

Unificationist Youth Meet, Greet, and Compete at Four-Day Sports- and Culture Fest

Ariana Moon and Michael La Hogue
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Regional Coordinators of the BCSF proudly wave the flags representing their communities at Junction.

An unprecedented four-day rally of Unificationist youth in New York has the earmarks of a rising Lovin' Life Ministry tradition. The seventh annual Blessed Culture and Sports Festival (BCSF) held from Aug. 9-12, 2011 on the Barrytown campus of the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) drew more than 700 registered participants to compete in a range of sports events – including men and women's Ultimate Frisbee, co-ed volleyball, basketball, and soccer, tennis, and table tennis – as well as talent shows, a ballroom competition, gaming tournaments, and a photography contest.

Registered teams representing communities across the country included New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, New England, Maryland, Florida, Minnesota, Ohio, Illinois, Texas, California, the Northwest, Special Task Force, Michigan, and Team USA (competitors from an assortment of states). Athletic competition was organized into two timeslots, morning and afternoon, allowing athletes to participate in multiple sports. Soccer, volleyball, and tennis took place in the morning, and basketball, table tennis, and men's and women's Ultimate Frisbee took place in the afternoon. Pastor Dave Hunter, Youth Pastor of New Jersey, was the Sports Coordinator and worked with the regional coordinators to make sure the events ran smoothly. "This year boasted the highest level of sportsmanship so far in the history of BCSF," Hunter said.

The following is an overview of each BCSF sports event ranked according to levels of participation, followed by a list of all cultural events.



Cynthia Jones, captain of the Special Task Force (STF) Ultimate Frisbee team, showed off her defense.

Ultimate Frisbee: The biggest and most popular sporting event of BCSF was, once again, the men's Ultimate Frisbee tournament. Seven teams played this year, representing New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Ohio, Chicago, California/Florida, and the Special Task Force (STF). Each team played four games in round-robin preliminaries on Thursday (Aug. 11) and Friday (Aug 12), and the top four – New Jersey, STF, California, and New York – played semifinals and finals on Saturday. All seven teams provided fierce competition and competed at a higher level than ever before. Even the Chicago team, which lost all four of its games, gave STF a run for its money and was ahead the entire first half of the game thanks to its agility and quick passes. The Ohio team – the "Ultramans" – was rooted on by more than 30 spectators at each of their games and manifested unparalleled spirit. The Maryland members had an impressive cheering squad as well, and their huge, white flag waved constantly throughout the games. The New Jersey team, which had been practicing for BCSF four times a week for the last four months, went undefeated throughout the tournament and took home first place. They boasted the cleanest and most fluid playing of any team; their throws and bids for the Frisbee were perfectly timed, which helped them defeat California for first place. California, with the help of the three, lanky Freystaetters from

Florida (Peter, 6'7", Mischa, 6'5", and Nathan, 6'2"), won four of their six games. They dominated the air, as almost nobody was able to reach higher than the two tallest players, Peter and Mischa Freystaetter (dubbed the "twin towers"). The most intense game of the tournament took place between New Jersey and New York in the semifinals. Both teams were completely exhausted after the nerve-wracking game, during which each team held the lead multiple times. The game between STF and New York for third place was the most engaging for many and showed what spectators thought was the biggest indication of the high caliber of sportsmanship throughout the tournament. Because the New York team was completely exhausted and wiped out immediately after their game against New Jersey, STF decided to split third place and play a friendly co-ed game instead. The game was filled with light-hearted laughter, and Dave Hunter even joined in and played for the STF team. The game ended with the childhood favorite, "last point wins" and all players from both teams flooded the field. The ability of the two teams to put competition aside and have fun was inspiring and exemplified the spirit of all the participants at BCSF.



Raymond Burns from New Jersey repeatedly snatched up the Frisbee before his opponents came close.

This year, four teams competed in the women's Ultimate Frisbee tournament representing New Jersey, New York, STF, and Connecticut. Although each team only played two games, all four games drew considerable crowds, especially from the corresponding men's Ultimate Frisbee teams. Connecticut defeated New Jersey to claim third place, and the STF and New York played for first in an exciting, breath-taking final that went into "double overtime." According to many, the women's final was more thrilling than the men's, which took place later that day, because of the closeness of the game; STF scored in the last ten seconds to tie at five and forced the game into the first overtime, and then at the end of the second overtime clinched the victory. "The final game between STF and New York was one of the most exciting Frisbee games I have ever seen, in both men's and women's Frisbee," said Ross Ward, who played on the STF men's Frisbee team and as goalie on the Connecticut soccer team.



The New Jersey Volleyball team watched closely as a teammate prepared to serve the ball.

Volleyball: Thirteen teams participated in the volleyball tournament this year: California, Connecticut, Florida, Maryland, New England A, New England B, New Jersey A, New Jersey B, New York A, New York B, Ohio, Michigan, and Minnesota. Preliminaries, semifinals, and finals took place on three grass courts over the course of three days. Games were best two-out-of-three matches up to 21 and all teams were co-ed. Volleyball was one of the most watched sports this year, especially whenever Ohio competed (Ohio supporters were the most numerous and excited of any state). Florida, New York B, New Jersey A, and Ohio were ranked first to fourth, respectively, in the semifinals. All games on Saturday had enthusiastic spectators; Florida crushed New York B for first place, thanks again to Peter and Mischa Freystaetter, and Ohio defeated New Jersey A for third place.

Basketball: Eight teams represented their regions this year in basketball: California, Chicago, New York A, New York B, New England, Texas, Seattle, and Minnesota. Games were held in the gym so it was a little difficult for spectators to watch, due to limited space. The two New York teams dominated the tournament for the second year in a row (the two New York teams were almost identical to the ones from last year) and defeated Chicago and Seattle (ranked third and fourth) in the semifinals. Seattle won third and New York A beat New York B in an intense game for first with spectators crowding every available space, even sitting in the high windows.



Ken Bodzewski from the Seattle soccer team skillfully maneuvered the ball from the New England players.

Soccer: Six teams played soccer this year: Connecticut, Maryland, New England, the Northwest, the STF, and Team USA. Round-robin preliminaries were played in the mornings from Thursday till Saturday with the single-elimination tournament taking place on Saturday morning. Four teams in the semifinals ranked first to fourth: Northwest (clearly outclassing most other teams), Connecticut, Maryland, and Team USA (a miscellaneous team created to accommodate those who didn't have a team). Northwest beat Connecticut in the finals 3-1 and Maryland came in third by default. Interest in soccer waned as the teams were unevenly matched (Seattle scored a total of 21 times throughout the tournament and only got scored on three times) and spectators shifted their interest to the heated volleyball semifinals and finals that were taking place simultaneously.



Patrick Cook from Michigan claimed second place in a Tennis match against Evan Anderson.



Elijah Whitmore (left), pictured with Justin Fong (right), cruised through his matches to claim first place in table tennis for the second year in a row at the BCSF.

Tennis: This year's tennis tournament attracted an impressive 14 individuals representing Connecticut, New York, California, Michigan, Minnesota, New England, and New Jersey. The tournament was held off-site on courts at Bard College. Each athlete played four round-robin preliminaries on Thursday and Friday. Ye Ji Ferraboli, representing New Jersey, played against her male counterparts and won three of her four matches, making it to the semifinals but was unable to stay for the games on Saturday as she had a different tournament in which to compete. Rexton Moon competed for the first time this year, representing New England. Because the tournament was off-site, the players had a lot of time to spend with each other. "The tennis tournament was amazing, because all the players were really competitive, but they didn't let that take over their sportsmanship or their enjoying the game and the time they spent with each other," said Jon Cook, a member of the STF who played for his home State of Michigan and helped organize the matches. The semifinals and finals were played on Saturday. Evan Anderson of Minnesota took first place after an exciting game against Jerry Holmes of California and Patrick Cook took third after beating Newman Kessler of New York.

Table Tennis: Only six competitors took part in the table tennis tournament this year, but all six represented different regions: Taishu Nakamura for New Jersey, Tod Masuyama for Florida, Evan Anderson for Minnesota, Elijah Whitmore for the STF, Jonathan Schramli for Connecticut, and Justin Fong for New England. Games were rather laid back and only the final game had many spectators. Elijah Whitmore, who represented the United States at the *Wongu Peace Cup* last summer, went undefeated for the second year in a row to claim first. Jonathan Schramli won second place again this year and Evan Anderson beat Justin Fong for third.

Cultural Events and Entertainment



Hundreds of young adults gathered to enjoy Junction, which welcomed attendees and kicked off the BCSF.

Junction: The New-Jersey-based Junction band, known for the talents of lead singers Glenn Haider and Faith Bowman, performed for an animated crowd on Aug. 10, 2011 to celebrate the start of BCSF, drawing more than 300 spectators. Regional coordinators of the BCSF then marched around the auditorium with their custom-made flags, much to the delight of those representing their communities. Victoria Roomet, Vice President of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP), introduced Jin Kwon Kim, the co-founder and coordinator of BCSF, who welcomed everyone attending. Pastor Jaga Gavin, youth pastor of Lovin' Life Ministries, invoked the theme of the Festival, "All In," by telling the crowd: "We are creating an 'all in' culture," and that "We should approach life with the same kind of an 'all in' attitude." The Junction band concluded the program with another three songs, and in terms of support, the crowd did certainly give the band their all.



Participants of the BCSF joined in fellowship and danced up a storm at the Ballroom Dance Social.

Ballroom Social: The first ever BCSF Ballroom Social took place in the auditorium on Aug. 11, 2011, with several hundred youth in attendance. Ariana Moon led the Waka Waka dance to kick off the event and offered a brief Waltz and Chacha lesson to introduce beginners to ballroom dancing. Snacks and refreshments were available, and the dancing lasted well into the evening, with many continuing to dance even after the social was officially concluded by organizer Jana Iparraguirre. Nearly all attendants participated in ballroom games such as freeze-dancing, and winners of the games were awarded "Sonic Cult" T-shirts, albums, and Unification-Church necklaces designed by the Reverend In Jin Moon. Participants even added their own take of glitz and glamour to the socials by dressing up, and novices and seasoned dancers alike were unafraid to step up and participate in the lesson with unparalleled enthusiasm.



Singer Matt Hill from Maryland engaged the audience with a rousing rendition of "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown."

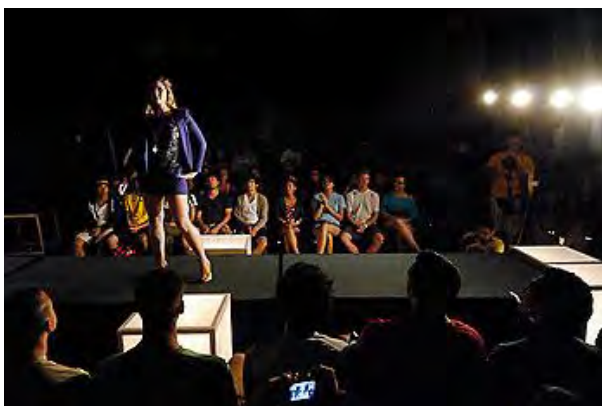
Open Mic: The stage in the auditorium was transformed for the night of Aug. 12, 2011 for an entertaining evening of Open Mic. BCSF featured about a dozen acts, most of them musical, including that of musical-theatre performer Matt Hill from Maryland, rapper Daniel Castillo from Texas, and the Portelance family from Canada. Aspiring comedian Andrew Love, who served as the MC, entertained the audience with his humorous introductions to each act, and Rev. In Jin Moon's husband closed with a personal testimony about health and wellness. Hundreds of youth attended; many had to stand or sit on window sills to accommodate the large number of spectators.

Several of the performers commented on the warm spirit of the audience, which supported each act with cheers. Performer Castillo said, "This Open Mic was especially amazing because lots of people were here from across the nation. The audience was so supportive. I think it's cool that everyone can get together to experience everyone's talents and express their own talents. In that sense, everyone has something to offer, everyone has something to give. I'm really grateful that we were able to put on a great show, and that it was supported by True Family, STF and all the other BCs. Everybody did a great job."



Heungkook Stephens (left), Misha Greene (center), and Christopher Stair (right), blew away the audience with their hip-hop/pop-and-lock number.

Talent Show: Nearly all BCSF participants, together with their friends and family, gathered in the Chapel on Saturday night to enjoy eight acts performed by second-generation Unificationists from around the country. Jaga Gavin, Kaeleigh Moffitt, and Justin Fong functioned as American-Idol-type judges for each act; Gavin and Moffitt consistently drew cheers of approval from the audience for their constructive encouragement, and Fong humored his listeners with the sarcastic criticism reminiscent of Simon Cowell, ex-judge of American Idol. After the Talent Show, attendees voted for the top three acts, and the winners were announced at the Fashion Show, which took place later that evening after a brief break. The vocal trio of Daniel Castillo, Natasha Honey, and Youngbok Gomez, and soloist Matt Hill, tied for the third-place prize of \$100. The Providence Dance Crew claimed the second prize of \$200, and a phenomenal hip-hop/pop-and-lock threesome of Heungkook Stephens, Christopher Stair, and Misha Greene drew the votes for a first prize of \$300. The ground floor, balcony, and sidelines of the UTS Chapel were packed with spectators who readily shouted out their support for performers from not only their communities, but other communities as well.



The Fashion Show featured model Alisha La Hogue.

Fashion Show: All the attendees from the Talent Show raced out of the Chapel into the auditorium in order to claim seats for the Fashion Show and to stand in line for the mocktails and desserts prepared by the young adults of the Leadership Module. The Fashion Show kicked off with a video presentation featuring Chelsea Legay, who, with the help of fashion- and hair stylists, underwent a makeover and explained the value of looking professional at a manageable expense. The walkway was then opened up to four young ladies, who boldly modeled both casual and formal clothes selected from H&M by fashion stylist Robin Wallace, and four gentlemen, who showed off their casual take along with new suits that were custom-tailored by Preston Moon through his company *Bespoke*, which was initiated to serve the same purpose of looking good at an affordable cost. The audience supported each model as he or she

strutted down the walkway, energized by the techno tracks blasting from the speakers, but the cheering for the gentlemen nearly drowned out the music when they appeared fully suited.



Glenn Widenhofer and Eika Davis grooved to a saucy Chacha at the Ballroom Dance Competition.

Ballroom Competition: BCSF's first Ballroom Competition attracted more than a hundred spectators and more than 40 competitors, many of whom rushed straight to the dance floor from the playing field in order to participate in both events on Saturday morning (Aug. 13, 2011). Several registered participants were unable to compete in ballroom dancing due to a sports game scheduled at the same time as their dances, and a surprising number of spectators vocalized their desire to sign up next year and their regret of having missed the opportunity this year. Jana Iparraguirre functioned as the MC and organizer for the event, and the judges, whom Iparraguirre had invited from the Cornell Ballroom Dance Team and Harvard Ballroom Dance Team, expressed how the organization of the competition and the support from the community watching surpassed her expectations.

“This ballroom competition exceeded my expectations beyond belief,” said Iparraguirre. “We had so many supporters, so many people who don't usually dance but wanted to come and watch, and it was such an inspiration for me to see the community pull together and watch. People cheered for everyone. To be able to perform in front of people, you have to be comfortable, and so for so many competitors to be comfortable here and to know they won't be booed off is an amazing testament of what our community is like. I'm just so happy that everyone came out and supported ballroom dancing, which supports Rev. In Jin Moon and what she's trying to do in developing the culture of heart in our movement, saying that dancing with a brother or sister, aunt or uncle, is fine as long as you do it with the right heart.”



The art gallery featured paintings, colored-pencil sketches, hand-crafted pottery, mosaics, and more.



Participants of the Blackjack Tournament, which took place during the Ballroom Dance Social, tried their luck.



Poker players showed good sportsmanship and competed in order to raise money for students in need.

Art Gallery: Shinyoung Chang and Shannon Forringer staged their own artwork and organized an art gallery to showcase the work of eight up-and-coming artists and two established young adult artists. The artistic mediums ranged from colored pencils to hand-crafted pottery, from painting to photography, and the inspiration of many works often was a young, second-generation Unificationist. Shannon and friends put their design skills to work featuring young adults in various artistic posters that were placed on the walls of UTS, leading BCSF participants to the gallery. Many of the art pieces were on sale, and people steadily made their ways out of the gallery with purchases in hand. Viewers described the gallery as “amazing,” “inspirational,” “beautiful,” and “intriguing.” The *Barrytown Gazette* will publish a feature article with details of the works featured. Jon Cook from Minnesota humorously commented at he was “jealous of the artistic skill” on display, and Heeja Dishman from California wrote, “Beautiful show...love seeing the talent of our community.”

Blackjack Tournament: During the Aug. 11, 2011 Ballroom Social, Reverend In Jin Moon’s husband took the role as the dealer for approximately a dozen youth who had signed up to play. Registration was \$10, and part of the total cash prize went to support the costs of BCSF. Sean Kim from New York claimed the cash prize with a pair of aces, each of which received a 10 to tally up to two 21s (in other words, two “blackjacks”) after having been “split.” Rev. In Jin Moon’s husband provided an educational seminar on gaming, stressing the importance of understanding that gaming is not a sin but a form of entertainment that needs to be handled responsibly. In addition to those who participated in the tournament, approximately 40 others watched and listened to the explanation of how to turn gaming into giving by donating winnings to organizations such as charities or scholarship funds.

Poker Tournament (Low-Stakes): 42 people signed up for low-stakes poker, buying in for \$20 and all vying for a pot of \$440. The game began at around 8 p.m. on Friday night and lasted until 11:30pm, when Theon O’Neil from Gloucester emerged as the winner. Close to \$275 was raised for the CARP scholarship fund for college students in need. Victoria Roomet, who oversaw the event, said the tournament was “spectacular and dynamic, because people got a lot of good hands. It was competitive, yet fun. Everyone followed the rules and regulations, so sportsmanship was great.”