

Families Welcomed 2012 at UTS with Food, Fanfare and Fireworks

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Many walked True Father's Trail's at UTS and recounted stories of his vision for education in Barrytown.

On New Year's Eve, more than 700 Unificationists of all ages gathered at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) at the Barrytown campus to welcome in 2012. Whether *Sumo* wrestling, face-painting, building gingerbread-houses or simply chatting with friends, parents, children and young adults enjoyed each other's company during this family-oriented celebration, having traveled from all over the country to do so. In the words of Rosako, a Generation Peace Academy (GPA) student, "The ball dropping in New York City was nothing compared to our New Year's party."

Festivities began in mid-afternoon with a variety of sports competitions. The muddy terrain seemed only to fuel the enthusiasm as player after player dived for a ball or a Frisbee, emerging victorious from a sea of mud. Two hours later it was impossible to distinguish the teams, but smiles shone brightly from mud-stained faces.



Young Unificationists warm up with a game of volleyball on UTS grounds despite the winter chill.

Inside the building the competition continued as *sumo* wrestlers in huge inflatable costumes fought it out to cheering audiences. Victoria Roomet, president of the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (CARP) defeated me after three exciting rounds. I vowed to return next year to challenge her again.

Inflatable castles invited knights to joust and the young and not-so young to bounce! Everyone loved fighting with the inflated sticks and knocking each other off the platform. Younger kids especially enjoyed the bungee race arena. Racing each other and being pulled back by a bungee cord attached to the waist was definitely the most fun! The Nerf-gun target shooting attracted a lot of boys who enjoyed the competition.



Two young adults spar in suits that humorously mimic sumo wrestling much to the delight of their audience.

The quieter, but no-less competitive games included a chess tournament held in the UTS Book Store. Figures huddled over chess boards, every bit as determined to win as the players battling the elements outside.

Children and the young-in-heart sported face paintings and used their creativity in the arts- and crafts hall. Groups of youth and young adults naturally congregated over cards and *Settlers of Catan* boards throughout the dining room and in various quiet niches.



Races involving bungee cords and inflated platforms brought the competitive energy out of participants.

Dr. Tyler Hendricks, a member of the education department at Lovin' Life Ministries, led a walk along Father's Trail recounting stories of Father's activities at Barrytown and his vision for education. Personal stories gave the people who joined the walk a glimpse into True Parents' heart.

Sumptuous food was served throughout the day. Paige and his catering team kept bringing more and more dishes out and served from what must have been a bottomless pot of *bulgogi*, a popular Korean beef dish. The generous heart of our True Parents surrounded us.



Human board pieces and seven-foot long sticks put the popular Korean game yute in a bigger perspective.

There were so many activities from which to choose. The evening festivities included what must have been the world's largest *yute* game (a popular Korean game involving sticks and board pieces)! The chapel was cleared and a huge *yute* board was laid out on the floor. Human board pieces leapt from circle to circle as they proceeded around the "board." Teams took turns in tossing the seven-foot long *yute* sticks, backed up by the cheers of their supporters. We were so excited to play!

In the dining room, groups competed in building gingerbread houses. It's amazing what you can create with a box of Graham Crackers, icing and an assortment of candies! The winning gingerbread house was a

castle, with a damsel on top of the tower and a knight in silver armor dashing across a drawbridge. Other non-traditional gingerbread creations included the New Yorker Hotel, Hogwarts and the Battle of Troy, complete with speared gummy bears.



Handmade gingerbread houses included a mini Graham Cracker version of the New Yorker Hotel built by the Vanderstok family.

Despite the fact that most of the young people had danced until midnight the night before at the CARP Winter Ball, the dance floor at Winter Fest was packed! The gymnasium was transformed into an elegant ballroom with ladies and gentleman gliding around the room to the awe and wonder of our senior brothers and sisters. “This is so beautiful – look at them.” As the pace changed and the men and women transitioned into a Chacha or Swing, the sheer joy of dance was evident on every face. Having good, clean fun took on a whole new meaning - pure joy was palpable in the air.



Fireworks dazzled a rapt audience during an 18-minute long show that ushered in the new year with a bang.

The night would not have been complete without taking time to share our hearts with our Heavenly Parent. At 11 p.m., hundreds of brothers and sisters poured out of the UTS building and gathered around the numerous bonfires that stretched behind the Massena House. We sipped hot chocolate and roasted marshmallows. Rev Cotter, our executive vice president, then gathered us in a gigantic, multi-layered circle on the hillside and shared his gratitude to God and True Parents, our International President, Hyung Jin Nim, and our Senior Pastor, In Jin Nim, for all we could accomplish in 2011. He thanked various leaders, our ministry staff, our youth leadership team and all who have invested in creating the offering from America to our Heavenly Parent. We then took time to pray and connect to God individually, as we offered 2011 and prepared ourselves to welcome in 2012. New Jersey Youth Pastor David Hunter led three resounding cheers of *eog mansei* and then as midnight struck, the sky was magically lit up with fireworks. The 20-minute display was a celebration of noise and color that drew an almost continuous stream of “ooh’s” and “aah’s” as each light burst outshone the previous one.



The gymnasium was transformed into a ballroom with ladies and gentleman gliding around the packed

room to the awe of the senior brothers and sisters.

One student said, “The best part of the Fest was spending midnight among hundreds of other of other second-generation under the brilliant fireworks.” We were standing together as one family under God – in love!

One young adult, Brian, said, “This has actually been *the best* New Years I’ve ever had. The Winter Ball was such a great time and very well put together. Finally, New Year’s Eve at UTS was so great. I can’t think of a better way to celebrate than singing, ballroom dancing, and hanging out with so many amazing BC’s.”



Rev. Cotter (black jacket) offered words of thanks to God and True Parents for the accomplishments of 2011.

It was a festivity of which True Parents would have been proud. It reminded me of the holy days when True Parents would celebrate with hundreds of members at Belvedere and watch over the sports and various activities. We honored our True Parents, and in the Korean cuisine and hugely popular *yute* game we were reminded of our roots and the ever present heart and spirit of our True Parents.

Thank You, In Jin Nim!

