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Brass Band Efforts Lead to Music Scholarship and New CD

Over the course of my Buddhist practice, I have received so many benefits. But I think my greatest benefits have been connected in some way to music, and I want to share some of them with you.

I am 23 years old and have been a member all my life. Only after I joined the Hawaii King Brass Band when I was 12 did I learn anything about music and playing the trumpet. My mother would take me to practice even though I couldn't stand going. After several weeks, I actually began enjoying practice and attending regularly.

Besides being with good friends, I also loved playing for the members and seeing our music enliven everyone at meetings. Although it was sometimes difficult making it to practices, these activities became a great joy to participate in.

Because of the Brass Band, I gained a good head start for when I took music in the seventh grade and throughout my high school years. The Brass Band has given me so much great training, and I will always appreciate that. The many conventions and culture festivals we participated in will remain golden memories for me.

After high school, I received one of the greatest benefits from my trumpet playing. The University of Hawaii offered me a full music scholarship. I was so happy that all my hard work and practice had paid off. I will be graduating this semester and continuing to play music.

While at school, I received another great benefit. I began playing with a band called Red Session, a ska band [Jamaican-style dance music]. It was extremely difficult with school, a part-time job and SGI activities to fit in practice time with the band and playing gigs on the weekends. Sometimes I would not get any sleep for two days. As a result, I would get really exhausted and stressed out. I would get really frustrated and down on myself because I could not spend time with friends or meeting people. I just kept chanting and after awhile I really started enjoying the struggles and obstacles and started overcoming them. Now when I see the benefits, I am so glad I didn't give up, especially in playing with the band.

Last summer, our band finished recording our first CD and the response has been really good. From this, we have been on three mainland tours so far. These were great experiences for me, getting to see so many new places and meeting new people.

But what I love most is when I see people enjoying themselves, the music and the dancing. People gathering to share their music communicates so much beyond words. It can instill happiness in people without a word. As SGI President Ikeda wrote in his "Precepts for Brass Band":

"Music is the flower of culture, a language common to the entire world. It is a thing of beauty sought by all people."

I am so grateful to the SGI and President Ikeda for the valuable guidance he has shared. I hope that someday I can make a great contribution toward culture and peace through music.

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