

NEWSBRIEFS

Diversity Workshop in S.F. Focuses on Inner Change

The first San Francisco diversity workshop, sponsored by the Culture Department, was held June 20 at the San Francisco Culture Center. To open the meeting, a video of Kathleen Dockett's lecture on diversity given at the Florida Nature and Culture Center was shown, explaining such concepts as the Buddha nature that exists in each human being, the eternity of our lives and global citizenship. The key to positive change, she stressed, is human revolution, which enables each person to break through his or her limitations. Next, participants broke up into smaller discussion groups to share their experiences, both positive and negative, about growing up and learning about their ethnic background as well as about interacting with other ethnic groups.

— RON BAIRD, Bureau Chief

Florida Group, District Leaders Network at FNCC

Group and district leaders from throughout Florida Region gathered at the Florida Nature and Culture Center June 13 to learn more about what it means to spread a message of hope around the world. The day opened with a lecture by Shinji Ishibashi, of the Men's Division Secretariat. "We need to feel good about ourselves — we need pride in something. But what we need to develop is our inner value — our understanding, our compassion, our fairness, our patience," he said. "If we're not developing, we feel empty inside."

The conference continued with presentations by David Rubin and Miriam Lawson. Mr. Rubin stressed that the skills we develop as leaders in the SGI are sought after in the world at large. Ms. Lawson said that her years in the public forum have convinced her that conflict in society results from inculturated beliefs that people hold, often unconsciously. Dialogue, role-playing and further encouragement rounded out the conference.

— TERRY ELLIS, Bureau Chief

SGI President, Russian Ambassador to Japan Discuss New Era in Relations

On June 10, SGI President Ikeda met for the first time with Russian Ambassador to Japan Alexandre Panov. Discussing the prospects for a new era in Russia-Japan relations, the SGI leader and the Russian envoy shared their hopes at the Seikyo Shimbun Building for the conclusion of a peace and friendship treaty between the two countries.

The SGI leader expressed appreciation to the ambassador for his recent gift of a Japanese translation of Russian children's stories written by Tolstoy. He noted that there is a clear moral to each story. In "The Old Man and the Apple Tree," someone asks an old man why he has planted an apple tree, when in all likelihood he will never live to taste its fruit. The old man replies that he knows he will never partake of its fruit, but that others will — and they will feel appreciation for his effort. President Ikeda commented that the idea of putting aside personal, short-term gain and seeking benefit for future generations is a lesson all leaders should learn.

Ambassador Panov concurred that Tolstoy was a great philosopher and, as a result, even his short works are pervaded with philosophy.

— Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER