

How the idea came...

Try to imagine a wild tiger in a cage, the restless efforts the animal is perpetually making to escape. This is how we felt since we came back from Japan last year. How could we contribute to our aim in Ren program? We were trying to do something beyond the borders of our countries, something that would have a bigger impact to both the Greek and the Egyptian society. The idea came to us when Radwa visited Athens for the Olympic Games last summer. The Olympic Games is an example of international understanding. Therefore, an idea was born, why not present international understanding through the Olympic Games perspective? Students would find it interesting, and we have enough experience to share. This was how the project started...

After the Games, Vasilis started collecting the necessary material from the Olympics. Perihan, who is an art teacher in Hayat International Academy in Cairo, informed the administration of the school about our plans and they agreed in arranging a day for the presentation. Katerina Lygoni (swy-14), who was a staff member of the Athens 2004 organizing committee, was informed about our plans and we started organizing a presentation for "**International Understanding, Volunteerism and the Athens 2004 Olympic Games**".

Vasilis visited the Greek-German School in Athens and after talking about Egypt, asked the students to write letters to the students in Cairo. Radwa, Perihan and Ahmed Amin started organizing the plan for the visit of the Greek members. Katerina gathered 4 more volunteers of the Games and everything was ready for the project to start...

On the way to Cairo...

Six Greek volunteers of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games volunteers gathered in Athens international airport on Jan 20th. They had their uniforms, other stuff from the Games in their luggage, and big thoughts in their mind. Vasilis was holding the first global torch relay. Their destination... Cairo.

Many Egyptian ex-py's were meeting in Cairo on the same day, trying to arrange the best program for the Greek friends and at the same time collecting the necessary equipment for the presentation.

Friday Jan 21st, was a lovely day. We met for the third time within one year which made us think that, the world is not as big as it seems to be after all. The next four following days, we spent the whole time together. SWY-family members were having a great time in Cairo, Alexandria and Al-Fayoum oasis.

The presentation...

On Tuesday Jan 25th, we had an early meeting; the six Greeks together with Perihan, Radwa and Jasmeen (Peri's cousin who had offered a tremendous help in time management). We were discussing the last minute arrangements and made a revision of the presentation.

The agenda was:

- The importance of education.
- International Understanding towards global peace.
- Olympic Games as a factor of international understanding.
- The Athens2004 Olympic Games and its contribution to Olympism.
- Volunteerism and its contribution to the individual and the society as a whole.

In a hall full of 150 students aged from 7 – 10 years old, we started the presentation by introducing ourselves to the students. The Greeks introduced themselves in Arabic, while the Egyptians introduced themselves in Greek. The Greek members presented their present to the school administration. An olive tree from Greece, the symbol of peace and friendship, together with a number of Olympic products for the students.

We started by the game that Simione from Fiji, had presented to the Ren education group, as the best way to show the importance of education. We had prepared 150 cards of different colors (60 yellow, 40 orange, 40 green and 10 red) which were distributed to the students. All students were asked to go to the end of the room and to move forward, depending on our start and stop signs. Each time the students were stopped, they were asked to sit, depending on the color of the card they were holding. In the end, only the students holding the red cards were the first. We explained that if this classroom was the world and the students were its population, the number of people getting proper education would be the students holding the red cards. We explained how lucky those students were, having the opportunity to attend a good school and how many others fail to get educated due to different reasons.

The students were then asked to give us examples of International Understanding. Factors such as communication, collaboration, acceptance, respect etc.. were explained. Afterwards, the students learned how to greet people in different languages. Different greeting gestures were performed by the students. The presentation we had created in Ren, was presented explaining different projects concerning education in different countries (like Australia's school of the air).

The pupils were asked about their knowledge concerning the Olympic Games. They stated the characteristics of Olympics such as friendship, peace and noble competition. Some features of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games were presented (the Cultural Olympiad, the Olympic Truce and the first ever global torch relay). The torch came into the classroom presenting a small torch relay in which the students took part.

Moreover, every one of the volunteers explained why he/she became a volunteer and our contribution to develop ourselves and our society. The importance of volunteerism in all aspects of life, was elaborated by many examples, as well as its advantages to the volunteers.

A pen-pal project was started between the Greek and the Egyptian pupils. The letters written by the Greek students were handed to Perihan, to distribute them to the Egyptian students, according to age, and English fluency. Finally, we shared our SWY experience with the young children; the way we met on board Nippon Maru, the memories we shared and the knowledge we gained.

In the end, all students were divided into groups to take photos with us and the torch. After a nice tour visiting the school facilities, we gathered in the sports field to plant the olive tree.

By the end of the presentation, we were offered certificates for our active role in promoting for International Understanding among youths. Furthermore, the school manager showed a great interest in organizing an exchange program for the students of the two schools. If this new exchange project happens, it would be the result of our active collaboration as SWY alumni together with the IYEO.

Evaluation...

To sum it all up, the students were very interested in the presentation. Their enthusiasm and active participation were impressive. We believe those children, would grow up with an amazing experience, learning about International Understanding between nations, and how it could contribute to Global Peace.

For us, it was another unique experience to share what we had learned during SWY and REN program, with the future of our world. Many thanks to each and every person who made this work come true, especially to the Japanese Government, which had assembled us from the beginning.

Participants on the project:

Radwa Saad (swy10-ren03 education)

Vasilis Tikos (swy6-ren03 education)

Perihan Adel (swy14-ren03 development)

Katerina Lygoni (swy14)

Athens 2004 volunteers:

Evgenia Grigoriou

Vivi Zissi

Christina Varlami

Viki Skandali

Special thanks:

The Hayat International Academy of Cairo

The Greek-German School of Athens