

Yoshi Okabe: Sometimes getting thanks is better than giving thanks

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Interim editor



In true “he’s not heavy, he’s my brother” fashion, Yoshi Okabe hangs out with his “main man, JJ,” during a church mission to Jamaica last year.

WHS grad spreads peace on earth at ground level

Yoshi Okabe wasn’t at home with his family in Waterford to celebrate Thanksgiving this week – which has made some orphans in the South American city of Georgetown, Guyana, very thankful.

Yoshi, 20, is a 2010 graduate of Waterford High School, whose family moved here from out of state in 2000.

He and other youth members of a mission sponsored by the Unification Church were due to arrive in Guyana this week to start a 21-day mission of service for some of the country’s youngest and most needy citizens.

For the last month, Yoshi has been a member of a traveling troupe of youthful fundraisers, trying to raise funds down south to support this month’s church mission. “It’s definitely been tough!” he said with a laugh.

Like many youngsters seeking ways to spread good in the world, Yoshi decided to take a one-year break between high school and college to work, think and grow into the adult he’d like to be.

“I felt that I sort of needed to back off a year and kind of think about a lot of things and our purpose in life,” he explained.

The current mission trip is part of a growth process that Yoshi has been involved with for years.

He lived in Korea during eighth and ninth grades as part of a church program to understand international cultures. Last year, Yoshi went to Jamaica, where his group helped repaint a school and fix a community center and served as mentors for children living in some of the country’s poorest areas.

His parents, Mitsuo and Tomoko Okabe, are wholesale florists. They say they’ve encouraged their son to “give back” to the world to show appreciation for the many opportunities that have come his way throughout his life.

Yoshi said he is happy to share his thankfulness for life’s blessings with youngsters who are less fortunate.

In Guyana, he and his youth group will construct a laundry facility for the Joshua House Children Center, an orphanage run by Unification Church members.

They will also be working with Habitat for Humanity, constructing housing for low-income families.

Yoshi said he credits his parents and his church community for helping him to develop a heart for others.

“God gives us blessings not to keep for ourselves, but to really go out and serve the people of the world and to share our blessings with others,” he said.

He points out that Mahatma Gandhi has said: “Become the change you want to see in the world.”

“That’s why I am here,” Yoshi said. “I want to see peace on earth, but I know that peace begins with me.”
Yoshi Okabe