

GPA's Story of Omaha

Roland Platt
May 13, 2014

We've been in Omaha for a little more than three weeks now and have been spending a lot of time with the youth, getting to know them and helping them understand our faith better. One activity that we've been constantly investing into is Il Shim. Once a week we get together with some youth from the area and share different excerpts from the Divine Principle to help them understand Unification Theology better, ultimately creating a strong foundation for their future. It has been really inspiring seeing them come every week with such eagerness to learn more about the Divine Principle and how it can really help us in our lives.



Shinji sharing some wisdom with a few of the Il Shim participants

Every Sunday afternoon we have been receiving cooking lessons from different community members. The last lessons we received were on how to prepare sushi, but this week we were taught how to decorate cake by Jacinta, a young unificationist and alumni of Generation Peace Academy. It was cool to see a post-GPA member of the community so excited to help us in a small activity. We drove to the Christianson home, where we got to meet their cute dog, Girl, and see what they consider home. With such a comforting atmosphere, all the members created decorations, unique and seemingly suiting to their character — some intricate, some very simple. It wasn't just cake making that occurred, but the simple getting-to-know-each-other of the community and also our own GPA group that made a big impact in the activity.



First year Lily Shapiro putting the final touches on her masterpiece.

This past weekend, we spent a lot of time in the garage painting signs, wrapping flowers, and washing buckets to prepare for Mother's Day weekend. This weekend was an exciting one with lots of rain and thunder. We spent many hours at the flower stands dancing, singing, doing whatever we can to get people to stop by and support. Our long weekend was cut short on Sunday afternoon due to a tornado warning which. We all enjoyed the time we had to get to know each other.



Junmi tries to figure out how she can pick-up the sign, she failed

Big Things in Omaha! April 29, 2014

Sunday April 20th we were given the chance to practice the art of sushi making. We were invited to a local sushi restaurant, Sakura Bana, owned by Uncle Tony Asanuma. We each had an individual stand to make our sushi.

Simple techniques such as keeping your hands wet when dealing with rice or matching the corners of the seaweed when creating the rolls made all the difference.

Definitely the thing that stood out to most of us was the heart of Uncle Tony. He offered us the best blue fin tuna and his heart to teach us was beautiful, you could tell he just wanted to provide us with the experience. There was so much freedom and acceptance from Uncle Tony in whatever we made or did. It was so fun to be able to create a food I love so much!



Generation Peace Academy participant getting ready to munch on his own creation

Our mornings here in Omaha are usually focused on education. So last Monday we were given a short

message from Elissa Nuna on giving a sermon. We were assigned to create a ten minute sermon which we gave on Wednesday. Topics varied from living in the moment to relating our life of faith to our life.

Many of us found it challenging to create main points, include quotes and articulate a logical and fluid sermon. We received feedback from each other both positive and constructive criticism. Not only do we get to practice creating the message but also practice our public speaking skills which we focus on strengthening on Thursday mornings.



First year participant Truman sharing his wisdom with the audience

We partnered with Habitat For Humanity for one day to help with a house in North Omaha, being built for a family of ten. The nine of us worked with one supervisor on Thursday from 8:30 until 3:30. We worked on various projects such as putting up walls to support the roof in the attic, creating fire stops on the first and second floors and installing a hand rail for the front steps. It was a good opportunity for all of us to focus on others rather than our own life of faith or responsibilities. I think a lot of us found hammering away at a few nails to be very refreshing!



Our supervisor for the day Nick giving Generation Peace Academy participants instructions to fix up the house

Omaha: The Good Life

April 23, 2014

At the end of our first full day here we were extravagantly welcomed by the Omaha community. Johnny Leonovicz, a young first generation member and Ty Christiansen a second generation member emceed the night, an entertaining duo. We were fed and played a few games. Generation Peace Academy offered a prepared song, "Stand By Me" and the night ended in some dancing.



Our enthusiastic emcees Ty Christiansen (left) and Johnny Leonovicz (right) welcome Generation Peace Academy to the very family-like community of Omaha

When Saturday rolled around many of us were nervous to go out witnessing. We shared many of the same fears and doubts towards witnessing as we had for fundraising. After returning though we all had a pretty different story to share. The team of ten was split into five teams, three were under the direction of Pastor Mark Lincoln and two under Mr. Yamagata, a local member. Three teams went to a local park while the other two headed to the University of Nebraska Omaha campus. Many of us told about experiences using a spiritual survey and others were able to use the DPlife.info site to share a two minute video introducing the Divine Principle. Many of the fears we all had were, as always, just our imagination and God was able to present a much more loving and deep experience with all of us.



Lynelle Curtin sharing the history of Omaha with the community and Generation Peace Academy participants on International Night

Once a month the Nebraska community holds an International night. This night usually consists of education to begin and food from the country. Members expressed the theme of International night as “Facts, food and fun”. We had a briefing on the history of Omaha, Nebraska and following that an exciting game of Jeopardy. Going along with the theme of “Nebraska”, venison, buffalo, and pork ribs were served for dinner, typical prairie cuisine. The night ended around a bonfire and with s’mores as well as some 40’s saloon music and dancing.