

Camp Aurora on New Hampshire's Lake Winnepesaukee, Celebrated its 26th Year

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July 6, 2019



"Whenever I ask young adult Unificationists what the most impressionable moments in their lives were, when they felt pride as a part of the Unification community, summer camp always seemed to make the top of the list. These opportunities we give our children every summer form the widest foundation of their faith for the rest of their lives. That's why I am so grateful for Camp Aurora, which just celebrated its 26th year, in giving our children an opportunity to experience God in a community with one another.

True Mother is continually emphasizing the importance of support and education for our youth, so I think we should all do what we can to contribute to Camp Aurora and other camps across the nation. In the Northeast Subregion, I would like to raise funds that can go toward this very purpose, so that we can ensure every child has an opportunity to participate. Big thanks to Heather Thalheimer, Tamami Okano and the staff. God bless you and thank you so much for this important investment of heart into our kids and our future. Aju!"

Rev. Demian Dunkley, President of Family Federation for a Heavenly USA



Camp Aurora, located in New Hampshire on beautiful Lake Winnepesaukee, celebrated its 26th year! From June 30 to July 6, a total of 92 campers and 32 staff enjoyed a fun-filled week with plenty of opportunities to build a community, deepen friendships and delve into what it means to be a young Unificationist.

The impression Camp Aurora has had on its campers has been exhibited through the return of previous participants as group leaders and core staff who contribute to the future of Camp Aurora and pave the way

for their younger brothers and sisters.

Through the staff training course, a sense of unity was created, as well as an environment of love for one another. Through a deep understanding of working towards the same goal, the staff was enabled to see one another as embodiments of God. This was passed onto the campers who were given the space and atmosphere to question their faith, discuss their challenges, and receive guidance. By the end of the staff training course, each staff member felt confident in their ability to care for their campers throughout the week. The staff created developmentally appropriate content for each age group to grow their faith in a way that promotes healthy, sustainable growth



Camp Aurora has also made an impression on the Geneva Point Center staff who hosts the camp every year. At breakfast one morning, the host told Pastor Heather Thalheimer that their staff wanted to meet the Camp Aurora group. Upon meeting, the host said the campers were really respectful, polite, and genuinely grateful. She said she found herself wondering what the world would be like if everyone was like the Camp Aurora participants and staff.

The theme for Camp Aurora this year, "My Choice, Our Journey," was about integrating individual desire for happiness, the choices we make, and the need for community and a higher purpose. The theme examined the collective journey of the Unification movement by taking time to study True Parents' life course and the choices they made for the sake of humanity. With this journey in mind, the campers explored the choices young Unificationists have and were empowered to take ownership of their own life of faith. The theme recognized that while we each take ownership through the choices we make, we are never alone because we have a beautiful faith community.

The high school camp schedule set aside a significant amount of time to reflect on Unificationism as a church, a movement, a religion, and as a philosophy. David Young taught high school campers Unification Thought in order to explore Unificationism at its core. One participant said, "David Young's Unification Thought QandA made me realize how much more there was to the church other than the Divine Principle and it really caught my interest and made me want to explore it more."

Following this, the campers examined different world religions in order to understand the similarities and differences between faiths in relation to the Unification movement. Campers reflected on the unique truths each world religion has contributed to humanity. With this foundation, campers were able to reflect on their distinctive roles as young Unificationists.

Furthermore, the high school campers participated in a moving activity that required vulnerability, compassion, and connecting together as one community. Through this, campers showed their genuine, authentic expressions by coming together as a family.

During the middle school program, camp directors anticipated the campers would remember that this journey as a young Unificationist is never one they would have to walk alone. The middle schoolers spent time talking about True Parents' journey and how it impacts their own parents' journeys, and eventually

their own. The counselors also give presentations on their own course as a young Unificationist. The middle school program concluded with a hand-written letter to God, asking any questions they may have and anything they wanted to express to Heavenly Parent. By the end of the week, the middle school campers were able to walk away with a sense of community and belonging. One camper said, "I learned to forgive my failures, myself, and others. I learned that God wants to connect with all of us."



The youth camp directors' vision for the week was "to empower the campers in who they are as God's children and inspire them to pursue their dreams and desires. Regardless of what they believe, say, or do, the youth campers will always have the support and love of God, True Parents, and their brothers and sisters."

The staff and Pastor Heather gave presentations about True Parents' life course and how to connect to who they are as children of God.

Of course, every age group participated in Camp Aurora's traditional activities such as SongFest, Limbo Night, buddies, the Aurora Playhouse, Aurora Idol, Capture the Flag, swimming, Scoop Shop, and plenty of campfires.

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Reflections

"Camp Aurora has transformed my life. I have a community of people who love me, cheer for me, and guide me when I have trouble finding my way. It is so wonderful to feel like I have family to lean on when challenges come my way. I know I will be safely received and be offered love and wisdom."

"I feel like God sent me here for this staff training so I could prepare for my second year of GPA. I've really learned that it is important not to judge people and to love them and their differences."

"I love being at Camp Aurora! I wish that every person in the world could experience this and that all church members could grow up in this environment. Camp is the definition of unconditional love and non-judgement."

"Camp Aurora is open to all children who want to be at camp. We have been fortunate enough to welcome school friends who rave about camp during their school year and new young Unificationists."

This year and in years past we had the privilege to have campers with a variety of special needs in our care. Our staff was trained in advance to take care of all of our campers and the family environment that is created allows each camper to have the best experience possible."

"What I love about camp is that it is a safe haven for many church communities and you are able to be vulnerable without being judged. We are able to share those stories and create strong bonds for the future."



"I LOVE the community at Camp Aurora. I feel so much love and support here. I feel like family with all the people here. It creates a safe atmosphere where I can be myself and become really close to the people around me. I learned that everyone shows love in different ways, and sometimes it's really hard to find out how they work. I learned that you can never judge or dislike people, because everyone has a good side. I learned that everyone feels lonely, even with so many friends around, so it's important to share your feelings and be honest."



"I learned that I am useful for my charisma, my natural leadership ability, and that I have a lot of

untapped potential."

"I learned how to forgive my failure and how to be a good role model. The trust fall activity helped me build my confidence."

"Something I love about Camp Aurora is the SongFests. They bring the whole camp together."



"Something I love about Camp Aurora is the energy. I think this is awesome because I feel that there is no other camp that loves everyone so much."

"My favorite presentation was Erika's presentation on being an offering child and writing a letter to God. I feel like I finally acknowledged Him."

"What I love about Camp Aurora are the people because they like me for who I am."

"I love buddies because you have a chance to make a new friend and be an older/younger brother/sister."

"Three things I learned at camp were how God is our parent and that He will always love us, why God created us in the first place, and how we are like God and how if we are happy, God will be happy."

"One thing I love about camp is that we get buddies. I want to come back to camp next year because I want to meet my new buddy. "

"I learned that to change your home you have to change yourself, that you are never alone, and that you have to be strong."

"My favorite memory from camp was meeting my buddy and hanging out with her."

"I want to come back to camp because it is fun and I learned about God and how to get closer to God."

"Camp Aurora has transformed my life. I have a community of people who love me, cheer for me in life, and guide me when I have trouble finding my way. It is so wonderful to feel like I have family to lean on when challenges come my way. I know I will be safely received and be offered love and wisdom."

"Camp reminded me of why I am still involved in this church. I plan to come back year after year."