

Lovin' Life Leadership Program's First Class Graduates

Naokimi Ushiroda and Heather Thalheimer
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The Lovin' Life Leadership Program graduated approximately 60 participants for its first Spring class.

The Lovin' Life Leadership Program graduated its first Spring class on Friday, June 8, 2012 at the Lovin' Life Learning Center at 4 West 43rd street. Approximately 60 participants completed the 10-week skills course in which they had the chance to learn about the vision and culture of Lovin' Life Ministries (LLM) and to work directly with LLM Headquarters staff to become proficient in an area of ministry. As the name suggests, the program provided ample opportunities for the participants to practice and develop their leadership skills through goal setting, public speaking, team-facilitation exercises, project management and developing a heart for others.

The Lovin' Life Leadership Program launched last summer with the purpose of providing an opportunity for members nationwide to experience LLM firsthand and get empowered to support their local ministries. An alternative to the year-long Generation Peace Academy (GPA) program, it was designed to allow young Unificationists to participate in the LLM activities together with members of GPA without delaying their careers and educational goals. The program offers internships called "practicums" in areas such as ministry, ballroom dancing, CARP (Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles), graphic design, public affairs and media.

Participants also are immersed in the programs hosted by the Lovin' Life Learning Center in NYC such as Junction, Ballroom Socials, Open Mic Night, and seminars by professionals from various fields. The new director of the Lovin' Life Leadership Program, Naokimi Ushiroda, who was recently appointed by Senior Pastor of LLM Rev. In Jin Moon, expressed satisfaction at the graduation: "One graduation down, many more to go. This is going to be the premier leadership program for the Unification movement."



From left to right: Rev. Joshua Cotter, Leaderhip-Program graduate Rebecca Mock, Heather Thalheimer and Naokimi Ushiroda.

The graduation ceremony started with a catered meal by Jatoma Gavin and the culinary staff at the Learning Center. Ushiroda opened with welcoming remarks outlining the vision behind the program. Next, three of the practicum teams presented on their accomplishments during the past 10 weeks in their respective areas of ministry: the Video Team shared a "mockumentary" of their practicum experience utilizing the various video editing skills they learned; the Admin Team, which worked with General Affairs Director of GPA Thanh Le, impressed the audience with the volume and variety of work they accomplished, including bookkeeping, budgeting for events, developing fundraising products and organizing transportation to workshops for hundreds of participants; and the Guest Care team presented on the number of programs and events they organized at the Learning Center such as the Liberation in North Korea (LiNK) event, TGIF concert, Open Mic Night and an event to raise awareness about human trafficking.

Misaki Ando, who chose to work with the Guest Case Practicum, testified that through events such as Junction, "I could see and feel the love and openness towards the guests that were invited. I feel that is part of Rev. In Jin Moon's vision – to have a loving, open heart to others so they can feel the love of God through us."



From left to right: Rev. Joshua Cotter, Leadership-Program graduate Takahiro Sakaguchi, Heather Thalheimer and Naokimi Ushiroda.

The presentations were followed by testimonies from some of the participants about their understanding of the vision of LLM through their experience in the Leadership Program. Josh Hunter from the Ballroom Practicum shared about the profound meaning behind ballroom dancing and how it deepened his understanding of relationships. Johanna Fleischman (see video) from the CARP Practicum talked about gaining conviction in the *Divine Principle* through preparing for an Atheism/Theism debate. Sachie Kawachi (see video) from the Public Affairs Practicum explained how she felt empowered by Rev. In Jin Moon and Ariana Moon to excel in her passions and share them proudly with the community as a way to inspire others to do their best.

“I came to understand how LLM is a gift-based ministry,” Kawachi said. “Rev. In Jin Moon really wants all of us to discover our God-given gifts and our passion, pursue it, and then plug it into the ministry and the church.”

Afterwards, three Leadership-Program graduates, Brian Tassej, Lara De Oliviera and Melissa Joyce, offered a musical selection to prepare for the keynote address by the Unification Church USA’s Executive Vice President Rev. Joshua Cotter, who conveyed the love and hope that Rev. In Jin Moon has for this graduating class. The ceremony concluded with a ceremony during which each of the graduates received certificates.



From left to right: Rev. Joshua Cotter, Leadership-Program graduate Rachel Boothby, Heather Thalheimer and Naokimi Ushiroda.

Hana Hendricks, a resident of New Jersey and graduate of the Leadership Program said, “I definitely feel that I’ve gained a lot of precious things from the two and a half months of being part of the Leadership Initiative. This program had a lot to offer, and because it was being offered to us and not just forced upon us, it put me in a position to take ownership over my life of faith for God and True Parents, which was a totally new experience for me. I’m really glad to have gained that ownership over my life.

“I was part of the Ballroom Practicum, led by father-daughter duo Jin Sung Park and Ariana Moon, which truly was a great blessing. Because ballroom dancing was the area of ministry that I chose, I had the opportunity to showcase a Rumba- and Foxtrot routine with other members of the Ballroom Practicum. What made that opportunity extremely memorable was being able to perform a brand new routine for my fellow graduates, friends and family, and letting them get a taste of how much effort and how much hard work the Ballroom Practicum has put into ballroom dancing. It made me feel satisfied and accomplished, and gives me the drive to continue ballroom ministry in my life.”

The Lovin’ Life Leadership Program is currently accepting applications for the summer session that will take place from July 1 to August 18 this year. The program has attracted attention from around the world and already has 11 international participants enrolled in the summer program. Apply today at www.familyfed.org/LLLP