

Labor Day Was Outreach Day for Lovin' Life in Maryland

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At left, Rebecca, student in Odenton, Md. meets Tessa Brady, second-generation Unificationist, at the Lovin' Life Information Booth Sept. 3, 2011.

Unificationists in Maryland and the District of Columbia extended their hands and their hearts to the general public at the four-day Labor Day Festival in Greenbelt, Maryland from Sept. 2-5, 2011. The Lovin' Life booths of New Hope Family Church won first prize at the booth competition and honors for environmentally smart products.

Nearly 50 Unificationists of all ages put in time as volunteers at a booth selling "Virgin Mocktails" and an adjoining booth selling lessons in "Calligraphy and Origami" (Japanese paper-folding) or as public-relations representatives at the Lovin' Life information table.



Greenbelt City Councilman Rodney Roberts gets a warm witness from Pastor Zagery Oliver at the Virgin Mocktails Booth.

"I loved the whole experience really. What I found fascinating was how the people were drawn by the calligraphy and origami lessons to think about the deeper things, like the bridges between East and West," according to Mrs. Beverly Berndt, who managed the Virgin Drinks booth.

Mrs. Berndt, known around the Maryland community as "Aunt Bev," said the youth ministry turned in an impressive showing of volunteerism. "I was really impressed with the entire youth ministry. Kids got there on time (to serve drinks), and if they couldn't come, they got their own replacements."

Natalia Wojcik a high-school volunteer at the drinks booth commented: "It was great to meet so many people at the fair and see them smile."

The Festival organizers chose the Lovin' Life booths as the best in appearance and awarded the church a blue ribbon and check for \$100. Along with five other booths the church Virgin Drinks booth got special recognition with its use of "green," bio-degradable products. "We got one of the six prizes for the 'greenest' booth, meaning our products embodied the goals of 'reduce, re-use, recycle, and replenish,' " Mrs. Berndt told www.familyfed.org. "Our drink cups, for example, were made of corn products, so they were biodegradable. The judges loved that," she added.



First Prize! From left, Beverly Berndt, Davina Johnson (Booth coordinator for Greenbelt Labor Day), and Keiko Burton, who holds the \$100 check and blue ribbon.

Rev. Randy Francis, district director for the tri-state region, specialized in producing three beautiful banners for the event. Rev. Francis observed: “During the planning and setup there was so much excitement about the possibilities of meeting both new and old friends in this kind of festive surrounding. Throughout the weekend, I saw so many [non-Unificationist] families having great fun roaming the grounds. Then, when they stopped to read the colorful banners of our booths, you could see them brighten up. Something new had appeared among the old carnival barkers and booths – dainty origami and Chinese characters not known to them. Then, I could see them mouth the words ‘Lovin’ Life’ and smile.”

Rev. Francis, Pastor Matthew Goldberg and Pastor Zagery Oliver took advantage of the opportunity to network with the locals. “Sunday, afternoon the church that rents the Greenbelt Movie Theater was letting out, and I approached the pastor of the African congregation, and invited him and several of those around him to our 9/11 Memorial Festival in Washington, D.C.,” Rev. Francis said, adding: “I asked if they knew of the Adams Morgan area where our main church is located and one young man said he had lived nearby, and the pastor said he would love to attend.



Festival-goers learn calligraphy from Emiko Butler (behind table) of Silver Spring, Maryland.

Visitors to the Unificationist booths included Mayor Judith F. Davis and City councilman Rodney Roberts, who made respectful comments about the decorations. Mrs. Debra Gohr, who recently joined the Unification Church as a result of last year’s Labor Day outreach, spent many hours this year witnessing to her neighbors during the information day on Sept. 3, 2011. “I had a fantastic time,” she said.

The outreach effort was unprecedented in the sense that the idea for the booths originated with a special-interest group organized after the second Launch Pad event of Lovin’ Life in District One. In addition, it was an effort both for Washington D.C. and Virginia members, who sent a witnessing team of nine people to help out on Labor Day, and the Maryland church members, some of whom will return the favor at the 9/11 Festival at the Washington, D.C. church on Sunday, Sept. 11, 2011. The purpose of the event was four-fold, according to organizers: to make money for more outreach, make friends, generate free media, and to have fun. The consensus of most involved with the effort was that those goals were achieved.