

New Jersey youth make holiday cards to raise money for children in Cambodia

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January 27, 2016



Inspired by the National Youth Ministry's theme for December, to "Contribute," the GO program (or God's Own) of the New Jersey Youth Ministry dedicated the month of December to youth activism. Led by staff members Stephanie Eby and Cienna Tardy, GO participants were invited to serve children in Cambodia, many of whom cannot afford to buy school supplies. In response to this situation, GO's young adult membership determined to raise funds to support several Cambodian children's school fees for an entire year.

In the spirit of the season, GO participants decided to make and sell Christmas cards. They dedicated one of their regular Saturday meetings to making the cards and spent the following two weeks fundraising. They split up into 15 small groups and set out with the goal to sell \$180 worth of cards per group. To meet this goal, some groups went door-to-door around their neighborhoods; others sold cards to friends and teachers at school, as well as to members of the local church community.

One group beamed as they reported their receipt of a \$100 donation from a war veteran who had visited Cambodia. "I was with two other Japanese girls," recalled Sayo Watanabe, "one of whom wasn't fluent in English and another who was very shy. I was in a really great mood and nothing bothered me that day, but a lot of people declined to buy cards and I knew that the girls were getting really discouraged. But I kept going and remembered what my parents had taught me about the importance of faith and perseverance in the service of others. I was able to stay positive and carefree, and sure enough, we received a very gracious donation. I think the attitude of reaching out and sending love as a channel for God allowed that to happen."

To complement its ongoing fundraiser, GO also invited Mrs. Denneze Nelson, President of the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) New Jersey chapter, and local WFWP representative Tomomi Ueda to give a presentation on the situation in Cambodia, which provided participants with the inspiration and motivation to continue their efforts.

By the end of December, the GO participants were able to raise \$1,600 for the Cambodia project. Although they fell short of their goal, the experience was, nonetheless, worthwhile. "The participants seemed really proud of what they were able to accomplish," Cienna commented. "I know I was really proud to see so many people in our New Jersey community come together to make it happen; the representatives from WFWP gave a really inspiring presentation, all the parents helped their children fundraise, and all the group leaders organized fundraising outings. It was really an incredible group effort."