

Second-Generation Unificationist Miwha Fumiko Geschwind Featured on Philanthropic Website

Yoshie Manaka

March 22, 2012



Miwha Fumiko Geschwind (19), a second-generation Unificationist and first-year student at Front Range Community College in Colorado, is planning a service project in Guatemala that was featured on the service website, *Dosomething.org*, on March 19, 2012.

Dosomething.org is a website dedicated to empowering young people under the age of 25 to effect social change. It was co-founded in 1993 by actor Andrew Shue of *Melrose Place* and is currently under the direction of Nancy Lublin, who founded *Dress for Success*. Teenagers gain membership to the website by organizing service projects and describing it on the site and are awarded with grants and other prizes. The web-based organization has more than 300,000 members, and it is estimated that the organization reaches more than 11 million young people annually, according to wikipedia.

On the website, Geschwind outlines the plans of her project:

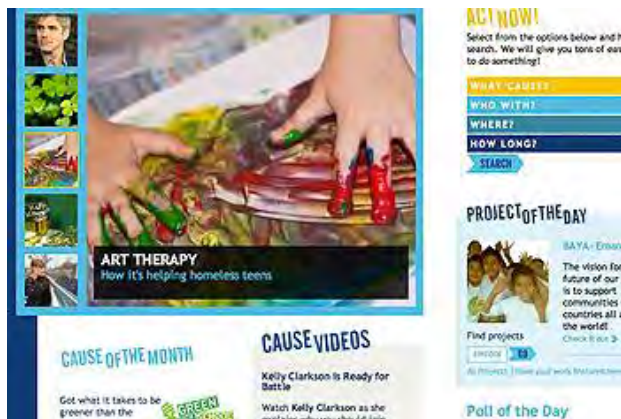
“The small community of Emanuel faces a difficult situation, especially after the civil war in Guatemala, which only ended in 1996. The smaller communities suffer especially. However, regardless of the circumstances, Emanuel’s community is destined to prosper. They grow coffee, among other fruits. Their biggest problem is that they can no longer use the coffee mill they once had. It enabled them to clean and roast their own coffee. They could no longer maintain such a huge structure with their income, and the mill fell into disrepair. The community is left with no choice but to work through middle men called “coyotes” who practically rob them of their coffee. They know they can take advantage of these people because they have nothing else. Emanuel needs funding to rebuild the mill, and then funding to generate electricity in their community. After that, they can begin the process of becoming a prosperous community. Until then, families suffer while their husbands and fathers are away.

“This summer I am bringing a team of Generation Peace Academy alumni to meet with the Mayor of Nuevo Progresso (the larger county encompassing Emanuel), as well as the head of Emanuel. I need exactly to understand their vision for the future of their community and what exactly they want to see accomplished. The focus is to get professional-quality footage of the people and the children. We also plan to interview people for powerful advertising. After quotas are figured out about the rebuilding of the mill, we will be able to come back to the states and create relationships with contractors and specific

groups.

“Even if the kind of money doesn’t come through as I’d like it to, and even if we don’t have a lot of volunteers, we’re still going to bring a boy to New York City (Where GPA is headquartered) for the week of Fourth of July. His name is Emanuel Sergio Domingo. He is a 16-year-old living with only his grandmother. Every day he would come to the mountains with us to tear down trees with our machetes and plant coffee. He would do this every day before school, even while the local kids in the middle schools teased him. He always supported us and seemed to be one of the most loving people any of us had ever met.

“I feel like this one project is just the beginning. But eventually, I want there to be a lot of projects like this. I want to focus on communities that have the potential to grow and prosper, like Emanuel, but where something is blocking them. I want to do that for different communities around the world.”



“My Life Expanded in Guatemala”

Geschwind went to Guatemala last year through the GPA program, and she says the experience was truly life-changing. “It was really funny because I really didn’t want to go to Guatemala,” she said. “So I begged Kimisei Miyake, who was my commander, to send me to Peru instead. I thought I wasn’t going to have a good experience in Guatemala.

“But the whole year on STF, I was struggling a lot with personal issues, and having a really hard time. I felt like I wasn’t deserving of God’s love. I thought, ‘I don’t work hard enough, and I’m not all these things,’ and I would list all the things that I wasn’t. I thought I’d go to Guatemala, and I wasn’t going to have a good time, but I kind of deserved it. It was a really strange mindset.

“In Guatemala, we didn’t really do amazing life-changing things, we just taught English in the schools, we helped cut down trees, we painted a mural at the school, and we had a dental hygiene seminar.

“We did all these little things. But the people in the community inspired me so much. That was the biggest thing for me. I realized that we have so much in America, and we’re so ungrateful. But in Guatemala, they didn’t even have heated water!

“I saw a lot of things that were not so great there. A lot of the men had to leave to look for other jobs, because they couldn’t support their families, so children grew up without fathers. But at the same time, they were the happiest people I’ve ever met in my life. They were such hard workers and they always cared about us so much. Even though we couldn’t speak Spanish, they would try so hard to communicate with us, and I felt so much love from them.

“I finally understood that because of these wonderful people and the amount of love I received there, even though I did not deserve it, that God is unconditional. I feel like I really understood God there. He gives experiences and loves me merely because I am His child. I realized that I was putting a limit on God’s love, thinking that he would only love me if I did this or that. I felt like I met a new God there. My whole life expanded. A big part of my heart was opened.”



Removing Limits

The summer after GPA, Geschwind went to Korea for 40 days. She continued to struggle with her ability to believe in herself, she tells the *UC Newsletter*. Before she left, her eldest biological brother, Kojin Tranberg (Ms. Geschwind is an offering child from the Tranberg family), told her, ““Miwha, remember to take risks.””

“I thought about it a lot,” Geschwind continued, “and as time passed, I realized that I wasn’t thinking less about Guatemala. I was thinking more and more about it everyday. It kind of became a part of me, and then I realized that I should stop fighting it. Obviously this experience meant something to me. I think I was trying to forget it because I didn’t really believe in myself to do more for them.

“Seijin Tranberg, who is also my brother, came up with this crazy idea to cycle across America to bring awareness to religious persecution in Japan. When he first started, I really didn’t think he could complete his goal. But 45 days later, he was in LA, and he was flying to China for more service work!

“After I saw that, and I thought about what Kojin told me, I realized that just like I put limits on God’s love, I was putting limits on my own dreams. I was stifling myself. I realized that if I feel like I should do something, I should really act upon it.

“Then the New Year came. Usually for my New Year’s resolutions, I’ll write a list of ten things that I want to do in the New Year, but never do anything. This year, the only New Year’s resolution I made was to start or create a nonprofit.

“I thought, ‘If I make all these goals every year and don’t get anywhere, I might as well pick just one goal and try my hardest at it.

“So since January, I never took my focus off that goal. I just thought, ‘I can do it, I can do it, and if I keep pushing myself and believing in myself, then this year I can accomplish something.’ I’d get discouraged, but then I would look at all of these inspirational quotes and re-convince myself of my ability. I feel like I gained a whole new confidence and perspective on myself, even though it came with a lot of work.

The Website

Dosomating.org is a service website that gives out grants, so Geschwind decided to create a profile there. “I’m going to Guatemala in the summer, around June 17th through July 2nd, but I needed to raise money and apply to grants,” she said. “So, I basically just filled out the application and created a page for my project. I didn’t know they had Projects of the Day, but they ended up selecting my project to be featured and putting it on the home page.”

It takes about two months for them to decide the winner of the grant. About five people get \$5,000 and one person receives \$10,000 towards their project. Just being featured on the website doesn’t mean Geschwind will get a grant, “but I’m keeping my fingers crossed!” she laughed.

Representing the Unification Faith

Geschwind knows that her confidence in helping the world stems from her Unificationist background. “Being a Unificationist allows me to have more confidence in myself. I really feel like our beliefs are extremely special, especially now that our Senior Pastor, Rev. In Jin Moon, always encourages excellence. I mean — I don’t feel like I’m an excellent person, but it’s not necessarily about wanting to pursue excellence in my achievements. I feel like there is a certain type of excellence that comes from just being myself, from being proud of my identity.

“Actually, while we were in Guatemala, this issue came up – not that we were hiding it, but the community realized exactly what organization we were a part of. Everybody there is Catholic. And the community leaders had this meeting to discuss whether or not they should allow us to continue coming back to this community. It was a really long, drawn out debate. But the verdict was that even though they didn’t agree with Rev. Moon’s teachings, they could appreciate us and how hardworking we were, how much we loved their community. It was apparent that Rev. Moon was leading good people, and they told us that we could continue coming back to their community as much as we’d like. It was a huge victory for us.

“In class, we’re studying cults, and in the notes, Rev. Moon is mentioned. I’m still trying to become prouder, to be able to say, ‘I am a part of the Unification Church.’ I realize that most people my age don’t know what they believe, and they say that they’re very tolerant. But if I mention that I’m religious, it’s another story. Maybe they won’t say anything to my face, but I feel a little bit of judgment.

“I realized that I should be really proud of who I am. If I always try to conform to what other people think and believe, then I will never be a strong person. I’ll just be like everybody else. Sometimes I get the feeling that everybody just acts like each other, and I don’t want to be like that.

“Even though people misunderstand Rev. Moon, if we can be really great people and help society, we can create a better name for him. I think that way a lot, I try to represent my movement by being nice and listening to people, and I know that’s very small. But people judge you and where you come from whether or not you’re aware of it, so I want to always represent well.

Our Senior Pastor and the Power of Women

“I’d like to thank In Jin Nim,” she said. “She’s a big reason why I believe in myself, and it’s so wonderful to have someone who truly cares about you, and who you become, and what you can do for the world. My mind was never that big, but thanks to her, it expanded, and I appreciate that a lot. She is a wonderful role-model.

“Being a strong and powerful woman has become so important to me. Not because I want to tell people what to do, or have authority. But for the longest time, I was afraid to express my opinions. I was afraid to believe in anything. Mostly I didn't believe in myself. But I realized that women have the biggest hearts. No offense to men, but if anyone can change the world through love, its women! We're strong, and our love can be endless. We're creative, and we nurture. We're a lot of things! It took me a while to realize it. But I am so proud to be a woman.”

Geschwind hopes to transfer to the University of Colorado at Boulder and double-major in marketing and international relations. In the long term, she wants to work for the UN, representing smaller third-world countries.