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Finding My Voice

BY ASHLEY NEU

As I walked through the doors of the Adventist world headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, I was greeted by a swarm of men and women dressed in business clothing. I had no idea what to expect as I made my way into a giant room equipped with lots of cameras and a well-set-up stage. This was the annual Year-end Meeting where the official business of the church is conducted and, as I am Andrews University's Student Association president, I was an invited participant.

My nervousness turned to curiosity as soon as Dan Jackson, president of the North American Division (NAD), took the stage. As the meetings commenced, he invited anyone under the age of 30 to come and stand by the stage. There were 14 of us. As I stood looking out into the audience, I was sad — sad that out of 300, only 14 of us were young adults. I stood there wondering if our presence even mattered at these meetings. Would the church even care what we had to say? Jackson said something soon after which made me realize just how much influence the young adults had. He said, "All are wanted; all are needed." It suddenly hit me like a ton of bricks. Young adults *do* have a place in the church. Our voices mean something and we shouldn't wait until we are told to speak up — we need to speak up now.

The following day, all the Student Association presidents were invited to have lunch with Jackson. This was a chance for us to express our concerns and ask questions regarding young adults' place in the church. As we sat there discussing the mission of the church and our involvement, it was clear to see the passion Elder Jackson had for young people. For every

question we asked, he had a biblical response, and he ended by saying that it was up to us as young adults to speak up for our generation. He encouraged us to raise our voice on issues involving the church — issues such as finance, education and women's ordination. Inviting the 14 of us to these meetings is just a small part of young adult ministry in the church. As Jackson expressed, it's up to us to carry on the mission of the church.

As I reflect back on my trip, I'm encouraged to see young adults get involved. This experience gave me new insights into the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its mission. As our church and its mission continue to grow, I hope young adults will see their value in the church and stay involved. I hope that our generation will see just how important it is for our voice to be heard, and how important it is for us to continue carrying out the mission of the church.



Ashley Neu is a senior public relations major at Andrews University and she received a \$100 scholarship for this article.

If you are a young adult interested in submitting an article for consideration, please email: herald@lakeunion.org.