

2016 International Day of Peace was celebrated by UPF in Yekaterinburg, Russia

Marina Sokolova and Dmitry V. Kuznetsov
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Ten volunteers came together on September 20 to make paper cranes, which the next day would be "Messengers of Peace." Several university students belonging to the local chapter of Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), an affiliated organization, came to support the project. On the International Day of Peace, September 21, these young people went to the Yekaterinburg city park with paper cranes and balloons.

Sixteen volunteers approached people in the street with a proposal to celebrate International Day of Peace by writing a wish on a balloon or on a crane and then giving it to any passer-by. One of the goals of the project was to give people the experience of "living for the sake of others" and the feeling of joy.

The project itself took about an hour. In the first few minutes, people did not stop, but with the first positive results people became more responsive. If people were in a hurry, the volunteers briefly told them about the International Day of Peace, gave them a crane or a balloon, and congratulated them. The total number of passers-by who stopped to learn about the International Day of Peace was about a hundred.

—Dmitry V. Kuznetsov, research assistant, Institute of Geology and Geochemistry, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences

Video: drive.google.com/open?id=0BxL2Zs858J4AbDdHM2hIT2FTM1k

Also in the city of Yekaterinburg, Marina Sokolova, a writer and a Young Ambassador for Peace, realized a project consisting of two parts. On September 17, she did a video interview with 10 volunteers who wanted to share their concept of "world peace." On September 18, she and some others held a mini-rally in the city center in order to warmly congratulate and encourage passers-by on the occasion of the International Day of Peace. Yulia Gilvanova helped her with the video and congratulations.

During the interview, the following questions were asked: "What does 'world peace' mean to you?" "How can we achieve peace?" "How would you like to celebrate the International Day of Peace in our city?" The interviewees sincerely shared their thoughts. The purpose of the video was to encourage viewers to take personal responsibility for peacebuilding at the local level through simple acts.

The second part of the project actually was inspired by the people being interviewed. Many of them approved of organizing a "flash-mob" to congratulate passers-by. On a beautiful Sunday afternoon in the center of Yekaterinburg, a small group of people spoke to others about the holiday and congratulated them.

Participants reacted to the project positively. Although young people showed more trust, interest and activity, and middle-aged and elderly people were generally shy, most people responded willingly.

In the video one can hear a song composed by Ms. Sokolova a few months earlier. She also created the slogan "Peace, it's just simple."

—Marina Sokolova, Young Ambassador for Peace, writer, vocalist, photographer