

Naokimi Ushiroda's Leadership Program Honors Graduates of the Professional Practicum Lessons

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Hurricanes and leadership changes may have rocked the Unification Church recently, but the Manhattan-based Leadership Program for young Unificationists keeps on rockin', according to some who graduated from the program on Friday, November 16, 2012.

Altogether, 32 graduates of the Fall 2012 class of the Leadership Program gathered at the Learning Center at 4 West 43rd Street in New York City to stage what they called the "Fall Recital." The group of teenagers taking a year off before entering college demonstrated the skills acquired in the previous four weeks by showing off their skills in mixed martial arts, design, videography and ballroom dancing.

"What was new this Fall was the instruction in mixed martial arts," said Naokimi Ushiroda, the Leadership Program director. He explained: "We added this component partly because of the influence of our new president, who is himself a martial artist, and because our members need self-defense instruction before heading overseas to do service work."

Several students said they appreciated learning skills of time-management and goal setting. "I have been able to set goals in the past, but I had trouble achieving them," said 18-year-old Madison Brewer from Texas. "So, I set aside my time each day to monitor myself. In this environment I was forced to think, 'Why haven't I achieved my goal? What I realized is that I thrive in a structured environment. I realized that I need to create my own structure, monitor myself and give myself a grade every day.'"

Martial arts instructor Larry Benaloga, 43, congratulated his students for getting a good start at learning throws and take-down techniques in only four weeks of practice. "Our True Father has explained martial arts in a unique way. He said that martial arts are a way of loving your enemy. If you do it the right way, you won't have to fight him."

Andreas Hochmuth of Bowie, Maryland, one of Benaloga's students, told Unificationnews that "a lot of what I learned was about mind-body unity. It was just self-discipline. Also that being good at martial arts is not about hurting people, but you want to be a benefit to society. Hopefully, what I've learned I can bring back home."