

Camp Lovin' Life Praised by First-Time Participants

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High-school campers built a church out of cardboard boxes and tape as part of a challenge that was presented to each of the twelve "tribes."

The high-school participants of the Unification Church's first national summer camp are unabashedly characterizing their camp experience as "life-changing."

"When I first came, I wasn't that excited," said Satoni Zaccaro from New Jersey. "But we did a lot of cool things and it's weird to say, but it's been a life-changing experience. Going back home for me will be sad - I really want to stay here!"

As the first national camp with the focus of empowering Blessed Children (i.e. second-generation Unificationists), Camp Lovin' Life provides the opportunity for young adults all around the United States to mingle and develop lasting friendships. Initiated by Rev. In Jin Moon and held at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) in Barrytown, New York, this new, attention-grabbing camp has drawn more than 90 high-school students, more than 100 middle-school students, and more than 60 staff members from all over the country. The high-school program of Camp Lovin' Life, which lasted 21 days, concluded Sunday, July 24, 2011, the same day the middle-school camp began, "so that we can all worship together physically with In Jin Nim at Lovin' Life Ministries in Manhattan," said Dave Hunter, Director of Camp Lovin' Life and MC of Lovin' Life Ministries.

"I knew mostly everyone from New York and New Jersey, but I met people here from like Alaska, Florida and other places," said Denthew Learey, from New York. "I felt awesome at camp. I felt really good."

"The best thing was meeting all these other second generation from different places. I'm not really into the church much, but this has been a good experience for me. I grew spiritually. It's great here," admitted Philsung Paquit from New Jersey.



During a watermelon-eating contest, campers were assigned blindfolded partners who used their intuition to help their partners finish their portion.

Camp Run by Second-generation Unificationists

Unlike some other camps in the Unification movement, Camp Lovin' Life is run entirely by Blessed Children. A core staff of five young adults – Dave Hunter, Toby Gullery and Ester Allen, all of whom are Youth Pastors for Lovin' Life Ministries, Cienna Tardy, who works as core staff for the youth ministry program God's Own (GO), and Teresa Ferrete, a Youth Pastor from Maryland – created the curriculum prior to the camp and worked tirelessly to interact with all participants. The active – and interactive – schedule of the program for the high-school camp consisted of morning presentations focusing on

spiritual development, physical activities in the afternoons, such as sports, crafts, and horseback-riding, and evening programs consisting of additional lectures or dancing. Hunter usually presented the morning lectures, but guest lecturers Heather Thalheimer and Rev. Phillip Schanker have offered their personal testimonies too. Afternoon activities for the high-school camp included creating flags out of cloth and paint, drawing graphic novels based on True Father's autobiography, writing gratitude cards to parents, and making friendship bracelets.

The high-school camp participants were assigned to one of twelve groups called "tribes," each of which was overseen by counselors. These twelve tribes were then assigned to one of two "nations," led by either Toby Gullery or Ester Allen, and overseen by Dave Hunter. Members of last year's Generation Peace Academy (formerly known as the Special Task Force), and students who had completed at least a freshman year at college qualified as counselors, while those who were moving into their senior year at high school qualified as counselors-in-training.

"I'm feeling really happy," said Steve Takahashi, a camper from Massachusetts. "I felt more connected to God, and I loved meeting new people. We did a lot of stuff with sports and activities and dancing, and it was all fun. I was happy to see everyone at the ballroom social that we had too, because everyone was smiling."

"I love ballroom – it's so fun. I'm going to continue doing ballroom even after camp, because I really enjoy it," said Jasmine Harris, from New York.

Ballroom dancing isn't the only dance form that ranks as a popular interactive activity. Philsung Paquit said, "I do break-dancing, and I met a lot of other break-dancers at camp. It was really cool. We even made a team."

Every Sunday, the campers had the opportunity to experience Lovin' Life Ministries live, leaving Barrytown in a set of buses in order to immerse themselves in the heart of New York City. Many of the current camp participants have never experienced Lovin' Life Ministries live before joining the camp.



Two girls wearing blindfolds relied on the directions of a fellow camper during a three-legged relay race.

"The Shoulders We Stand On"

Campers proudly sported T-shirts emblazoned with the theme of the camp, "The Shoulders We Stand On," which focuses on recognizing our spiritual heritage by understanding that we stand on the shoulders of God. Participants are given the opportunity to "experience the joys of the Unification faith, inherit the vision of Lovin' Life Ministries, and grow closer to God and True Parents while having lots and lots of fun with their peers," according to Hunter.

"We came here without knowing anyone, but everyone was very welcoming, and we met so many people," said Julie and Lina Sasaki, sisters from Ohio who attended the camp together. "Dave Hunter, Toby and Esther are pretty awesome too. When we were growing up we had talked a lot about True Father without understanding his heart, but now our relationships with people and God and Jesus and True Parents have changed. Everything they explained to us was really easy to understand, and all the testimonies from the campers and captains brought us closer. We were really sad to go back home. Hopefully we can keep up the spirit that we found at camp."



Young adults, pictured practicing the swing, learned to respect each other as gentlemen and ladies through the medium of ballroom dancing.

Camp Lovin' Life has even exceeded the expectations of the high-school students themselves. "My experience here has really changed my life," said Sarah Davis, from Hawaii. "I even started doing a bowing condition - a hundred bows every day - in order to understand True Parents' heart and God's heart. And I met some really amazing people."

"We did a "reaching-God" activity, where you write down on paper things that have been keeping you from God and tape it to one person who tries to hold you back physically as you reach for God, which is a place like somewhere across the room," said Satoni Zaccaro. "It was amazing seeing other people struggle with that and everyone reached God at the end. Going back home for me will be sad - I really want to stay here!"

Jasmine Harris said, "It's been a really great experience. I've learned a lot, and so much of what I've heard just made me want to go back to my family and love them even more. I'm able to relate to my family and understand my parents better than I did before. The best thing about this camp was getting to know people from other places. I really do feel like they're my family."



High-school campers exercised the values of leadership and teamwork during interactive activities.