

EDITORIAL: Developing Our Community 'Gardens'

From our standpoint as SGI members," writes SGI President Ikeda, "the community in which we live, our area of specialty, our occupation and our families all are our 'garden' of kosen-rufu. We must cultivate and develop this garden."

Throughout the SGI-USA, from Miami to Maui, members are grappling with the important issue of how to create an organizational structure which best accomplishes the cultivation of the garden in their respective areas by the end of this year. Creating an organization rooted in the community — a neighborhood-based, streamlined organization — is one of the six challenges for the SGI-USA's future outlined by General Director Zaitzu (see the Dec. 27, 1996, *World Tribune*).

What's it like after reorganization? One headquarters chief reporting on the immediate upsurge of enthusiasm and participation after the new community-based headquarters was inaugurated describes the "exciting, joyful, jubilant and tear-stained eyes" of members.

One territory reorganized and streamlined this past January. Prior to that they had eight chapters and three headquarters — 11 teams of leaders — to serve 16 districts. They had many problems including unfilled positions, weakened districts, poor communication, an overburdened women's division (since it was the only division with enough capable individuals to fill all the leadership positions) and especially a youth division stretched to the breaking point.

They combined into four units with four districts each, and now need only four teams of leaders (16 divisional chiefs instead of 44). They report that communication has improved significantly, leaders have more time to home visit and encourage members directly and in general they are really enjoying the change.

But reorganization is difficult to implement. The benefits for the members are great and the improvement of the organization is important for the future of our kosen-rufu movement. But the impact on individual members and leaders can be disorienting and possibly discouraging at first. Therefore, regardless of the plan for your area, there are a few important things to keep in mind.

First, each person's active involvement in the creation of the plan is important. Express your opinions and ideas. Know what is being considered. The best plan for each area will emerge from the collective wisdom of those who know the conditions best. Of course, no plan will satisfy everyone in all particulars. Therefore, once a good, workable plan is adopted it is important to fully support it.

Second, every member is precious. In the midst of change, those who may not be assertive, may not attend activities regularly or who are inactive may fall through the cracks and be lost. Good, accurate membership lists are indispensable. Also, each leader should keep in good contact with each member until they are confirmed and personally connected in their new organization.

Finally, many leaders will find themselves with new members, new organizations and new responsibilities. Some positions and organizational units may be eliminated. This is a natural result of our intention to downsize the organization and put more resources at the forefront. Great care should be taken in finding the best place for each person, consistent with his or her ability, availability and willingness. Although a painstaking process, the goal should be that every leader feels happy and excited about his or her new responsibilities.

In other words, the reorganization plan can only be as good and effective as our careful

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consideration of human relationships is during the process. After all, while structure is important, it is only important or meaningful when focused on the people — all of the people — it intends to serve.

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