

Interview of WFWP Albany, New York Chairwoman Tamara Starr-Perry

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Behind the countless projects and amazing work of WFWP are passionate women dedicated to building a world of peace. Time to get up close and personal with one of our very own chairwomen. Mrs. Tamara Starr-Perry, a young mother of two (soon to be three), recently stepped up as the new WFWP chairwoman of Albany, New York on January 16 and shared with us her vision and motivation in a tell-all interview.

Question: Let's start with a short introduction. Can you tell us a little about yourself?

Well, my name is Tamara Starr-Perry and I grew up on Staten Island, New York. People who know me, know that I am a huge music fan and I love going to concerts. In fact, I am very excited that my son Jacob is almost at the age where I can start taking him to concerts so we can share that love of music together. Music has always been huge in my family... it was the same case with our spiritual growth. Both of my parents grew up in a very religious household, so when they both joined the Unification Movement in the 70's, it was pretty easy to incorporate traditions within the family. But as I was growing up, I had this strong sense that I needed to do something. I was always fascinated by people like Eleanor Roosevelt, Mother Teresa, and Gandhi because they all had a choice: they could either just pursue a comfortable life or take the path to serve others and to advocate for those who did not have a voice. I knew from a very young age that I wanted to get involved with social justice in some way, so in high school I was planning Service for Peace projects on the island, and in college I was very active in NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group) creating programs to help the homeless.

Question: Name one woman who has had a major impact on your life and why.

Hands down my mother. That woman did not just bring me life, she helped to give me purpose and worth. She always believed in me and supported me, and always taught me to try my best to stay on God's course - even when things get so difficult. It was because of her that I learned how to stay strong at times when I felt the most vulnerable. She also taught me to trust in the reality of a life after death and know that my ancestors are always by my side. My grandmother was Mayan Indian, so the whole family was very spiritual - and a firm believer in praying and the power of meditation.

Question: What does women's leadership mean to you?

Heart. I feel strongly that women are natural mediators within the family and often even within a company. I also feel that there is a lot of heart with leadership styles as well. A woman can be firm, but also loving at the same time.

Question: How did you first get involved with WFWP?

I have to say that it was my mother and Mother Moon who inspired me to be involved with WFWP - since its founding! I remember how excited my mother was at the first national event and I remember how I would read every book and pamphlet that she would bring back. Just the idea of a movement of women who had a goal to bring peace and unity not only inspired me but it also enlightened me. So, I knew that I wanted to be involved from a very young age. Around the time I was in college, I was able to

get involved with the website. But I knew that I wanted to do more.

When I moved to Boston in 2008, I was very excited and happy whenever the chairwoman, Mrs. Peggy Brewster, hosted a WFWP event. I really felt it was a blessing that I was eventually able to serve as co-chair for the Boston chapter during my last year there. Even though the time was very short, I still cherish the 10 years of memories I made in Boston. And I am very excited to be serving Albany.



Tamara and her husband Daniel Perry

Question: What motivates you? What do you value most about WFWP?

Now that I have two small children (with a third on the way), I can't help but feel that the next generation is what inspires me. I feel that it is my responsibility to help inspire the next generation of women to stand up and do good, just as the generation before did for me. I value WFWP because of the amazing people I have been able to meet through the organization: both men AND women who believe that unity and heart are the two big keys to creating peace in this world. It is a world where the idea of "living for the sake of others" isn't a reminder but a way of life.

Last year you became the co-chairwoman of WFWP Boston and as of Jan. 16 you are the new chairwoman in Albany, New York. Can

you share something about this journey?

It was a heck of a journey.... One that was filled with so much joy, but also a lot of internal struggle. When I think of someone who leads, I think of someone who is able to serve others. But I also realized that as my children are getting older, I need to learn how to have a balance and how I can incorporate my family with service.

It is so easy to assume that it is simpler to work things out on your own, but through this journey I learned that it really does take a village. And no one should ever go about a goal alone. There needs to be some kind of a support network or at least a trinity to help you see the joy even through all of the madness, to help keep your spirit and heart aligned and to continue to focus on the big picture. One family under God. That is the goal. But it will take a village, so that energy can spread to cities, the country, and eventually the whole world.



Question: What is your vision for the Albany chapter? Do you have a special focus or field of interest?

I personally envision great things for Albany. It's the capital of New York! I want to collaborate with family shelters, government organizations, and other non-profits that want to inspire women and inspire families who are struggling. Because it is hard to think about world peace when you are worried about whether or not your family will ever have a home. It's hard to think about world peace, when you are a young woman who feels that there are no options for success. I want to use WFWP to try to reach women and families across the Capital District so then we can form that village that can work towards world

peace - by learning to serve others and to show the power of the heart.



Question: Are there any upcoming projects you'd like to share with us?

Not yet. But I really want to plan something for the spring. I feel that would be the best time - right after the CSW events at the United Nations in March.

Question: Any advice for other young ladies who want to take on a leadership role?

Don't ignore that voice inside. Don't ignore that calling. Sometimes it may seem as if we don't have any time because of school, family, etc. But one thing I learned is that if you feel passionate about a certain cause, time won't even be an issue. In fact, you may even find that serving and being involved is the only thing that brings true joy. And find your trinity of close friends who can act as your support network.

