

Korean Daily Focus – Approximate English Translation

Title: "Age is just a number when changing the world..."

Teen Environmental Group "Tree Musketeers" President Adam Gerard

"I don't need to wait for adulthood to display global leadership." On the 9th, KOROOS Global Education Conference and Student Leadership Institute were held at Chadwick international. While 1200 Korean-resident foreigners were watching, Tree Musketeers' Adam Gerard took the attention with his speech. Currently studying at Mira Costa High School in the US in the 11th grade, Gerard had started working at Tree Musketeers at the age of 9, and became the youngest president at the age of 13. Gerard stated that "if I can look at problems around me and participate in solving them, age should not matter. From Kindergarten to High School, anyone could show leadership in changing the world." Tree Musketeers are currently holding a campaign called "3 million teens, 3 million trees" and have planted 900,000 trees already. We met with Gerard and asked him about how teens show global leadership.

-How you started to participate in Tree Musketeers..

>At 9 years old, on a trip to Washington DC, I visited Tree Musketeers. There I was influenced by the idea that teens could bring change to the world. Tree Musketeers was one of the few places where teenagers could lead change. A surprising fact was that a girl at only 13 years old was leading the entire organization. She had a strong conviction for youth leadership, and I wanted to be like that. So I was only 9 but I said I wanted to partake in Tree Musketeers.

-How were the reactions?

>The members told me to confirm the volunteer calendar before participating in the actual labor. I said "no, I want to aid in leading Tree Musketeers." All of the members hesitated, but after many requests and a period of leadership training, I became a manager at the age of 9. The leadership training and public speaking lessons helped a lot. And later, at the age of 13, I became the president.

-Do you have any philosophy on youth leadership?

>Adults often say that the youth are the future. I wanted to go further than that. The youth are the future who live in the present and change should start now.

-What kind of organization is Tree Musketeers?

>Tree Musketeers was founded in 1987 by girl scout students. At the time, the students started a tree-planting movement in their town which grew exponentially to the point of receiving awards from several US presidents. The group was even invited to the White House by past-president Bill Clinton to receive an award. Currently, we have a campaign for planting 3 million trees.

-Could you not have started working for the environment as an adult?

>There is a general stereotype that only adults can bring change, but everyone of this age is responsible for destroying the planet. The youth will now rise up to protect the environment.

-Can you introduce how teenagers could bring change to society?

>Youth should be actively involved in areas that interest them the most. If they look around, they could find an area that fits them in the direction of changing society. Regardless of age, regardless of how young you may be, there is a way to solve problems and bring change to the masses.

-Specifically explain how to make a group like the Tree Musketeers.

>Just by gathering a few friends with the same interests starts it. Producing ideas that can help coexistence is important. Like so, when enough friends and members are gathered, dedication for the organization develops. In the process of making an organization, you can witness leadership, passion, and devotion. I wish people knew that they don't need to wait for someone else to come to them. I hope that the Korean youth could make their own organizations to change the world together. During the process also comes leadership and teamwork.

-Do you have a message you want to send to the ambitious Korean youth who want to be global leaders?

>You can create change no matter what age you are at. There are many areas that you can pour your passion into. I myself am working with kinds from kindergarten to the 12th grade. Our youth should not wait until college graduation for an opportunity to come. We must take the initiative in order to become leaders and change the world.