

FFWPU USA: Celebrating 10 Years of Las Vegas HPHC's Shine City Project

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Photos courtesy of Shine City Project

March 16 marks the 10th anniversary of a group of young Unificationists launching the Shine City Project ([SCP](#)), inspired by True Parents' love for the environment and selfless heart of serving others. Volunteers cleaned up the corner of Sahara Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard in 2013 and never looked back, spending the past decade transforming Las Vegas from 'Sin City' to 'Shine City.'



"The Shine City Project challenges our city's culture of self-centeredness to become one of selflessness," said SCP Director Jeffrey Silerio, a founding member of the group. "We aim to build leaders of heart and character who share love and compassion for others while being stewards for the environment."

SCP has since contributed thousands of volunteer hours in and around the greater Las Vegas area, with Jeffrey and his younger sister, Jennifer, even [recognized](#) in January 2022 with the President's Volunteer

Service Award for their combined 127 hours of community service during 2021.



Over the past two years, SCP has continued to scale its volunteering with recurring weekend service projects. In 2022, they amassed some 1,200 service hours and completed 52 service projects in total - nearly one every week. "[We are grateful] to the 98 volunteers who joined our service projects in 2022," said Jeffrey. "We had volunteers not just from North America, but Central and South America as well," he said, recalling a clean-up project in Uruguay in December.



The group's [2023 goal](#) carries on this trend, as ongoing collaboration and partnerships with more than 20 organizations from around the community enables SCP to have a significant impact. From planting vegetation in community gardens and rehabilitating recreational areas, to delivering hot meals and basic necessities to people in need, the SCP team remains determined to make Las Vegas known for hospitality beyond its infamous hotel strip. "I believe that the efforts of any one person can create a ripple effect with other people," said Jeffrey.



While SCP continues working with various non-profit organizations - including Green Our Planet, Ahern Orchard, and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission shelter - the group is also branching out this year to work with more of the community's faith-based groups, such as Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada. "[We] have love and appreciation for the special participation of [different faith groups]," said Jeffrey while noting their great influence.

Within the Unification movement, SCP has partnered with CARP Las Vegas, Generation Peace Academy, Harrison House, Las Vegas Heavenly Parent's Holy Community, New Hope Foundation International, and Youth and Students for Peace USA, among others. "Together, we will create a more loving and caring community which, in turn, can create a more loving and peaceful world," Jeffrey said. "If a change can happen in Las Vegas, change can happen everywhere."

You can learn more about the Shine City Project [here](#)



West

2 Siblings, 200+ Hours of Volunteering



Jeffrey Silerio (left) and Jennifer Silerio (right) serving their Las Vegas community

“Volunteering is a lifestyle for me,” says Jeffrey Silerio. “I believe that volunteering shouldn’t be an unpleasant chore or something that we do out of necessity to fulfill volunteer hours. Rather, volunteering should be an enjoyable experience where we get to go out with friends, explore our community, and make a difference.”

Jeffrey and his younger sister Jennifer are well known in their Las Vegas community. He currently runs the Shine City Project ([SCP](#)), a volunteer initiative that first began among a group of Unificationists in 2013. Most recently, the two siblings earned national recognition with the [President’s Volunteer Service Award](#) – having devoted more than 100 hours each to volunteering throughout 2021.

“I feel grateful for the opportunity to serve my community,” says Jeffrey. “I always enjoy discovering new places where we can help out; it’s very rewarding. The desire to make a change in Las Vegas also motivates me to keep going, because as a native of Las Vegas, I hope to show others that this city is our home and we can create a more loving and caring environment for everyone.”

After connecting with SCP’s founder on campus during college, Jeffrey has remained committed to volunteering with the group for nearly a decade. Inspired by his faith and family upbringing, he says his passion for serving others was inevitable.

“In high school, I always spent my lunch time helping other students with

their math questions," he says, "so I was eager to do something again for my community. Our True Parents believed that something special can happen in Las Vegas and that our city can be a model city for others to follow. I believe if a change can happen in Las Vegas, a change can happen everywhere."

Jennifer soon joined her brother in 2016 as she sought to make a difference in people's lives. "I like working with like-minded people who want to help the community," she says. "It brings me happiness and a sense of fulfillment when others are able to feel joy from the service work we do."

In 2021, SCP volunteers [ramped up their presence](#), partnering with a wide range of nonprofits and other organizations such as Green Our Planet, Ahern Orchard, and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. By the end of the year, SCP had amassed 1,150 service hours in the greater Las Vegas area and completed 48 service projects in total – nearly one every week.

"Even though I am just one person, I've inspired others in my community to contribute even more," says Jeffrey. "I believe that the efforts of any one person can create a ripple effect with other people."

"Through volunteering, people in the community can see that we want to help those who are less fortunate and also save the environment," says Jennifer. "Other people feel encouraged and empowered to make a difference in their community as well."

The siblings say they feel honored to be recognized by the U.S. President with a certificate from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation. Since 2003, the President's Volunteer Service Award has celebrated the important role of volunteers in America's strength and national identity. The award honors individuals whose purpose positively impacts communities in every corner of the nation and inspires those around them to take action, too.

"These are amazing young people who are really the model people in America today," says Rev. Millhan Stephans, president of Youth and Students for Peace ([YSP](#)) USA, which presented the award to the Silerios and seven other young people from around the country on Jan. 22. YSP is certified to give various levels of the award based on age and the amount of hours volunteered within a 12-month period.

"We're honoring outstanding volunteers and recognizing the great impact

they make,” says Rev. Stephans. “These service opportunities also help them grow and find their own place in changing the world.”

For the Silerios, 2022 will continue as a year full of volunteering, with each day a new opportunity to give and serve more people. “We will do our best to make Las Vegas shine and show others the value of living a life for the sake of others,” says Jeffrey.

You can learn more about Shine City Project, including its upcoming service projects, [here](#).

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An Eventful Year of Giving



Courtesy of Shine City Project and YSP Bay Area & Chicago

“2021 was truly an eventful year,” said Jeff Silerio, director of the Shine City Project ([SCP](#)) in Las Vegas. “It was great to spend time with people we care about and appreciate, but we’re also grateful for the many volunteers who joined our service projects throughout the year. Together, we put in more than 1,150 volunteer hours and completed 48 service projects,” – nearly one every week.

Despite the pandemic, Unificationists across the U.S., like Silerio, were delighted to make a difference in their communities during the past year through a range of service projects benefiting countless people in need.

“In 2020, everything changed; our service projects were put on hold, and there was uncertainty about when we would be able to see each other in person again,” said Silerio. “We learned to live our lives at home, learned new skills and hobbies, and familiarized ourselves with virtual meetings. But 2021 was different.”

With some ease of restrictions, volunteers hit the ground running.

“For 11 consecutive weeks, we focused on helping with meal services for both residents of the Rescue Mission shelter and our local community,” said Silerio. “We also mixed soil in garden beds, revegetated areas with plants, raised funds for a community garage sale, performed yard work, welcomed visitors to a holiday theme park, and we handed out food at a mobile food pantry. We even had the opportunity to help out at a gala and auction for the Shaquille O’Neal Foundation.”

SCP welcomed familiar faces and connected with new people as well, with many looking to contribute their time and talents to various causes. Partnering with a host of local organizations – including CARP Las Vegas, YSP USA, GPA, Green Our Planet, Ahern Orchard, Harrison House, and Get Outdoors Nevada to name a few – the group was able to make a tremendous impact, particularly during the holidays.

On Dec. 4, SCP volunteered with Opportunity Village, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing enrichment, empowerment, and employment opportunities to people with disabilities. SCP helped staff the nonprofit’s Magical Forest fundraising event, which supports

different programs, services, benefits and wages for those with disabilities.

The following week, on Dec. 11, SCP supported The Just One Project to distribute food through its mobile food pantry, which provides and delivers groceries across Southern Nevada to individuals and families experiencing food insecurity. The group went to Jim Bridger Middle School, one of the 13 locations where food is given away every month by The Just One Project.

In other parts of the country, YSP chapters in the Bay Area and Chicago were also hard at work with charitable endeavors.

YSP Chicago partnered with the local CARP chapter at Harper Community College on Dec. 8. The group put together snack bags for people in need at All Saints Lutheran Church in Palatine, Ill. The group wrote positive affirmations on gift bags filled with assorted snacks and decorated bookmarks for the church.

In Oakland, YSP members supported a toy giveaway on Dec. 17 hosted by B.A.S.I.C. Ministry. Volunteers collected more than 60 toys and surpassed \$300 in donations to buy toys for kids in need. The gifts were then distributed at Elmhurst Park where there was live music entertainment, food, and a bouncy house for kids.

“The atmosphere was filled with joy from the community coming together,” said a local YSP volunteer. “The kids waited patiently for the moment when they could receive their gifts. And after lots of anticipation, the kids approached in small, excited groups and left with big smiles on their faces... To see the joy and many smiles of families as they were handed gifts was a wonderful and heartwarming experience for all of us. I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

For Silerio and many volunteers, this new year is about more opportunities to give and serve – putting their faith into practice with those they meet.

Have a story idea you'd like to share from your community? You can submit it to info@unification.org.

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SHINE CITY PROJECT

FROM SIN CITY TO SHINE CITY



ABOUT

TEN YEARS AGO, A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS ORGANIZED A CLEANUP AT THE CORNER OF SAHARA AVENUE AND LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD ON **MARCH 16, 2013**. THE SERVICE PROJECT WAS HELD IN FRONT OF BONANZA GIFT SHOP, WHICH IS POPULARLY KNOWN AS THE "WORLD'S LARGEST GIFT SHOP". THIS OCCASION WOULD MARK THE BEGINNING FOR AN ORGANIZATION WHOSE GOAL WOULD BE TO TURN LAS VEGAS **FROM "SIN CITY" TO "SHINE CITY"**.

IN A CITY OF LUSTFUL DESIRES, GREEDY TRANSACTIONS, AND SELF-INDULGENCES, SHINE CITY PROJECT **CHALLENGES OUR CITY'S CULTURE OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS TO BECOME ONE OF SELFLESSNESS**. WE AIM TO **BUILD LEADERS OF HEART AND CHARACTER WHO SHARE LOVE AND COMPASSION FOR OTHERS** WHILE BEING **STEWARDS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**. TOGETHER, WE WILL CREATE A MORE **LOVING AND CARING COMMUNITY** WHICH IN TURN CAN CREATE A MORE **LOVING AND PEACEFUL WORLD**. IF A CHANGE CAN HAPPEN IN LAS VEGAS, **A CHANGE CAN HAPPEN EVERYWHERE**.

OUR INSPIRATION

Rev. Sun Myung Moon and
Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon

The inspiration for starting Shine City Project came from Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and his wife, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon. The two have inspired and pioneered for a worldwide movement



for peace across races, religions, and nationalities. By creating loving families and by living for the sake of others and for the world, world peace is achievable.



"Heaven is not what we are given but what we must build." – Rev. Sun Myung Moon

OUR AFFILIATES

YOUTH AND STUDENTS FOR PEACE (YSP USA)

strives to advance world peace by empowering youth and students to become global citizens through character education and peace projects supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



COLLEGIATE ASSOCIATION FOR THE RESEARCH OF PRINCIPLES (CARP LAS VEGAS) seeks to create an inspired youth movement progressing society to become a global family united upon Universal Principles. We empower young adults to become global leaders who will contribute towards building a unified world centered upon God's love, by providing education and training based upon our core values.

WHAT'S NEXT?

03.11.23

Shine City
- Project -

Duck Creek Trailhead
09:00 - 11:00 am

03.25.23

Shine City
- Project -

Cottonwood Cove Marina -
Lake Mohave
10:00 - 01:00 pm

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JEFFREY SILERIO
OR EMAIL SHINECITYPROJECTLV@GMAIL.COM.

GALLERY





May 29, 2021 @ Vegas Roots Community Garden



October 2, 2021 @ Shaquille O'Neal Foundation – The Event



January 12, 2020 @ All Friends Animal Sanctuary



June 11, 2022 @ Spread the Word Nevada



December 4, 2021 @ Opportunity Village – Magical Forest



June 8, 2019 @ Silver Horizon Group Home



August 6, 2022 @ Ahern Orchard



May 4, 2019 @ Club Christ Ladies Tea



May 7, 2022 @ McKee Ranch Foundation



October 30, 2015 @ Haunted Harvest, Springs Preserve



October 20, 2018 @ 33 Hole Overlook, Lake Mead



March 2, 2019 @ Las Vegas Wash



August 17, 2019 @ Catholic Charities of Southern Nevada with International Leadership Training Program (ILTP)



September 2, 2015 @ UNLV Involvement Fair



July 24, 2021 @ Harrison House



July 25, 2015 @ Clean the World



Shine City Project's 2nd Anniversary Celebration (March 14, 2015)



July 31, 2015 @ Las Vegas Rescue Mission



Shine City Project's 3rd Anniversary Celebration (March 18, 2016)



April 26, 2013 @ Lorenzi Park



August 22, 2014 @ CARP Las Vegas House



August 16, 2014 @ CARP Las Vegas Learning Center



August 15, 2014 @ Mt. Charleston



November 9, 2019 @ Just One Project – Helen Marie Smith Elementary School



October 13, 2018 @ Las Vegas Wash with Generation Peace Academy



Shine City Project's 1st Anniversary (March 15, 2014 @ Sunset Park)



April 25, 2014 @ El Pollo Loco



August 9, 2014 @ Rebel Recycling Center



Shine City Project's 6th Anniversary Celebration (March 16, 2019 @ CARP Las Vegas Learning Center)



April 27, 2019 @ Pittman Wash



March 9, 2019 @ Las Vegas Community Healing Garden



April 20, 2019 @ Gilcrease Nature Sanctuary



November 23, 2019 @ Green Our Planet - Legacy High School



Our First Service Project (March 16, 2013 @ World's Largest Gift Shop)

CONTACT

Interested in joining?
Have a service project
idea? Want to
collaborate? Send us
an email!

Name *
Email *
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Message

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