

Ride Through Europe with CARP

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“She came all the way from America!”

The emcee welcomes me up to the stage. Over 200 people from 33 European nations gathered in one great hall for a Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) European Leaders Assembly on April 8-10, 2016. During their Youth segment, I'm given 10 minutes to present about the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) in America, its activities, and recent developments. The screen behind me is huge. I grab the mic and jump right in. People seem to be listening with interest.



“STEP UP is changing people’s lives, one action step at a time.”

STEP UP (STudent EmPowerment through Unification Principles) is CARP America’s newly launched program, where students engage in the study of Unification Principles and explore ways to practically apply them in their lives.

I manage to squeeze in a few more exciting projects that CARP America is working on. Then I hand the mic back to the emcee and he asks the audience, “Do you all have your seat belts on? Are you ready for the ride?”

That’s right, CARP America is ready to take you on a ride and we want the whole world to join in!

As CARP America’s International Liaison, I had the privilege to visit several European countries as part of a greater effort to strengthen connections among CARP communities around the world. Maybe it’s because I was born in France (my father is French) that I felt very much at home in Europe.

CARP Breakout Session:

Twenty leaders gather for a breakout on CARP, each of us curious to find out more about each other. Each country representative shares about their unique situation. It is clear that CARP’s circumstances and prospects differ from country to country. Yet, I can sense that the desire to work together is very much present. A common thread that emerges from the discussion is lack of money, lack of full-time staff, and lack of communication on a regional level. We all acknowledge the need to meet up more often, but since that is not always easy, we start working out the details for a way to communicate and share resources anywhere, anytime. One that we will actually use. It is inspiring to know that there are people devoted to CARP all over Europe, and that there is a real thirst for connecting and working together. This is just the beginning.



At dinnertime, I had a really interesting conversation about education over a very traditional Czech meal of potatoes and schnitzel. My main takeaway from the conversation was, *“We can educate students as much as we like but we must also let them experience and realize it for themselves.”*

Immediately, I thought CARP could offer these opportunities for experiences and realizations. At CARP, we focus on the study but also the application of Unification Principles – principles that bring unity:

- We can develop genuine relationships through sincere selfless interactions.
- We contribute to society through mastery of our unique creativity.

STEP UP is a two-day program where we explore each of these principles over the course of 7 sessions. Each session includes a brief talk on the principle and then an interactive activity where participants get to experience the power of applying the principle in their lives. For example, we do a listening exercise to get participants to realize how important listening is to building genuine relationships. We want to give students the tools to discover and experience the principles in their daily lives in a very practical way. And do so in a way that they can clearly see the impact of applying these principles in their lives.



CARP Czech Republic:

This was my first time presenting CARP America’s newly launched program STEP UP so I was feeling quite nervous. Useless thoughts raced my mind as I prepared for the presentation. How will they react? What will they think of it? One of the participants, Pavlina, suddenly tapped me, thankfully interrupting my disempowering train of thought. She pointed to something in the song book. We had flipped to the final song before starting my presentation and right next to the song was a photo of the famous “Church of our Lady” in Prague. What are the odds that we land on the

song with a photo of the very building I had just visited earlier that day in Prague! I took it as a jolt of encouragement and a good sign that I was in the right place 😊

So here we are, 10 people sitting on three big sofas- it felt homey. I started by giving a brief introduction on CARP America and then gave them a taste of our STEP UP program by giving a short talk on one of the Unification Principles: “We mature through pursuing truth, beauty and goodness.” This is the first time we are introducing STEP UP to Europe and I had no idea how the reaction would be. At the very start, everyone was reserved and I had to encourage them saying, “Don’t be shy. This talk is interactive. I will be asking you many questions so please feel free to shout out your thoughts.” That was all the encouragement they needed. I felt a sense of relief as they became more and more comfortable expressing their thoughts.

After the talk, I lead them through an exercise where participants get to experience different levels of listening. I started by making them experience level 0 where there is no listening involved. Your partner asks you a question and then simply ignores your answer for 1 minute. I was surprised how much they

really got into it. I saw one person totally ignoring their partner by pretending to talk on their cellphone and looking out the window or just focusing on sipping their tea. I was so grateful that they invested in the exercise wholeheartedly, making the experience that more real and impactful. This set the tone for the rest of the exercise. When we got to level 2, people were eager to know what was next asking, “there’s another level after this?” Towards the end of the exercise, the room was buzzing with excitement and bright faces.

One participant expressed that she appreciated the exercise because it helped her to see how these principles could be applied to real life. “I know these Unification principles but I always struggled with putting them into action. Now I know what I can do to practice those principles in a tangible way in my daily life.”



CARP Austria:

Austria boasts many wonderful historic buildings and I had the pleasure of seeing a few. We started with St. Stephen’s Cathedral and walked around the square. Then came the challenge: finding the best coffee and dessert in Vienna City. Three CARP members had come out to give me a tour of the city and now they were engaged in a thorough debate. “Should we take her to Aida or Café Central?” I appreciated their heart to want to show me the best Vienna had to offer. After much discussion on the pros and cons of each coffee shop, we decide to go to Café Central, a beautiful traditional cafe, where it is said that famous people like Sigmund Freud often frequented to hold talks over afternoon coffee.

The next day, 15 people gathered, all eager to know a little more about CARP America. I gave my presentation and then opened up the floor to any questions. The questions came in one by one, by far the most questions I’ve received on this tour all together. But I was glad to answer them because it showed that they really did have an interest.

We got to level 3 on the listening exercises. I introduced intuitive listening and then asked them to try it out for 1 minute each. When the 1 minute was over, I stopped them but one participant looked up at me with a bit of remorse on her face indicating that she was not ready to stop the deep conversation they were having. “Was that really one minute?” she asked suspiciously to which I answered with another question, “Doesn’t 1 minute feel a lot shorter when you’re truly engaged in listening to someone?”



As soon as the presentation was over, several people came up to me saying they were inspired by the program. Even as I write this report, one of the participants who helped organize the gathering has been

constantly asking me for the resources to be able to organize similar programs and events. It's coming soon!



And then my worst fear happened right there in front of the room – my computer went black and died. I was so embarrassed. We have become so dependent on technology and computers, it's hard to believe they didn't exist a couple decades ago! Luckily my computer resurrected and I could do my presentation. It was that time of day, late afternoon, when all your body wants to do is take a nap, but the participants followed along well.

After the listening exercise, one participant came up to me and shared very honestly, "I realized I do that a lot. I don't really listen to people. I want to work on that and change that." Realization it is the first step; taking action is the next. We finished the session just in time for a warm curry dinner.



CARP Albania:

I hopped off the plane and rushed to hop up onto the stage. CARP Albania was by far my biggest audience with about 30 participants. I explained that one way to grow our capacity to love is through doing acts of service. Then I asked them to write down an action step for the week. One participant shared with the rest of the group that his act of service for the week would be “to cook a meal for my grandmother.” How sweet!:) At the end of the listening exercise, one participant beamed, “I was happy to be able to ask my friend deeper questions to try to understand how he was feeling and what he really values in life. I could listen to what he had to say and just offer my full presence.” They really got the point of the exercise and that made me so happy as the facilitator.

At the end, I asked, “Who would you like to offer the gift of listening to this week?” Participants were challenged to take an action step: to think of one person whom they don’t listen to deeply and to intentionally take their listening to the next level.

One participant asked me, “What if it is the other person that is ignoring me and not listening to me?” I responded by saying that we cannot change other people and that we can only work on ourselves. The best we can do is offer our own gift of listening to them and those around us and hope that they will one day also learn to give that gift of listening. It was such a great experience that 3 new guests who attended the presentation signed up to become CARP members that day! That made me feel that STEP UP has a lot of value to offer students, no matter the country. It was a short stay but I got to experience Albanian food, Albanian culture and most importantly, the warm hearts of the Albanian people.



My Reflections

I went to 4 very different countries with the same STEP UP program and was thoroughly relieved to see that the response was all very positive. Despite our differences, deep down we all aspire to become better people. STEP UP offers us the chance to learn about Unification Principles and how we can apply them in our lives with the hope of leading better lives and making a greater, positive impact in our communities. This is just the beginning. Like our founder and True Mother, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, recently stated, “We have to work together. Nations can no longer pursue their own interest. Countries should help each other and become united.” Despite our differences, there is without a doubt something that we can all learn from each other. Together, we can achieve so much more. Thanks for coming along for the ride and see you at Momentum in July for new adventures! Check out our website (carplife.org/international) to submit a cool story or find out more about what other CARP chapters around the world are up to!