

Volunteers needed at Yoshi and Fran Ichijo's *Treasures of Heaven* Horse Camp

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The Treasures of Heaven Ministry urgently needs volunteers, young and old, to support special needs campers at the 7th annual horse-back riding camp at the New Hope Farms in Port Jervis, New York from August 1 to 4, 2013.

Every summer, the Treasures of Heaven Ministry, a ministry for people with special needs, holds a horse-back riding camp at the New Hope Farms for people with special needs and their family. The coordinators of the Treasures of Heaven Ministry and its annual camp are Yoshi and Fran Ichijo, Unificationists from Gaithersburg, Maryland and parents to Kenji Ichijo, a Unificationist-born youth with special needs who has received the Holy Marriage Blessing.

The Treasures of Heaven Ministry name is derived from a speech by Rev. Hyung Jin Moon, former international president of Family Federation World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), when in 2008 he spoke about special needs children and said, "I feel that these special kids are truly treasures of heaven who teach us so much, if we are willing to listen." He explained that his wife has a sibling with a handicap. With this inspiration, the Ichijo's decided to change the name of the Special Needs Ministry, which was started in 2004, to reflect Rev. Moon's direction to refer to Unificationist-born youth with special needs as "Treasures of Heaven."



"Our goal for the ministry is to ease the pain of the parents living with a disabled child to help them to find solace and hope," said Mr. Ichijo in a video interview with UC Magazine. (Watch the video interview). The Treasures of Heaven Ministry also strives to build a bridge between able-bodied Unificationist-born youth and Unification-born youth with special needs or severe disabilities, according to the Treasures of Heaven Ministry's website.

The annual camp serves as a type of bridge, where the Unificationists, both young and old, are partnered up with and act as mentors for the Treasures of Heaven Unificationist-youth.

At the Treasures of Heaven Horse Camp, each Treasures of Heaven Unificationist-born youth are paired with two volunteers. This benefits the Treasures of Heaven Unificationists, as well as the volunteers who give of themselves for three days to the welfare, joy and experience of the handicapped persons who cannot perform simple tasks themselves, according to Mrs. Ichijo. The goal is to be with them for the activities, helping them to engage and unite with horseback riding, crafts, scavenger hunts, nature walks, swimming or water-balloon play. For some of the Treasures of Heaven, it is their only time during the year where they have time devoted to a friend of their age, according to Mrs. Ichijo. She said of the volunteers who help: “The volunteers are some of the most giving in our movement, coming back year after year and bringing their friends to feel the same joys and growth of love that they experienced during that one weekend.”



For those interested in volunteering at the Treasures of Heaven Ministry camp, “All you need to bring is yourself and a caring spirit for the campers and a desire to make friends with them,” according to the Ichijos. “The camp is full of laughter, fun and some tears. It could become one of the most heart-warming camps you have ever attended.”

For more information, please contact the national co-coordinators, Yoshi and Fran Ichijo.