

**WISCONSIN CONFERENCE
BIG HIT WITH MEMBERS
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The result of Wisconsin's first area-wide conference, held Sept. 23-24, can be summed up in one phrase: "Mission accomplished!"

Barbara Garrison, from Milwaukee, one of the chief organizers of the event said: "I really enjoyed it! I think everyone did. We wanted to create an activity that would help promote unity, and where everyone could just be happy together. We also wanted to have meaningful presentations, so that people could take something home with them. There were a lot of obstacles to overcome to make it all happen, but we did it!"

Irene Mackie, of Madison, echoed those sentiments: "It's been a great weekend. And it was really enjoyable just to practice here in such a beautiful environment."

The environment she referred to is the Green Lake Conference Center, where the conference was held. Located on one of the few spring-fed (and thus crystal-clear) lakes in the state, the grounds are truly beautiful. It was a fitting site to host such a wonderful gathering.

More than 60 members from all over Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, as well as several leaders from the Chicago area, attended the weekend event, many meeting for the first time. A member from the Upper Peninsula, who received the Gohonzon at the conference, said: "We're sort of isolated where we are. It was really fun to meet all these people. I had no idea! And there was so much information. It was really impressive and educational. I learned so much."

Saturday's sessions included a panel discussion on "Breakthrough Prayer," a lecture on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin and a session on applying Buddhist principles to health issues. That night there was a bonfire, with performances by the youth and a marshmallow roast (the first for many of the non-native Wisconsinites.) On Sunday morning, everyone gathered for morning gongyo, more youth performances, and many were able to stay for the midday teleconference of the Central Executive Conference from Los Angeles.

Many members cited the highly interactive, entertaining and informative lecture by Eric Carlson as the highlight of the conference. However, Melanie Bennett may have summed up many of the participants' final analysis when she said: "It was all great, but some of the best, most meaningful conversations happened during meals in the cafeteria. It was just like being at the Florida Nature and Culture Center!"