

INDIANA HOLDS FIRST VOV SEMINAR BY GARY RUSSELL, INDIANA

School violence was the theme of the Victory Over Violence seminar held at the Indiana Community Center on Oct. 23.

In an intense skit, John Fox was an American student who displayed racial animosity toward an Asian classmate, portrayed by Shinichi Hisano. Words were exchanged, the Asian student's sister, played by Caisy Lun, was attacked, and a showdown with a gun resulted in the sister's inadvertent murder. The skit was performed throughout the room, with characters walking up and down the aisles. This made the audience a part of what was happening.

Caisy Lun later shared a personal experience about a classmate who pointed a drill two inches from her forehead and turned it on. Rather than helping, kids circled the scene and laughed. "You are so cool! Look at her face!" students said to the young man with the drill. At first Caisy considered the matter no big deal since no one was physically hurt. But then she wondered how anyone could think threatening someone's life could be cool or funny.

Caisy's experience segued into a presentation on school violence. The statistics were alarming: Between 1996 and 1999, 21 school shootings had occurred in the United States. Taking personal responsibility and recognizing passive violence are crucial to stop the epidemic, she said. "Once we understand where negative feelings are coming from, we can stop from acting on them."

Guest speaker Charley Wiles, director of the Peace Learning Center at Eagle Creek Park, spoke of the center's conflict resolution curriculum for elementary school children. Mediation skills are taught at the center, to show students how to peacefully resolve conflict on their own.

The seminar will soon move to schools around the state, followed by seminars on other violence-related topics.

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