care of people, because we know this is not some place where we can charge \$25 a class," Leon said.

But the instructors, including Urzua, bring years of experience and training from world-renowned programs, and they said their school is unlike anything in the borough.

"The kids come for the teachers, and they know they're learning something," Urzua added. "Kids call it a second home. That's what makes me believe in what we are doing."

To donate, [visit their fundraising page](#).