

GPA's 2014 accomplishments and 2015 plans

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January 27, 2015



The year 2014 was certainly significant for the Generation Peace Academy (GPA), and just like the rest of us, GPA took time as a group to reflect on the past year and look forward to the next.

Among the many highlights of 2014, December offered a unique and special experience to close out the year. GPA participant Ami Davidson from Chicago, who was fundraising with her team on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, approached Tom Laventure, a journalist from a local newspaper called *The Garden Island*. Curious about the program and impressed with Ami's enthusiastic spirit, he arranged an interview with the entire GPA team on December 19.

The team shared their experiences and the overall vision and purpose of GPA. They spoke of how fundraising builds participants' character of perseverance and love for others. Jana Ochoa from California shared her experience of the hospitality and support of the people on the island and how she was uplifted and encouraged by their response. "The locals here have such a heart of giving and are open to all the things that our program is all about," she said. "They are really supportive to all that we do and uplift my spirit."



Tom wrote a featured article about GPA as a youth program of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, with quotes from each participant. He was fair, open-minded and happy to hear about the GPA experience. The participants themselves were thrilled to share their ideals with a wider audience in the community. The article confirmed one of the group's determinations for the year: to invest more confidently into outreach and to be proud to share with the world.

GPA certainly had many blessings to count this holiday season. It was a great foundation to propel them

to the beginning of 2015, to make new goals and determinations for the year.

Halfway through their year of education and service, they recently completed a seven-day Divine Principle lecture practice workshop. What better way to begin the year than to go back to the root of Unification tradition, the Divine Principle? Divine Principle study is a key part of GPA's objective and education goals, and prepares young Unificationists to practice the Divine Principle in their daily lives and educate others not only by example but as trained educators themselves.

After returning from their homes for winter break, participants gathered together at Camp Flaming Arrow, set in a beautiful environment in the Hill Country of Texas, surrounded by hills, forest and a river running through the land.

The workshop opened with a reunion filled with stories from participants' trips back home and goal-setting for the second half of their GPA year. Early on in the workshop, participants carried out the "God language" exercise to help them discover and connect to their unique channel to building a relationship with God: through outlets such as nature, activism, contemplation, truth, or uplifting singing. This activity helped participants design their workshop experience and choose activities based on their primary "God language."

In order to set the spirit to focus on the Divine Principle, the core staff shared personal testimonies of what the Divine Principle means to them. Christine Froehlich, an experienced educator and lecturer from the Bay Area, California, taught the seven-day content during the workshop and also trained the participants in lecturing.



Mornings began with presentations, discussion and animated question and answer sessions. Afternoons were dedicated to Divine Principle study in teams and lecture practice. Throughout the course of the workshop, participants had the chance to deliver a 12-minute lecture in front of a 100-person crowd, and received feedback from the core staff on how to improve the lecture based on content, logic and presentation.

"We were moved by their courage and sincerity," said Roland Platt, director of GPA.

On the final evening of the Divine Principle workshop, Dr. Michael Balcomb, president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), and Rev. John Jackson, pastor at the Dallas Family Church, visited the camp and sat in on a few Divine Principle lectures by the GPA participants.

After hearing from the participants, Dr. Balcomb told about his own experience with the Divine Principle and how he applied it during the recent outreach effort in Las Vegas. He said that we can help our Heavenly Parent reach out to everyone by inviting others to hear the truth, and he challenged everyone to reach out to at least one person each day and give them the opportunity to connect to the Divine Principle.

Workshop participants look forward to applying the Divine Principle and their new education skills as they go on to prepare for their overseas service projects in Panama, Peru, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines.