

EAST BELLEVUE DISTRICT — BELLEVUE, WASH.

The Pacific Northwest Region completed its geographic reorganization, or geo-reo, in May 1998. As the newly appointed women's division leader for the equally newly formed East Bellevue District in Bellevue, Wash., near Seattle, Linda Chapman decided to visit all the women in the district. Linda says, "Before geo-reo I was a vice-district leader in a big, wonderful district with many capable people. We had fantastic year-end meetings in the past, sometimes with 100 people. After geo-reo, it was a great time of human revolution; it was hard for people to separate. I felt the importance of the stand-alone spirit. When East Bellevue was first made a district there were around six or eight women; some I visited once, while others I visited regularly over a four or five month period. My district grew so much that I continued to visit each woman."

She accomplished her goal in time for last year's November Commemorative Meeting. The meeting was a great success. Almost everyone brought at least one guest. One guest is now practicing in East Bellevue District, and another is in a Seattle district. "We needed to remember the joy of practice and new members bring a lot of renewal to a district," Linda continues.

In preparing for the meeting, Linda, her daughter and others created a play based on the book, *The Cherry Tree*, written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda. They wrote the script and made costumes and props; the children acted out the book's story, much to the delight of an appreciative audience. Linda adds: "The youth in particular are standing up. The Boys and Girls Group performed in the play, while the older youth made commemorative book-marks for everyone. We all had to stretch our lives to do things that we normally wouldn't have done. We also showed the video of President Ikeda's visit to the Philippines, which the guests really loved. They thought it expressed a clear explanation of the SGI as well as President Ikeda's role."

The importance of sharing this Buddhism with others is a commonly expressed sentiment in East Bellevue District. "We really want to introduce people to the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We had whole families as well as individuals attend our year-end district meeting. Not everyone joined, but many are now friends of the SGI. We try to have fun in our district. With all the changes that have taken place, I think we really have a great district now. We made a goal to introduce three new people in our first year, and at first it seemed that we didn't meet our goal. However, shortly after what would be our one-year anniversary, we sponsored two people who received the Gohonzon. One had been a guest at the year-end meeting, and another was a young woman who had moved into our district and just received her Gohonzon. We are on our way to making our goal, but we just had to persevere."

— BILL LAWRENCE