

**Festival Brings Out Volunteers' Best**  
**By PATTY JACOBS**  
**Las Vegas, April 13**

More than 1,200 people clapped, stomped, hooted, hollered, ate exotic food and enjoyed the 1st Las Vegas Spring Family Festival. The carefully planned event was held in peaceful Lorenzi Park, in the heart of the city. Las Vegans took to heart the spirit to make friends of the SGI by going out into the community.

The members decided to put on this Spring Family Festival, but no one knew exactly how to do it. Nevertheless, the commitment was made and the whole Las Vegas SGI-USA community put its prayer, talent, energy and desire into making it a success.

Visitors, including two busloads of SGI members from Los Angeles, and Las Vegas SGI members were greeted by a large banner surrounded by balloons.

Mayor Pro Tem Arnie Adamsen said he really appreciated the festival's warm family atmosphere. "Our community needs more events of this type," he said. "I wish you well."

City of Las Vegas Councilman Matthew Callister and his wife and daughter also attended the festival. He was amazed at the diversity of the organization and said: "What a bright spirit. I am pleasantly surprised by the way people are conducting themselves."

What the councilman didn't know is that more than 300 people in Las Vegas Territory were involved in making the event a success. Most of them worked behind the scenes, like Jeddie Kemuku.

Being involved in the behind-the-scenes activities has created a stronger SGI community, Ms. Kemuku said. "I was asked to get involved in Byakuren, and I didn't know anything about it," she said. "But now that I have been a part of this festival, I see where this is very important. We need to do this annually so that people can come together, stay involved in the organization and help kids stay off the streets and out of trouble. I'm glad I did this."

Ms. Kemuku is a transplanted Hawaiian and was born into the practice, but she said she didn't really have an appreciation for the internal workings of the SGI until she became involved in the young women's division. "My mom was always chanting, and I got bored with that," she said. "But once I started going to YWD activities, I started chanting more and I wasn't bored and getting into trouble. I think there are a lot of kids in Las Vegas who could be involved in an activity like this family festival. It would keep them involved in something positive and help them stay out of trouble."

Byakuren and Soka Group members stood at strategic places around the perimeter of the festival to direct traffic and answer questions. Visitors strolled by tables with SGI literature, T-shirts commemorating the festival for sale, a 12-foot scroll being signed by all present to be sent to SGI President Ikeda, a TV tent for viewing a videotape of the SGI president's travels and the Tina Turner-Larry King interview, and booths for games and food.

The Las Vegas members even organized their own security force, thus relieving the City of Las Vegas Marshals and park security company of much of their duties. Las Vegas Marshal David Payne said: "This group took care of everything. Everyone had a good time, and there were no disturbances. This group has such wonderful cooperation. I have never seen so much harmony in one place before. I want to find out more about how they make it happen."

And what about cleanup? Few people like that detail, but SGI member Bert Esquivel did. "I signed up to help with cleanup and the next thing I know they tell me I'm in charge," she said. "It was a big responsibility for me. I never did anything like that, but I had a very strong determination to not get tired and keep going. One of the members of the

crew is 76 and has trouble walking, but she just kept cleaning up and never stopped the whole time. She inspired me to keep working.

“We started at 8:00 a.m. and, even though the festival finished about 4:00 p.m., we stayed until 5:30, cleaning up the kitchen and making sure everything was spotless,” she said. “One of the park employees told me that the park kitchen had never been this clean before. It felt good to be a part of something important like the festival.”

The games, only 25 cents each for children, were made and staffed by SGI-USA members. One game that always had a crowd of children around it was the Wheel of Fortune, a table-top model of the wall-mounted casino game. But this is Las Vegas, so it isn't unusual to see a game of chance as the favorite. Las Vegas SGI member Charles Bell bought the materials and built the Wheel of Fortune. “I wanted to do something special for the children,” he said. “I'm glad it was so popular.”

The center of attraction for the whole festival was the entertainment, which looked like the United Nations. “Diversity” is Las Vegas Territory's middle name, and it showed in the line-up of entertainers. The Boys and Girls Group, junior high and high school divisions and youth divisions each had hip-hop and tap dancers. Guest Judy Hendrickson said: “I can't believe the talent I'm seeing here today. It's hard to believe that all these people are in your organization. I'm impressed!”

A special treat was Las Vegas city employee and SGI friend Rupert Henry's solo on steel drums. He mentors several Las Vegas youths on the steel drums, and he graciously agreed to perform when he found out so many young people would be attending the festival.

The choruses sang, the bands and orchestras played and the dancers danced — every act was enthusiastically received. (A large color photo of the Las Vegas Dancers was featured on the front page of the *Las Vegas Sun* the next day.)

But the real story, perhaps, is the effect the festival has had and will continue to have on those who worked to make it a success. As James Herrmann of Los Angeles put it: “One of the things that is wonderful about this event is to see all four divisions working so harmoniously. The support the women's division and men's division members have given to the youth is wonderful.

“And I see youths who are changing their lives and involved in their human revolution through this festival,” he said. “Several of them told me that they are using the festival and their involvement in making it successful to change things in their lives. This is their human revolution.”

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