

**PERSPECTIVE: The Buddhist Perspective Yields Hope and Confidence**  
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When we view our lives with the eyes of a common mortal, our problems may seem overwhelming and our lives very confusing. But when we look at the same lives with a Buddhist perspective, an entirely different picture emerges. A picture full of hope, confidence and wisdom.

It was and still is that Buddhist perspective that has seen me through many difficulties.

In May 1993, my husband and I opened a restaurant in St. Louis, full of hope and determination for a successful business. For two years, on a daily basis, we struggled to make our dream a reality. We chanted so much daimoku, we received guidance, we supported each other and others in practice and yet nothing seemed to work.

Every day, the business was worse and our partners more intolerable. And yet every day, we awakened with renewed hope and determination to make this business a success. We constantly questioned ourselves: What else can we do? What do we need to change in our lives to turn this around? Absolutely nothing worked, or so it seemed.

SGI President Ikeda tells us that in Buddhism no effort is wasted. I knew that even though the answers were not apparent in our lives at that time, the seeds of the solution were planted and would manifest when the time was right. This Buddhist perspective gave us continued hope, patience and the wisdom to know that our lives were unfolding as they should.

In May 1995, two years later, we sold the business, breaking even financially. When that door closed, another opened — the opportunity to open a restaurant in Cincinnati. We sold our home, uprooted our family, gave up excellent jobs in St. Louis and relocated to Cincinnati in October 1995. We didn't have loan approval for the business, but we had a lot of determination and confidence. During my 15 years of practice, these words have never failed me: "You make the decision first, and then make it right with daimoku."

To make a long story short, we again faced many obstacles, but our restaurant, Nicola's, finally opened on April 15, 1996. Every prayer we had for the first restaurant has been answered in the second. The business is steadily growing and we are receiving wonderful feedback from customers every day. A couple months ago, we received an award from *Cincinnati Magazine* for making the "Best in Cincinnati" list.

And then, a few months ago, something happened that made me see the real benefit, the real reason we came to Cincinnati. It was something that made me understand that, just as the problems of the first business were temporary, the success of our second is, too.

We originally found out about this business opportunity through my niece. She relocated from Toledo, Ohio, to work with us at the restaurant as our pastry chef (she makes to-die-for desserts). I have always loved my niece, but we really didn't know each other well. Over the past months, we have developed a deeper relationship and friendship. My niece and I have had many philosophical discussions.

A couple months ago, she hit a very low point in her life. We spent hours talking about Buddhism. Erin went home with a stack of *Seikyo Times*, and less than a week later she had read them all and wanted more. She started chanting every day and feeling a positive change in her life. It has been so wonderful to see her life open to Buddhism and experience the benefits it provides.

And this is what I realized, more clearly than ever before: My happiness is not based on the success or failure of a business, but rather on the Buddha nature within me. And the true benefit I've experienced is seeing someone I love open up to the Buddha nature inherent in her life — that will never leave.

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