

**SITE OF FIRST SGI-USA DISTRICT FORMED ON THE EAST COAST IN 1960  
HIGHLAND PARK, N.J. BESTOWS HONORARY CITIZENSHIP  
ON SGI PRESIDENT  
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On April 24, SGI President Ikeda was made an honorary citizen of Highland Park, N.J. Mayor Meryl Frank presented a proclamation of citizenship and a key to the city to the SGI leader in recognition of his efforts for world peace and in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of his inauguration as the third president of the Soka Gakkai.

The ceremony was attended by Highland Park District leaders, other leaders from the area, as well as Tariq Hasan, SGI-USA men's leader, who received the proclamation and key on behalf of President Ikeda.

As narrated in the first volume of *The New Human Revolution* (vol. 1, p. 194), it was in Highland Park, N.J., in 1960, during President Ikeda's first overseas visit, that he created the first district on the East Coast. At that time, members traveled from New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and as far away as Canada to attend what is now a historic event. At that meeting President Ikeda encouraged the members and guests, saying: "This Buddhism has the power to transform your suffering into happiness, to change the tears you have shed into glittering jewels of good fortune.... My purpose in coming to the United States is to help you turn that into a reality." From this seed planted 40 years ago, we have seen the extraordinary growth of the organization in the northeast and the movement of scores of capable youth out into society.

During the ceremony in the borough council chambers, Mayor Frank said that it was through her relationship with local members that she recently learned about President Ikeda and that she was struck by the similarities in their visions. Citing his efforts and encouragement, she mentioned her struggle to create a government based on open dialogue, an atmosphere of mutual respect and the inclusion of all voices in this uniquely diverse community.

It is with a deep sense of pride in their history that the members in Highland Park District and the surrounding districts have challenged themselves over the years to reply to President Ikeda's dream. They have developed many capable leaders, including strong youth, many of whom have been students at nearby Rutgers University, and they have shown actual proof in their own lives.

With this event, they feel they've had the opportunity to show their appreciation and to further the bonds of friendship between the SGI and their community.

Other awards and proclamations presented recently to President and Mrs. Ikeda include: honorary citizenships from the cities of Cerritos, Calif., Memphis, Tenn., and Walnut, Calif.; a commendation from the City of Santa Monica, Calif., to Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda for their dedication to spiritual and cultural values; Los Angeles County's commendation to Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda as Ambassadors of Peace; the proclamation of Soka Gakkai International Day (May 3) by the City of New Orleans, La.; the proclamation of Daisaku Ikeda and Kaneko Ikeda Day (May 3) by the City of Las Vegas, Nev.; and Certificate of Recognition for Daisaku and Kaneko Ikeda as Emissaries of Peace (May 3) from the City of La Puente, Calif.