

FFWPU USA: Unificationist Summer Camps 2023 - Building Bonds in Nature

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Photos courtesy of Project Orenda, Surf Camp, and Robert Sayre

From camping, climbing, and kayaking, to surfing, hiking, and biking, many of this summer's immersive camps in nature brought young Unificationists closer to our Heavenly Parent and each other. A surf camp in California and a national adventure camp in New York were among the programs inspiring youth in new and exciting ways.



"It's nice just spending time with the people that lift you up and help you strive to be better," shared a young participant of the West Coast's "Surf Camp." With one-on-one instruction, participants learned the basics of surfing before heading out on the water to catch waves. The group also enjoyed bonfires and cookouts while engaging in fellowship, Divine Principle study, music entertainment, and personal reflection time.

"I really enjoyed the car ride and being with everybody and going surfing," shared another camper. "It was really fun, and I would definitely go again next year."

On the East Coast, the new "Project Orenda" held at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown,

New York, gave campers a whirlwind of team activities and character-building exercises. An opportunity for spiritual and emotional growth, campers absorbed the peaceful landscapes of neighboring lakes, mountains, rivers, and forests during the two-week retreat.



"I feel God the most out in nature," said one Project Orenda participant, who said the camp was the perfect way to tap into their spirituality.

"When I'm with my friends and just sharing deeply with each other, I feel God in those moments of being open and vulnerable," shared another camper.



For some, taking pen to paper and pouring out their heart is just the outlet they need, while prayer and True Parents' teachings helps others understand and connect more intimately with God. However, with nine camps held across the country this year, the joyful spirit and camaraderie they provide is something that touches every participant.

At Camp Shehaqua, held at Hickory Run State Park in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, young families with kids of all ages enjoyed activities including volleyball, dodgeball, arts and crafts, musical entertainment, bonfires, a talent show, and more.

"I like that there is something for everyone," said a mother of two children. "It's a great opportunity for everyone to come together - all the kids, parents, and elders - and make meaningful memories."

"[Summer camp] puts things in perspective and brings me back to what is most important: relationships," said a young participant of One Heart Camp in California. "Our relationship with our family and friends, but also our relationship with God."