

21 GPA volunteers spend three weeks serving in the Philippines

Roland Platt
February 28, 2015



As the international service segment of their year-long course, 21 Unificationist-born young adults who are undergoing the Generation Peace Academy (GPA) leadership training recently spent three weeks in the Philippines. Under the leadership of Kenzo Tanaka, they were involved in outreach efforts in Manila, disaster relief on Bohol Island, and a pure love rally on a university campus.

When they first arrived in Manila on February 18, they were warmly greeted by Merly Barlaan, the leader of Women's Federation for World Peace in Manila. Mrs. Barlaan has been instrumental in the preparations for GPA's many events and projects in the Philippines.

For the first few days after their arrival, the GPA participants joined local members of World CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles) in outreach efforts on three campuses in metropolitan Manila: the Technological University of the Philippines, the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, and the Eulogio "Amang" Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology. They invited college students to a Peace Leadership Seminar, which World CARP holds on a regular basis.

According to local World CARP President Rene Lansangan, around 100 people came to the seminar, which took place at the Manila Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) headquarters. Several of the GPA participants, who were inspired by the passion that the local CARP students have for God and True Parents, gave lectures at the seminar. Ami Davidson, a first-year participant, said, "Everyone was able to hear the Divine Principle, and that was very crazy because they learned things that we learn every day, but the difference is that they're more grateful for it compared to us and sometimes we take that for granted as Unificationist-born young adults."

On February 23, the GPA team relocated to the island of Bohol, in order to begin the construction of two classrooms at Jandig Elementary School in the town of Maribojoc. According to local coordinator James Mabilin: "The magnitude 7.2 earthquake that hit Maribojoc on October 15, 2013, left us with almost nothing but hope. It had been our task to rise again and slowly shape up the community. A psychological rehabilitation program for the trauma of women and children. Structural rehabilitation for shelters, schools, health centers which were destroyed by the earthquake. Rehabilitation of the livelihood activities of the community (fishermen, farmers, craft weavers) whose main source of income relies on the natural resources but was displaced by the calamity. It had been difficult for us to start all over again from scratch, but with people like Generation Peace Academy, who are willing to share their time, resources and love to everyone, these make us feel that we are not alone in facing the challenge. I believe that together we can improve the lives of the community."

GPA began this 10-day project by breaking the cement of the previous foundation and filling one side of the foundation with rocks of varied sizes. "Without God and True Parents this wouldn't be possible," said first-year Sean. Camarie, Atsuko, Erika and Ryota also painted a few murals for the school.

The GPA participants also interacted with the school's pupils through sports, games, telling jokes and teaching them about U.S. culture. In gratitude for their help, Mr. Mabilin took the group on several

afternoon excursions on Bohol Island, such as to the beach and to a communal organic farm.

GPA's final service project in the Philippines involved supporting a Pure Love rally held on February 28 at Bohol Island State University (BISU). The purpose of the event, a collaboration between the university and GPA led by Mrs. Barlaan, was to combat human trafficking in the Philippines, which is unfortunately a very relevant issue for university students. In order to prepare for this event, a BISU/GPA leadership forum took place at BISU the day prior, in which BISU students were introduced to the Divine Principle. GPA participants worked hard to create placards and invite college students all over campus to the rally.



Dr. Arceli M. Hernando, director of student affairs at BISU, gave a powerful kickoff message to the gathering of over 100 participants. GPA performed for the group before giving a presentation on the meaning of pure love and abstinence before marriage. The program concluded with a heartfelt speech by third-year participant Kailey, a few testimonies from GPA participants, and the reciting of a Pure Love Pledge. The GPA team noted that students' perceptions about the meaning of pure love had changed as a result of this experience. "Pure love is unconditional and unchanging," stated first-year Aimi.

The GPA participants are very excited to bring back their wonderful, impactful experience to the U.S. According to first-year Koji: "I am so excited to bring these experiences back to my home. I learned the heart of giving and receiving from the love of the children. I felt I was chosen by God to work in the Philippines."