

Long Island Band Gaining Momentum
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The Long Island Youth Band had its first rehearsal in December 1996. With enthusiastic support from parents, friends and members, we have conducted monthly rehearsals at a member's home.

Before the formation of the Long Island Youth Band, only a few junior high and high school people from the area participated in any SGI activities, and the participation was sporadic. Members became excited at the thought of having an activity for youth centered on Long Island. This would make it possible for families to contribute their full support! As a result, there are now 20 junior high and high school students participating in the Long Island band.

The highlight for the group so far was a performance at the New York Culture Center for a March world peace gongyo. As the group's central figure, I determined that each member of the group would deepen his or her understanding of the Gohonzon and develop the band with SGI President Ikeda's spirit. Before the performance date, the band had played only twice, so the band members and support team arrived early to the culture center and rehearsed with only a short break before the performance.

The hard work paid off as our first performance sounded like we had been playing together for years! It was remarkable.

Besides rehearsing music, the Long Island Youth Band has been chanting, learning gongyo, reading President Ikeda's guidance, playing basketball and eating together.

When asked what they liked best about the activity some of the members responded:

Shiina Yamada, 14: "The reason I enjoy the Youth Band is because I love the art of music. It gives me faith, the faith that young Buddhists like myself can accomplish something we enjoy together. It's also a lot of fun, which is important."

Jatin Sokhi, 11: "The band helps me learn to cooperate with other people."

Roshan Sokhi, 14: "It helps me meet other people and learn how bands operate."

In a conversation with Brazilian composer and pianist Amaral Vieira, SGI President Ikeda stressed that to secure happiness for all human beings, culture should take precedence over science, politics and economics. Music, which directly reaches the depths of human life, can be said to be the supreme art that enables human kind to become truly happy.

Keeping this spirit close to heart, we are determined to continue having musical activities on Long Island.

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