

Generation Peace Academy's 2014 Service Projects

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GPA participants design and paint a mural in Colegio la Union School in Santiago, Dominican Republic

During the past few months, enthusiastic young participants of Generation Peace Academy have been jetting around the world doing service projects, connecting with local communities, and practicing the message of True Parents. GPA strives to put True Father's words to "live for the sake of others" into action, a motto that accompanied them throughout their travels. As another year of the GPA program comes to a close, there is much to celebrate as they look back on their accomplishments in the places they served.



Sorting through fruit donations to deliver only the best to a local nursing home

Thanks to the hard work of GPA members, the community of Villa Linda in Peru, South America now has a new community center, a place to hold educational programs, community meetings, and public events. Teams spent time there building an orphanage and painting classrooms. In the Caribbean island of Trinidad, GPA took on projects that not only improved economic development, but also educated the community on family values.



Posing with Colegio la Union School children and toy donations from the New Jersey Unification Church community

Many of the GPA service projects included construction or refurbishment of buildings and their grounds. At a school in Santiago, Dominican Republic, a GPA team turned an empty lot into a playground complete with a beautiful mural. The team had to break down a wall, level, and clean out the lot, which was then used to hold educational classes and serve as a playground for the school children. Schools in that region struggle to fund their programs and maintain facilities while keeping costs down for low-income families. Thus, the playground project provided great benefit to the community.



Building an urban garden in the center of a community center in Panama City, using recycled pallets and materials. The herbs and vegetables grown will be used by local restaurants

In Barbados where the country has a more developed economy, the projects were more about connecting with the people, especially youth. GPA participants were presented with the many problems facing young people, including high unemployment, drug abuse, teen pregnancies, crime, and broken families. The team was able to provide empowerment through volunteering at St. Philip District Hospital and giving a talk at a Juvenile Detention Center. They spoke of the importance of a culture of service and encouraged the local youth in a two-day Youth Leadership Conference on how they can positively impact society. There may not be many physical signs of their service left behind, but the impact they made on the hearts of the people is a substantial victory. One of the local Unificationists commented, "We were blessed with the presence of the GPA participants...they were able to make contact with local groups and institutions and they even motivated our young Unificationists and some of their friends to get involved."



A GPA brother helps paint a school in Barbados with a young local helper

For all of the projects, the purpose was to provide the most value by getting to know the real needs of the community. In Panama, the GPA team tackled the country's growing problem with waste management. In some places, piles of trash lined the streets, making recycling systems an absolute necessity. The team partnered with an organization in Panama City to help create a recycling program for a local community that involved going to restaurants and teaching them how to recycle. They collected material and gathered data to help build a sustainable solution. The seeds that were planted through this project are sure to blossom long into the future.



Carrying sorted recycling collected from one of the local restaurants, as part of Panama City pilot recycling program

Whether it was an empty lot where a building now stands, or a young person with new hopes for the future, GPA left their mark all around the world. The projects they completed will add value to the communities and provide opportunities that were previously impossible. The people that they inspired will hopefully go on to be public-minded citizens, and contribute in their own way to True Parents' legacy by serving communities around the world and setting an example for others to follow.



Restoring a church building in a slum area of Lima, Peru

Learn more about GPA and the many ways they make a difference and find out how you can become an international service volunteer at their web site www.generationpeaceserves.org/.



Preparing for painting of the Unification Church Center in Barbados