

## TAKING PART IN MAKING PRIDE

### SAN FRANCISCO

Under a spectacular sky, 150 SGI members — gay, straight, young, old, singles and families — participated in the San Francisco Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Pride Celebration. The June 27 parade drew 600,000 marchers and was seen by an estimated 500,000. Held to commemorate the Stonewall Uprising of 1969, the parade was a reminder of our advances in human rights and of the work yet to accomplish.

Alongside other religious organizations, the SGI marched to implement its Victory in the Community for the New Century. Walking behind a beautiful banner, members handed out to the cheering crowds more than 11,000 bookmarks, which contained an introduction to the SGI, a short experience from members explaining why they chant and contact information about the local culture center and its G/L/B/T group meetings. The bookmarks included this quote from SGI President Ikeda: “A third millennium, imbued with respect for the sanctity of life, free from nuclear arms and war, and rich with the rainbow hues of diversity, will only come into being through the efforts of empowered and responsible citizens who don’t wait for someone else to take the initiative.”

Other members answered questions and shared experiences at an information booth. Receiving many guests from all over the country, staffers gave away *The Winning Life* books, brochures and cards with contact information and articles about Buddhism from national and international SGI publications. Guests were invited to an introductory event on July 11.

It was exciting to have heart-to-heart dialogue with several former members who had quit practicing because they had felt they did not fit into the SGI. In addition, several current temple members found it encouraging to learn that the SGI fully supports gays in the organization, including performing commitment ceremonies for same-sex couples, even though they are not legally binding. These individuals expressed a strong interest to start practicing again with the SGI.

— DIANA ELROD

### BOSTON

SGI-USA members marched June 12 in what has become a major expression of freedom, hope and truth: the Boston Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Parade. This was the maiden voyage for the 25 members from the New England Region to participate under the banner of the SGI. In this 29th annual parade, there were all kinds of people — bankers, bikers, religious groups, muscle men and drag queens, who caught the eye and tweaked the free spirit in us all.

The largest cheers from the thousands who lined the parade route were for a small group of men and women representing the Boston police force. It stirred something within you as these gay and lesbian officers, some of them holding hands with the same gender, marched in front of their fellow officers, who lined the parade route. The message was that we can live together with respect and dignity for one another!

As the marchers made their way through the South End, their high spirits and joy touched many a parade route spectator. The route ended at the Boston Common, where a stage was set up for music and presentations. Some gave experiences, describing how they are winning in their lives despite living in a world that doesn't always accept them as they truly are. The hot June air was filled with camaraderie, respect and dignity. The vibe was peace, joy and love — and freedom to be who you are.

—*LARRY TISH*

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