

50 attend three-day WFWP USA Leadership Retreat

Angelika Selle
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Women leaders from across the country gathered in Arizona from July 23 to 26 for a three-day Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Leadership Retreat. Fifty current and upcoming leaders participated in a weekend full of inspiration, networking and team building. With presentations on branding, character education, marriage and family, outreach and more, the retreat lived up to its theme: "Growth: Uplife, Upgrade and Collaborate."

The participants ranged in age from 17 to 70 and represented a multitude of ethnic backgrounds. The beautiful Franciscan Renewal Center in Paradise Valley, Arizona, in the Phoenix metropolitan area, provided the ideal location for the annual national retreat and leadership training. This year's retreat garnered a lot of attention, with high attendance and excitement among participants and staff. The organizers tried to create an environment in which participants could be "inspired, uplifted, nurtured and empowered."



Some of the main external goals for the retreat involved sharing best practices, providing practical tools to chairwomen and teams, and setting effective goals for specific projects including Schools of Africa. "Our participants understood and took ownership of the vision and mission and are ready to implement the things they learned," said one staff member.

The local Arizona chairwoman and WFWP members were essential to facilitating as staff and organizing transportation. Their participation made for a warm welcome for all the participants.

At the first gathering, WFWP USA President Angelika Selle welcomed attendees and introduced the new national team including Katarina Connery, the newly appointed vice president, and Kiyomi Schmidt, a very capable new administrator, as well as members of the staff and board. The energy in the room was charged with joy and anticipation as President Selle spoke about the goals and purpose of the retreat. The

session ended with everyone forming a large circle for a prayer to dedicate the retreat to God.



A big part of the retreat focused on following the example of the WFWP founders by nourishing not just the mind but also the body. Each day began with an exercise component including a yoga session, followed by a brief music and worship period.



On the second morning, President Selle was moved to address the women about the unresolved historical issues of race in the United States. In a special healing ceremony, Caucasian women bowed in repentance of wrongdoing on behalf of white people in history. Tears were shed on both sides, as the women hugged one another and offered deep prayer. The discussion that followed acknowledged the need for substantial action, not just repentance and forgiveness, in order to move forward. The women made a commitment to always respect and honor their sisters of other cultures, nationalities and faiths, and assist them in substance to have opportunities and access to learn, lead and make their contributions freely without being stopped or discriminated against. This amazing experience cleared the way for a retreat full of love and new beginnings. "I learned a lot about my journey spiritually and physically and in every way, about my role, duty and responsibility with and for WFWP. It is so comforting to know that I am not alone and that what I am dealing with is the same or similar to others," said one participant.



Through presentations on Vision 2020 and the Blessing Movement, practical tools and tips, and nitty-gritty organizational assessments, participants left with a sense of how far the organization has come, and what they can do to contribute to its growth in the future. As another participant reflected, “I haven’t known where to go with my chapter, how to have motivation. I am now motivated to do a School of Africa fundraiser, so now I have some meat for the women to chew. I also know now that I have many wonderful women to work beside.”

The organizers would like to recognize the tremendous effort made by an intergenerational collaboration of Headquarters staff, regional advisors, chairman, and the Board in creating the schedule, program, sessions, activities and goals.

