

A Dream Come True
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A firm foothold for the advancement of kosen-rufu in New Jersey became reality on Sept. 9 with the official opening of the first SGI-USA community center in the state. At the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a message by State Sen. Frank R. Lautenberg praised the members for making a valuable contribution to the diversity of New Jersey and expressed his desire to work towards protecting the rights and dignity of humankind.

Renovations on the historic, two-story brick building located in the city of East Orange in central Jersey include the construction of a main Gohonzon room that seats 200, a bookstore and several activity rooms to be shared by all members. For the nearly 1,600 members living in the state, it is the realization of a dream that they had kept in their hearts for many years.

Since the founding of the first district in New Jersey by SGI President Ikeda 38 years ago, people traveled to the community center in New York (in the early days Philadelphia) for most activities. Although the drive is not too long (many members could reach their destination in an hour or so barring traffic), the congested roads were always an obstacle, and tolls and parking were costly.

Marie Monteguedo, who joined the SGI-USA in 1971, reflected on the early days of her practice: "I feel like I'm living a dream. During gongyo, feelings of deep appreciation kept welling up inside me."

Throughout the week, five additional opening celebrations were held to accommodate the entire membership.

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