

**CLEVELAND NORTH DISTRICT PARENTS MEET
BY KAREN HANNAN-DEWALT AND M. LA VORA PERRY
CLEVELAND CORRESPONDENTS**

Cleveland North District parents met April 17 at the beautiful East Cleveland home of Mike and Tecka Spencer for the district's first Parents Meeting. While children engaged in slow gongyo and other activities upstairs, supervised by Young Women's Division District Leader Shuna Ash and her crew, parents of all ages gathered downstairs to encourage one another in faith and parenthood.

Long-time members Art and Mishizu Haavisto shared an experience (see p. 3) highlighting the importance of setting a good example, including children in our daily activities, encouraging children to try new things, and sharing with children our accomplishments and benefits resulting from our efforts in faith. Relaying guidance from SGI President Ikeda, the Haavistos stressed that the efforts we make in raising our families are great contributions to kosen-rufu, and the efforts we make for kosen-rufu result in great benefit for our families — these efforts are inseparable.

Discussion about how to continue to develop a sincere mind of faith was then stimulated by referencing Nichiren Dai-shonin's "Letter to Oto Gozen" in the March issue of *Living Buddhism* and the commentary that supports it regarding the importance of sincerity. LaVora Perry offered that understanding our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth in all of our many capacities (parent, daughter/son, partner, employee, etc.) helps us to stay focused on the big picture and not to be petty.

As people shared insights about their own upbringing, some concluded that because children are so deeply influence by their parents, when we continue to develop ourselves through faith, practice and study, we are encouraging a seeking spirit toward faith in our children as well.

While balancing his animated toddler daughter, Alyssa, as best he could, Northern Ohio Area Men's Division Leader Mark Jenkins concluded the meeting by sharing a question he had asked himself when reading about Oto Gozen: "What would make a single mother risk life and limb with baby in tow to see how her teacher was doing?" Mark concluded that sincere faith is the invisible, but very real and deep belief in something or someone. In Oto Gozen's case, it was her faith in the Daishonin that fueled her seeking spirit. In Mark's case, he said he wanted to have that same type of feeling toward the Gohonzon and his Buddhist practice. He reminded those present that despite the fact that Oto Gozen was a single parent of a young child, she had the pure, seeking spirit to weather harsh conditions to support the Daishonin. She was a pioneer of sincerity, for which the Dai-shonin had profound appreciation, and she was a great example for us all.

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