

Three Young American Unificationists Participate in the Kola Project in Russia

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July 29, 2019



From July 8 to 29, three American young adult Unificationists had the opportunity to attend the Kola Project in Russia. Kola Project is a three-week program for young Unificationists that is organized by FFWPU Russia Unificationists. The goals of the program are to encourage a lifestyle of living for the sake of others, overcoming limitations of the mind and body, and to awaken participants' original minds. This is done through a variety of activities, such as Divine Principle education, service projects, fundraising and exposure to the wilderness.

Most of the oldest youth in Russia are 18 to 20-years-old and are the children of those who met True Parents through U.S. missionaries who went to Russia in the 90s. Thus, inviting American participants to attend for the first time was an intentional expression of gratitude. Youth and Young Adult Ministry (YAYAM) was excited to co-sponsor the trip for three participants to pilot sharing this experience.

The first phase of the program was held in St. Petersburg, Russia and focused on Divine Principle workshops, fundraising and sightseeing. It was the first time many of the participants had fundraised before, as was the case with Mina T., one of the American participants. Reflecting on her time spent fundraising, she explained, "I was able to not only meet a lot of amazing people, but I was also able to create unforgettable memories and understand the deep hearts of Russian people. Although it was a bit hard and painful I feel like I was able to expand my heart."

During the second phase of the program, KOLA Project staff and participants ventured out to the Lapland Reserve on the Kola Peninsula. The participants found themselves immersed in the natural beauty of the Russia wilderness, and spent the majority of their time exploring the nature around them and working as volunteers to prepare the nature reserve for visitors. The participants had many incredible experiences there, including climbing mountains and swimming in the lakes.

The American participants had a profound experience full of challenges, breakthroughs, and valuable insights. One such challenge that presented itself early on was the language barrier between the Russian and American participants. However, this became a unique opportunity for the participants, as Kody Morris, one of the American participants and a team leader during the program, shared, "This made communication a bit difficult and (there was) a need for constant translation. This reality forced me to focus less on the power of my words and more on how my actions could convey the love that I wanted to express."

The KOLA Project was an incredible and unique experience for the American participants in which they were able to experience the heart of God through fundraising, education, and nature. They were also able to create strong bonds with Unificationists from Russia and other nations.