

**NEW MEMBERS SHARE THEIR JOURNEYS IN FAITH
BEING IN CHARGE OF MY OWN LIFE
EXPERIENCE — PAMELA DOWELL, RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CALIF.**

I have been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism now for seven months, and I must say I have seen a lot of really good benefits. My husband, Edward, was diagnosed with Hepatitis C and in January, the doctor prescribed some medicine for him that can have very bad side effects. We found out our insurance would not cover this drug. The cost of it is \$1500 a month. We don't have that much extra money, and the doctor can't guarantee that it will even work. With everything that was happening at this time, I became so angry. I didn't care about anything outside of my own environment. The anger I had made me determined to chant more and change this in our lives.

When my husband first was told he had this, I knew I could help him get better, but I felt that this was his disease. From talking to a very dedicated SGI member, I realized that this was also my disease because it affects not only my environment but also our kids. So the first month I was having these emotional outbursts, I could be anywhere and just cry. In talking to another member one night, she said you have to chant for the right medicine for him. After I talked to her that night, I never had another outburst. I realized I had to change my karma and not become a young widow. By chanting I took control of the situation.

After Edward's February exam, some of the enzyme counts were better; one was actually normal. So we resubmitted a claim to our insurance company and told them why it is medically necessary for him to have this medicine. On March 12, we got word that the insurance approved the medication. But the fight wasn't over yet, we had to find a pharmacy who would bill the insurance so we wouldn't have any out-of-pocket expenses.

I called every big pharmacy there was. All I kept getting was no. We had come this far I wasn't going to give up. I got the phone book out, and the first one I called, the man said I would be more than happy to help you as long as they will pay me. So he called later to say it was fine.

There are so many really wonderful members in the SGI but I have a special group of four: Jack and Trisha DiPietro, Christina Friedman and Simon Holding. These people have helped me so much, more than they will ever know. I am writing this because as a new member, it is so important to have other members to call. I don't know if I could have gotten through this as well as I did without these wonderful members' help.

Through my Buddhist practice, I have developed so many wonderful benefits, not just material ones; it is more of a feeling of being in control of my life —100 percent. Life seems to go so much smoother now. I know that there will be other issues that will come up, but with this practice I know I can overcome anything, and I know I have the help of my really special friends.