

Staffan Berg: Parents' Day Celebration in Las Vegas Surpasses Expectations

Ariana Moon and Hope Igarashi
July 24, 2012



Lovin' Life Ministries Pastor Rev. Staffan Berg offered an impromptu opening prayer, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance recited by the three boys to his left.

A Parents' Day celebration sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) that was expected to attract no more than 50 people drew an impressive total of 152 guests on Sunday, July 22, 2012 in Las Vegas at the Life Christian Center. At least 65 individuals were honored as outstanding parents in 12 categories, including "Foster Parent, Step-parent, Single Parent," etc. Each of the 65 honorees received commemorative certificates and flowers, and 12 received special recognition and framed certificates. Recipients included UPF Ambassadors for Peace, Korean War Veterans, Christian clergy and a Unificationist single mother of two boys.

Hope Igarashi, the UPF chairwoman in Las Vegas and her husband, Tadashi Igarashi, spearheaded the organizational efforts that went into the event. Her assistants included Katherine Duncan, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of #5 and an Ambassador for Peace, and Dr. Anne Jones, pastor at the Life Christian Center. "We [UPF representatives] have national conference calls weekly with UPF President Jim Gavin, and he's been encouraging all of us for the last month and a half to have a Parents' Day event," said Igarashi. "I've only been in Las Vegas for 13 months, and I hadn't intended to come here to organize such an event, but I decided to anyway, together with my husband. I feel like a pioneer here in Las Vegas, and I love pioneering. The event ended up being so much fun. Everything just flowed."



The Parents' Day celebration in Las Vegas drew 152 people and took place in the Life Christian Center.

Igarashi served as the MC for the event, which she described as “wonderful!” Mimi Morse, a member of the Executive Slot Host Team at the Aria Hotel, gave the congratulatory remarks and praised Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon for their support for the initiation of Parents’ Day back in 1994. The Parents’ Day Proclamation given by the Governor of Nevada was read by Dr. Jones, and Duncan followed with opening remarks. Lovin’ Life Ministries Pastor Rev. Staffan Berg offered an opening prayer. Three young boys recited the Pledge of Allegiance and two young ladies sang a song that “really got the Holy Spirit moving in the house,” according to Igarashi. The event also featured a raffle that included prizes of a tea set, toiletries and various ornaments.



MC Hope Igarashi (center) and WFWP representative Rachel O'Brain (far left) stands with winners of the raffle, who won a tea set complete with tea and cookies.

At the grand finale of the program, Samuel Patton, an Ambassador for Peace and a recipient of the Korean War Veteran Medal, and his wife Miriam Patton were honored as the “Parents of the Year.” The Patton’s have seven children, 17 grandchildren, and six great grandchildren of which several were in the audience. “They were very surprised and overwhelmed with joy,” said Igarashi.

“Despite the lack of air conditioners and an insufficient number of chairs, the spirit during the event was beautiful and peaceful. Children were extremely well behaved and dressed in their Sunday best as they waited to applaud and see their family members recognized! There was a great sense of anticipation. Awardees were so proud to come up on stage as their families cheered them on and cameras flashed.”



Korean War Veteran Samuel and Miriam Patton stand together with members of their family as they are recognized as the "Parents of the Year."

“A Miracle in Vegas!”

Igarashi says that the fact the event was a success is a “miracle,” which resulted in the unexpected abundance of help she received from willing hands. “I was originally planning a program with 40 to 50 people because of my limited budget, but God had a different idea and pulled a miracle in Vegas!” she said.



Mimi Morse holds a certificate she received from (left to right) Katherine Duncan, the president of the Chamber of Commerce of #5, Hope Igarashi and Dr. Ann Jones, pastor of the Life Christian Center.

“Spirit World helped me. I was initially organizing this event all alone, and my husband was paying for everything. But within the very last days before the event, a generous personal financial contribution was suddenly made by Mimi Morse. Immediately after, nomination forms started coming in like hot cakes to me. By Saturday, the day before the event, about 85 nominations for outstanding parents were in. Many Christian families in this community had become so excited as they learned about this national holiday that they had asked if their kin could also be honored. Unfortunately, we weren’t able to accommodate many of the last-minute nomination requests, but we hope to do so next year!

“On Saturday morning, during the last few hours before the event, I set out to buy many more much-needed certificates, flowers, folders, frames, etc. I thought to myself, ‘How can I pull this off? How can I get 85 certificates written out and organize 100 folders with handout materials. But lo and behold, my phone started ringing off the hook with offers of help.

“Susan and Bill Star, the former state leaders of Las Vegas, called and helped tremendously with editing. Susan took over filling in the names on the certificates. Kaye Yamaguchi of American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) called and helped stuff the 100 folders. Lorna Todd of Women’s Federation for World Peace (WFWP) called to donate flowers and help with several other things. My husband took care of the certificate printing and framing for the 12 selected winners, among countless other tasks. In the meantime, Dr. Jones and Katherine were busy with follow-up phone calls, purchasing and preparing extra food for the reception.”

Igarashi experienced a similar overflow of assistance during the event: “Rachael O’Brian of WFWP showed up unexpectedly and took charge as head of registration and oversaw the door prizes and raffle efforts along with Lorna Todd! The pastor who originally was to open the program ended up in the hospital, but lo and behold, Rev. Staffan Berg, who was not expected to attend and came only to drop by, arrived in the nick of time and offered an opening prayer. I introduced him as a Unification Church pastor, which was great since some clergy in attendance have worked with us over the years.

“Everyone thanked us over and over again. Truly it was a wonderful and high-spirited event. We thank

Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, our True Parents, and believe that because of their support, everything came together! Special thanks to Bill and Susan Star, Kaye Yamaguchi of ACLC, Lorna Todd and Rachael O'Brian of WFWP, who helped pull many details together!"