

Honduran and American Youth Pave “Pathways to Peace”

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Nutley, USA— On June 14, 2015, the “Pathways to Peace” cultural exchange project was held in Nutley, New Jersey. The event, whose theme was “Peace is not simply the absence of war, but the development of friendships,” was a collaboration of the town of Nutley, the Nutley school district, the local Rotary Club, the Nutley Clergy Association, and UPF-USA.

From 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., Honduran students worked with American students to create a traditional sawdust street tapestry, or alfombra (“carpet”)—patterned after the alfombras created on the streets of Comayuga, Honduras every year—on Nutley’s main street, Franklin Avenue. Others created tapestries on the avenue using chalk. Nearly 400 people participated in the event, which also featured music, food and a performance of martial arts.

The keynote speaker, H.E. Mrs. Elizabeth Mary Flores Flake, Permanent Representative of Honduras to the UN, made an early appearance at the event. After arriving, she eagerly collected chalk, found an area on the street to work on and began designing her own chalk drawing of the patron saint of her hometown of Comayagua.

At the closing ceremony, a choir of about 150 local students sang “One World of Peace.” Afterwards, Amb. Flores thanked UPF and all the individuals and groups who helped organized the project. Nutley mayor Mr. Alphonse Petracco then presented a key to the township to Amb. Flores, who received it on behalf of the mayor of Comayagua, who was unable to attend the event.

The making of an alfombra is a devotional act in Comayagua tradition. Therefore, in closing, Mr. Petracco and Mr. Mario Salinas, director of UPF-Honduras, walked toward one another from opposite sides of the tapestry the youth had created to meet in “brotherhood.” Mr. Salinas then presented the mayor with a Honduran national costume as a gift.

The participants danced joyfully on the tapestry to conclude the activities.

During and after the project, many people, including Mr. Petracco, concurred that the project was not only beautiful, but extremely meaningful. At the Nutley Board of Commissioner’s meeting the following week, Mr. Petracco presented Mr. Salinas with a key to Nutley, and each of the three Honduran students who had participated in the project, framed proclamations honoring them for volunteering for peace.

A week after the project, the Honduran students were treated to sightseeing in New York city and Philadelphia, and visited the New Jersey shore and the Atlantic City boardwalk. They also enjoyed a tour of the UN headquarters, which was arranged by Amb. Flores. Amb. Flores later met with organizers of “Pathways to Peace” to discuss possible collaborative projects in the future.