

UPF Australia: RYS Project Includes Tree-planting

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June 13, 2015



Riverwood, Australia—Young people from 16 nationalities and six faiths came together to plant trees in a project of the Religious Youth Service (RYS).

The RYS project was held on June 13, 2015, in Riverwood, a suburb of Sydney in the state of New South Wales, in cooperation with the Council of the City of Canterbury. The objective of the project was to bring participants from different religious backgrounds together to practice cooperation, respect for each other and serving the community.



The one-day project started at 9 a.m., when the 35 participants gathered at the Salt Pan Creek to plant trees.

The young people came from 16 nationalities (Australia, Germany, Austria, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, the Czech Republic, Finland, Vanuatu, the United States, Canada, Burma, India, France, Australia Aboriginal, Malaysia) and six faiths and cultural backgrounds (Sikhism, Aboriginal spirituality, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Unificationism).

The project was organized by UPF-Oceania (regional secretary general, Rev. Gregory Stone), in cooperation with the UPF-affiliated organization Women's Federation for World Peace (president for New South Wales, Aila Willitts). The organizing committee members were Ms. Kyomi Muraoka (fundraising) and Ms. Jana Lajdova (coordinator).



In the project, the participants experienced an aboriginal fire purification ceremony with an aboriginal leader, Michael Jarrett. They also practiced working together during the time of tree planting. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful nature and became friends.

After the tree planting, the participants moved to the nearby Hannans Road Public School for a vegetarian lunch prepared by a local Sikh community and an educational session with professional trainer Fazida Razak, a Muslim living in Perth, and Michael Jarrett.

At the beginning of the session, the participants introduced each other and then did self-discovery activities. Then Michael Jarrett divided the participants into four groups, each of which planned an ideal nation, its government and regulations, etc. The project ended with an interfaith prayer by representatives of each of the religions. Then the participants received a certificate of appreciation and took a group photo.

Some participants said they enjoyed the interfaith aspect of the project and found the educational part interesting. UPF is now inspired to plan another RYS project in the near future.