

## CARP Grand Rapids, MI Community College Chapter Leader J. Kisile

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*J. Kisile served as the CARP President on Grand Rapids Community College campus for over a year*

J. Kisile started the CARP chapter at Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC). He shares his journey discovering how CARP can be an asset to the campus while giving him an opportunity to love his campus.

A little more than a year ago, I was inspired to start CARP on campus. What inspired me was seeing other faith groups proudly sharing their faiths on campus and being part of a discussion group. I was taking a Public Speaking class and together with other students who were in that class, we developed the habit of meeting one hour before class started to discuss about life -- these discussions went from God and religion to politics and current events. It was a great time!

One day, I decided to give a speech on "Sexual Purity" for class. I met some resistance from my professor who thought the subject might be a little too controversial, but I did it anyway with the surprising amount of support and encouragement I received from my peers. After I gave my speech, my professor told me, "You are a brave man, not so many students would have the courage to talk about such a topic."



*CARP Grand Rapids gives a space for people to share what's important to them*

That experience began to fuel in me a desire to create a platform where people can openly share without fear of judgment. I wanted to give students the opportunity to be heard and to listen from different

perspectives all in keeping the spirit of love and unity. I shared my excitement with people who kept me accountable to what I was feeling called to do.

I must say I didn't know a thing about CARP before that; I was raised in the Unification Movement [also founded by Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, known as Father Moon and Mother Moon respectively], but that was my only exposure. I had to learn about CARP and how it operates. The next thing I knew I was talking with D. Young, a CARP alumni, about how to create a constitution for a club - - then after that, I was talking to Teresa [Rischl], CARP President, and then it was a whole new world that was opened to me. I have met some of the most wonderful people in my life through CARP.



*J. (right) and the CARP GRCC advisor, Dr. Stephen Barton (left), both work hard so that students are taken care of in CARP*

But starting CARP was probably one of the most difficult things I've ever done in my life so far. One day you are very hopeful, the next day all your hopes are crumbling. You get people who promise to work with you then the next thing you notice is that they are gone. Transferring your vision and passion to others is probably the hardest part of leadership, but it takes you on a very needed journey of patience and perseverance. I must say that I have grown so much as a leader through this journey.

At first it was very difficult -- you reach out to 15 people, 10 of them show excitement about the ideals of CARP and promise to come to your next meeting, but maybe 1 or 2 of them show up. And you are very disheartened, but as Father Moon teaches, "You have to be able to motivate yourself." When I couldn't motivate myself, the wonderful headquarters team and some of the awesome brothers and sisters in Grand Rapids always stood by me.



*CARP Grand Rapids brought over 40 students and faculty to their Peace Starts With Me Conference in Fall 2018*

Tears rolled down my eyes last Fall semester when we gathered over 40 students and faculty members to hear a message about peace, love, and reconciliation. To me, it is also a testament of God working through us. Although we still have ways to go, we have now grown to be a very proactive student organization. I hope it can keep growing even after me.

We set a table on one of the busiest places on campus and talk with people about the vision of CARP, our meetings, and our upcoming events. However, I have learned that stopping people as they are making their way to something that they have already set their mind on is not the most effective way to get their attention to your cause. I have learned that word of mouth or sharing with friends and people you already have a connection with is the most effective way of reaching out to people.



For me personally, it's not about increasing the membership of CARP; it's about how many people can I love today? How many relationships can I create today? Can they feel the authenticity of God's love through me? Those are my main concerns every time I am on campus.

At first, I thought that I had to be very smart and share the great truth of the Principle with students; then, I realized that I first had to love my campus more than anybody there. I learned that a lot of students and even faculty members are in search of genuine relationships -- they are in search of true love. At first they will reject you, but the more you love them, the more their hearts will melt.



*J. connects with CARP members and listens to their opinions and life stories both in and outside of meetings*

I have met young people who came from very broken families and just wanted someone to listen to their frustrations. I have become friends with the janitors and had very profound conversations with them -- I went to their room during my lunch break to keep them company and in return they gave me their love. They knew where to find me and asked where I was if they didn't see me. I am very grateful for all these relationships, and I want to keep investing in them.

The CARP experience has been to me a confirmation that the power of love is indeed stronger than that of the Principle. There was a time when people didn't agree with what we had to share with them, but because they could feel our genuine love, they always came back. In many cases, because of the relationship of heart that we were able to create, it became easier to share the Principle.

For many of the CARP members in my chapter, I am someone they can go to and someone they can count on. Some of them come to me for advice, and I tell them, "I am a student of Father Moon, you can learn from him for yourself as I did."



*J. shares about CARP's values from Father Moon with conviction*

The biggest lesson I have learned from being in CARP is that the most effective formula for happiness is to give it to others. I have learned that only through raising others can I truly grow. One of the most memorable experiences to me was a student who always complained about one of her professors whenever she came to CARP meetings.

She thought that she was struggling in that class because her professor was rude and didn't care. To help her in that situation, I challenged her to greet him and ask about his day. At first, it was very challenging for her because he didn't care about having a relationship with her, but with persistence and patience he began to open up more. I can still remember the big smile on her face when she said in one of our meetings, "You know, I actually love that class." It was a life changing experience for her and for many of us to witness the power of love at work.



*The Midwest CARP chapters collaborated for their winter retreat last year*

To the current and future members of CARP, I'd say: the world needs you; you are not insignificant. Sometimes you will feel like your effort doesn't make a difference, but it does. You mean the world to God and because of you He has hope for a better world. However, on this journey to the ideal world, you will meet a lot of obstacles, but keep your eyes on the ideal. If the ideal is so obscure at that moment, choose the path of true love because when we choose true love is the key that unlocks the solution to all problems.