

Aloha Leadership Workshop at East Garden encourages critical thinking

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The recent Aloha Leadership Workshop held at East Garden from Dec. 28, 2015, to Jan. 1, 2016, was a transformative experience for participants and staff alike. More than just studying Divine Principle, participants were encouraged to think critically, engage in conversation, and to put their knowledge and talents to use in their local community. "This workshop was a beautiful experience. I learned so much about myself and about God and True Parents. Also, I learned about family, goal setting, and becoming a son God takes pride in," one participant said.

Mari Curry, vice president of FFWPU-USA and one of the organizers of the event, commented, "The young people had the opportunity to reflect on their communities and look at the whole picture. They maturely looked at the weaknesses and were pleasantly surprised by the strengths that they found. They took this assessment and, rather than seeing the weaknesses as a problem, they saw them as an opportunity and planned projects to remedy them."



At the close of the workshop, participants met in small groups and came up with ideas on how to improve or contribute to their local communities. “The family environment fostered communication and collaboration. All the participants really felt empowered to make a difference,” Mari Curry said.

One participant agreed, saying in her reflection, “Family Time was one of my favorite parts of the workshop. I quite enjoyed bonding with my ‘family members’ and completing tasks with them. I love how much family was so emphasized these past few days—it gave me a new perspective on familial relationships and just how beautiful an ideal family is. All the staff couples and their children were an added bonus to the family aspect. It was great, seeing such examples of loving families right in front of us!”

It was also encouraging to see young Unificationists take the reins of running the workshop. Gerry Servito, one of the main lecturers for the program, noted, “It was groundbreaking to see young blessed couple parents leading Youth Ministry aspirants. It is a beautiful model, unique also that the husbands support the wives who were appointed by True Mother. A very different experience from all-men-run workshop experiences. The balance modeled here is remarkable.” One of the participants also commented on the model set by program leaders, saying, “I really valued watching young blessed families lead. Seeing how each family looked over each other’s kids, just observing the joy in each marriage/family.”

The weekend focused heavily on empowering participants to become leaders. True Mother has emphasized the importance of investing in the next generation, and the organizers took that view to heart in preparing the presentations, activities, and opportunities for connection. One student said: “This workshop gave me specific tools and guidance in helping me make goals as a leader. The talks were all really well done and high quality. I also had fun and was able to make new friends.” Many of the participants expressed similar sentiments. Now that they are back at home, many already have begun working on their project ideas in their own communities.

With the successful completion of this workshop, organizers are looking forward to the next Aloha Leadership Workshop, to be held from July 1 to 8, 2016. Staff are currently looking for support in creating an even better experience for the next workshop. “We are looking for inspired individuals and couples to help bring this Aloha Leadership Workshop to the next level. If you have a skill you would like to offer or if you would like to be a mentoring couple at the workshop or be a part of the planning team, please contact us. We would love to see how we can work together,” said Kaeleigh Moffitt.

