

An Adventurous Gap Year with the Oceania Leadership Team

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I have always known that I would have a gap year to do some traveling or participate in activities with the Unification Church before going off to college. The real question was, which one? This was a huge decision, one that could change how I would perceive my life when I went to university. When I look back on the process, it's all a blur, really. I do not know when I decided that the Oceania Leadership Team (OLT) would be my home program. All I know is that I prepared for about a year in advance before I actually went to Australia.

OLT jitters

When I get there, I was already a day late. OLT picked me up in a big white van and we are off for the orientation workshop, where the adventurous part begins! Pretty soon into the program, we are busy raising funds, going on mobile raising funds teams (MFT), doing service projects, going to the beach, traveling around Sydney, etc.

Pacific projects



Pretty much the biggest thing OLT does is go to islands in the Pacific and do projects to help needy communities. We spent around half a year raising funds and preparing to go to an island. We went there for a few weeks helping with education, building facilities, donating supplies, and getting to know the hearts of the people. In 2015, we were able to travel to Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. To be in a country where there may not even be readily accessible hot water, humbled all of us OLT members when we spent time with the members. The people of the islands live quite simple lives, yet that is one of the beautiful points about them. They feel joy in each other, in nature,

and by helping others. I would not trade my experience in the islands for anything. It helped me to see the reality of the difficult situations in the world and helped me realize how lucky I am and that I should be more grateful.



Raising funds

Many second-generation members feel quite intimidated about raising funds. It probably has to do with the fact that they would have to walk up to a random stranger and ask them for money. I get it. They have to go outside their comfort zone, far outside of it. More often than not, there is a higher number of rejections than donations. I know that it is difficult and have had my fair share of rude rejections that made me want to break down and cry and not continue. Each time this would happen, I would sincerely pray to God, to forgive that person who rejected me. I would move on to meet

many supportive people who wished me good luck. I never let the negativity sit in my mind for long. Maybe that is the trick. My favorite part of raising funds was not just getting any donation, but a food donation that I could share with my team. Within my OLT intake, my specialty was getting food donations. My friends say it is my face. I think God has prepared a person to help even in some small way, such as by giving food. Most of the experiences I have had with God so far were through raising funds on this program.



Independence

OLT is really a program to focus on yourself individually. The participant has to have discipline within themselves as well as the determination that they want to change. The OLT family will help of course, but you have to set it in motion. It is a great way to learn about who you really are and to build your faith and to ask questions.

Future after OLT

Now that I've done the program, what do I have in store for my future? Well, OLT has asked me to come back as staff member. I am going to help OLT continue to be a great program for young second-generation members as well as continue to build up my own faith.