

“Lovin’ Life Ministries Saved My Life,” Says Young Unificationist

Liana Gaarder
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Liana's younger brother Branch is planning to follow in his sister's footsteps and attend Generation Peace Academy next year.

The following is a testimony by Maryland-resident Liana Gaarder, who, after a year in the Special Task Force (STF), now known as Generation Peace Academy, successfully raised money to pay for her college tuition and to help her family at a time of financial crisis. She is currently a full-time student at Anne Arundel Community College, at which she is completing a transfer program to the University of Maryland (UMD). Gaarder's parents were blessed in 1982 as part of the 6,000 couples in South Korea and have three children: Trellis (22), Liana (19) and Branch (17).

I had so many incredible experiences in this past year on STF – from fundraising to ballroom dancing. The two most valuable aspects of all of that, which I carried with me into everyday life, are the following: First, I took with me my relationship with God. I can actually relate to Him as my parent now, instead of as some eminent being on a throne. And I have developed a deep sense of trust that He is truly guiding my life. I have this peace in my heart that I don't have to worry about anything because God is with me, He loves me, and my value comes from Him. That in itself made my STF year priceless.

Second, I walked away with a deep relationship with True Family. Getting to know Rev. In Jin Moon's family was such a special experience for me. I have felt God guiding me through Rev. In Jin Moon and her husband, Dr. James Park, time and time again. The love and investment they have put into me have propelled me forward and I feel that – thanks to them – I am well on my way to being the person I've always wanted to be, but never thought was possible.

A Happier Perspective and Healthier Life

After finishing a year of focusing on my internal excellence on STF, I decided it was time to switch gears. I'm striving to become a well-rounded person; so after a whole year of STF, I had a lot of external catching up to do.

My entire life I've been overweight. After trying diet after diet, I gave up and accepted that I would always be chubby and out of shape. That totally changed when I started taking Vemma, a liquid vitamin supplement. I had more energy, and I began working out. Through exercise, I became more in tune with

my body so I could significantly feel the negative impact of, for example, eating a slice of pizza before running. Instead of “dieting,” I began to cut out excessively sugary or fatty things like soda, fried food, and bread. With the combination of multiple, daily doses of Vemma, regular exercise, and healthy eating habits, I lost 40 pounds over ten months. It felt like a miracle. In addition, my immune system is now in tip-top shape. I used to get sick regularly, but since I started taking Vemma, I haven't suffered through anything but the occasional stuffy nose.

In living for the sake of others, the key word is “live.” To me, that means that I need to live my life to the fullest if I want to make a substantial impact on other people's lives. I have to take charge of my own life first. This is why I'm so motivated to persevere with Vemma, with college, with anything that involves investing into my personal well-being.

The Spirit of a Mother-Daughter “MFT” Team



Liana's father (left) helped prepare treats that Liana (right) used to raise money for college and her family.

As my geographically-dispersed family decided to reunite in Maryland, we were faced with many challenges, including being houseless and jobless. As we all know, the road to building ideal families is a bumpy one. The last thing Satan would like to see is an easy reunion of a God-centered family. The last thing we were going to do, however, was let him get in our way.



Liana's mother and father worked together to support their daughter's fundraising efforts.

With bills to pay and my empty college fund to fill, my mom and I decided to do something about it; we created our own “MFT” [Mobile Fundraising Team] – she was the driver, and I was the fundraiser. It was

like STF all over again. So far we have gone out for two three-week periods – Thanksgiving and Christmas. She takes care of the product, the area and transportation, and I do the fundraising. At the end of each day we offer it up to God in prayer and then split the result. Through the unity of my mom and me, and my commitment to tithe ten percent of all my fundraising result, I believe the spirit world was inspired to help us achieve our goal. We persevered through each day, and didn't stop until we reached our daily goal of \$500. This experience not only brought me closer to paying for my college tuition, but it brought me closer to my mom. We're already planning our next fundraiser for Valentine's Day.

We started each day by flipping open my STF book, which is stocked with inspiring speeches by True Father and True Children. We would read until we felt ready for the day. It's amazing how much strength was poured into me from just reading! No matter how negative and uninspired I may feel, my mind and spirit always feels so clear and bright after some good old *hoon dok hwe*.

My mom would drive and drop me off at all kinds of businesses. I personally love to fundraise at car dealerships, so we would look up all the dealerships in town and go to one after the other. It was exciting! It was also a constant struggle to get out of the van each time my mom pulled over somewhere, but with the goal in mind and my mom's encouragement, I persevered. It's all about having the right mindset. One of my favorite quotes by Father is: "Please have an adventurous and pioneering spirit." I feel like that explains my mom and me in a nutshell. In the car, whenever I would hit rock-bottom, my mom and I would joke about how grateful I should be to be fundraising, because I could be so much worse off. I have a college education to pay for, I am young and healthy, and I am a good fundraiser.

I approached anyone and everyone, and with a smile I said, "Hi! I'm fundraising for my college tuition! I was wondering if you'd like to help out!" For Christmas, we sold homemade treats wrapped in cellophane with a ribbon and a bell. It was a lot of fun. People are so supportive of helping with college tuition, and they could always use a snack while they're stuck at work.

For me, fundraising is like a roller coaster. The hardest part is getting on the ride, but once I'm on, it's exhilarating! Driving to fundraising area is like waiting in a line. Getting out of the van is like creeping up a hill before a big drop, but 90 percent of the time when I approach people, I have a blast. I really love sales and relating with such a wide spectrum of people. It's all about communication of heart.

Why I Am Grateful for Lovin' Life"



Liana and Dr. James Park smile for the camera after a Sunday service. "I have felt God guiding me through Rev. In Jin Moon and her husband, Dr. James Park, time and time again," said Liana.

Internal and external excellence is the best way to sum up what I've gained from STF, LLM and fundraising, that is, learning how vital it is to not only have a healthy spiritual life, but also have a healthy

body, a great education and a beautiful family. Living prosperously is not a bad or selfish thing! I am confident that God does not want me to suffer. So long as I am living a God-centered public life, once seemingly self-centered things suddenly benefit the sake of the whole.

I value attaining my college degree because I know it will aid me in becoming a well-rounded person and provide the tools I need to make a substantial offering to the providence. Career aspirations will probably fade in and out of my life, but my greatest aspiration, which is to be the best daughter, sister, wife, and mother I can possibly be, will never change.

I would love to get involved with CARP [the Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles]. I think the vision of CARP – empowering college students with spiritual and academic support – is fantastic. In addition, watching the Maryland church community grow up so beautifully makes me eager to plug in wherever I can, as soon as I can. One thing I am totally pumped to support is the development of Ballroom Ministry here in Maryland. I also look forward to joining the ballroom team at UMD.

Lovin' Life Ministries [LLM] saved my life. Actually, I don't even remember living before LLM. I am eternally grateful to In Jin Nim, her family, and her team for making this possible. LLM gave me hope in my spiritual and personal life. I can honestly say that I am proud to be a Unificationist now that LLM is around. It gives me real hope for the future of our movement. In Jin Nim's encouragement and education has completely refreshed my perspective; she has helped me realize my potential, my value and my purpose.