Creative acts of service mark second annual Global Youth Day

This month’s Global Youth Day was the second annual event that sent hundreds of thousands of Seventh-day Adventist youth and young adults out of church for service projects in neighborhoods and communities worldwide.

The March 15 event was also broadcast on the Internet live, highlighting projects from 20 sites. This year’s event had nearly three times the live online participation from last year, with more than 27,000 media publications on the event’s website and Facebook page.

Youth Ministries Director Gilbert Cangy said the event helps bring unity to Adventist youth around the globe and is a chance to express creativity in service.

“While our young people are scattered around the four corners of the world, they are bound by a unique and common calling to proclaim the everlasting gospel and prepare the world for the soon coming of Jesus,” Cangy said.

The event asks youth to skip hearing a sermon and instead go out to “Be the sermon.” Adventist Youth from Namibia to Norway visited elderly in nursing homes, sang songs of support to prisoners and offered health and nutrition information in city squares. Many offered prayers for passers-by, all adding up to millions of acts of service worldwide.

“I was amazed with the creativity and diversity of initiatives that youth around the world came up with,” Cangy said. “They were all outstanding.”
In the United Kingdom, an iconic red Routemaster double-decker bus was transformed and parked in London’s Oxford Street offering free health screenings and prayer.

In Mexico City, youth prepared hundreds of meals for patients and families at hospitals while others in a park invited passers-by to listen to health talks and receive health screenings. In Colombia, youth held prayer stations throughout city streets.

In the Netherlands, Adventist young people used a nationally known slogan “carrying the egg” as a way for people to share their stresses and write something on a real egg.

In Egypt, youth and medical professionals held a health expo in Cairo’s Ezbet el-Haggâna district.

In the Philippines, youth in Manila distributed supplies, prayed with passers-by and demonstrated other acts of compassion before meeting for a “Compassion Walk” from Luneta Park toward Harbour Square.

In Yaoundé, Cameroon, Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson offered a prayer to close GYD ceremonies in front of 7,000 people.

A team at the denomination’s Stimme der Hoffnung media center in Germany coordinated the worldwide live broadcast of the day’s activities. Local broadcast studios ranged from major church media centers and local churches to outdoor venues and a makeshift studio in a secondary school. The event was broadcast using the Internet instead of more costly satellite time.

Cangy said the event highlighted partnerships from many of the denomination’s ministries, including Youth Ministries, Communication, Adventist World Radio and Hope Channel.

Next year’s Global Youth Day is scheduled for March 21.

**Sexuality summit concluded with call for consistency, caring**

A Seventh-day Adventist Church vice president’s final wrap-up of the denomination’s sexuality summit last week was a call to see same-sex attracted church members as “brothers and sisters” also in need of God’s “saving grace”—while upholding the Adventist Church’s stance against sexual conduct outside of heterosexual marriage.

Ella Simmons used the summit’s “Final Word” address to urge a consistent view and implementation of the church’s beliefs about human sexuality.

“As long as we protect, cover-up, [and] yes, condone adultery, dishonesty, and other sins that were forbidden by God in the church and particularly in high places, we will not be able to reach members with our words of truth for the transformation of their lives—in any way,” Simmons told some 350 delegates at the Cape Town International Convention Centre on March 20.
For four days top church leaders and regional representatives discussed the church’s response to homosexual behavior in the face of a worldwide cultural shift that is increasingly supportive of gay and lesbian relationships. The “In God’s Image: Scripture. Sexuality. Society.” summit addressed the fact that LGBT issues are affecting church employment practices and operations of its educational and healthcare systems in a growing number of world regions.

Delegates also heard a presentation from a psychologist’s perspective the previous evening as Peter Swanson, an associate professor of Pastoral Care at Andrews University and a licensed psychologist, addressed the audience.

Swanson began by reading the Adventist Church’s statements on same-sex relationships, emphasizing the stance against intolerance, hate crimes and discrimination.

“I strongly support the call of my church to support and protect human rights,” Swanson said. “They [gays and lesbians] need your sympathy, patience, and love. Speak words of encouragement to them.”

Swanson also told delegates that reduction in same-sex attraction and same-sex behaviors due to change therapy was “rare,” and that some Christian gays and lesbians perceive they have been harmed by change therapy.

The final 24 hours of the four-day summit also featured a plenary presentation by Miroslav Kis, professor of ethics at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Kis challenged delegates to both think clearly about the Biblical teachings on human sexuality and to act compassionately toward those not aligned with those norms.

A reflective experience led by Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, the Adventist Church’s Education director, followed Kis’ address. She summarized the summit by asking a series of questions of the audience.

Beardsley-Hardy, an educational psychologist, said participants would better learn and remember the summit’s key points by summarizing them in their own words. She directed delegates to write 60-second essays on a number of topics covered throughout the summit, including the biblical perspective on alternative sexuality, legal issues related to employment and communication, and membership requirements.

Help Oakwood win again

An historically Black Seventh-day Adventist university is again in the running to win a grant from the world’s largest home improvement retailer in an online voting contest, which the university won last year.

Oakwood University, based in Huntsville, Alabama, United States, is currently teetering between first and second place in the voting tally in the Home Depot Retool Your School Campus
Improvement Grant Program. The winners must have both the highest amount of votes and social media activity.

Supporters can vote for their school of choice once per day until the campaign ends on April 14. The campaign’s hashtag is #OakwoodTHDRYS.

University officials chalked up last year’s win of a $50,000 grant to the worldwide support of the Seventh-day Adventist community, something they hope will help them repeat with a win this year of a $25,000 Campus Pride grant—the same school can’t win the top prize two years in a row, a university spokesperson said.

The university used last year’s grant to build a picnic pavilion on campus. This year they’re hoping to install park benches and trees on a section of campus near the library.

"We need everyone's support to help Oakwood win this grant," said Kisha Norris, executive director for advancement and development for Oakwood.

Oakwood is one of 104 Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the United States that have primarily served African-Americans.

Supporters can vote at the website www.retool yourschool.com/vote-now.