

YOUTH LED THE WAY IN MARCH!

Open the Century With Victory!

Youth Division members from Studio Oaks Chapter in Los Angeles #1 Region sponsored an introductory meeting on March 18 to commemorate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day. The event's theme was "Open the Century With Victory," a phrase that came from one of SGI President Ikeda's speeches.

Starting with the kick off, each youth division member who participated in planning and carrying out the meeting pledged to create a victory in their life. The youth wanted to stand up and be counted! Their focus was on becoming more capable people and on raising the younger youth division members to become future leaders. Says Young Women's Chapter Leader Stacey Humphrey: "We really wanted to give the younger people an opportunity to expand their capacities by taking responsibility for various aspects of the meeting. They are the future."

Many junior high/high school division members directed various aspects of the festivities, including working with the Boys and Girls Group to create artwork and decorations. The meeting was also greatly supported by the men's division and the women's division, who helped immensely with behind-the-scenes work.

Among the 139 people who attended the gathering were 24 guests, some of whom participated by dancing, greeting, acting in the skit, or doing behind-the-scenes work! Other aspects of the meeting were a panel discussion, which allowed guests to ask questions to six SGI members, an



experience by a junior high/high school division young woman, a musical interlude with piano and singing and a short video presentation.

After the vibrant, dynamic meeting, people went to the park for a BBQ, entertainment and dialogue. This March 16 commemorative meeting was a huge success. The Studio Oaks Chapter youth members are determined to build on the victories and friendships developed through this March 16 celebration and to further develop their capacity to work for kosen-rufu. ♪

By Jessica Mingo, Los Angeles

I Will Value My Own Life

It was good against evil—Dr. Evil, that is—in a skit performed by the Rocky Mountain Region West Area youth March 19 at the Denver Culture Center to commemorate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day.

The West Area youth portrayed many characters (Dr. Evil from *Austin Powers*, Adolph Hitler, a Mafia mercenary and High Priest Nikken Abe) to elaborate on the Victory Over Violence pledge—"I will value my own life." The characters, who gather together for the "Evil Awards," discover that their acts of tyranny and destruction are no match against the power of chanting.

Nearly twice as many youth division members from the four areas of the Rocky Mountain Region—West, North, East and Colorado Springs—participated in the planning and facilitating of the meeting than last year. Presentations by each area included skits, musical performances, readings and experiences.



("Value..." continued on page C)

We Are the Future of Society!

Park East and East River Chapters of New York East Region held a joint youth March 16 commemorative meeting in upper east side Manhattan on March 19.

The theme was "Entering an Age of Hope: Youth as the Future of Society!" Thirty-eight members and four guests attended the eventful and joyful meeting, which included songs by the Boys and Girls Group, a message from SGI President Ikeda, a presentation on March 16 and more.

In an open discussion, participants shared their ideas on the advantages of youth, challenging one's worries and hopes, and their individual missions to contribute to create better society and future.

Cory Taylor, SGI-USA young men's leader, encouraged everyone to challenge and win over individual struggles and become strong

and secure individuals based on faith. He also reminded us that Buddhism is not magic, as if all of a sudden you could change yourself or resolve all problems. Rather, Buddhism is a process of challenge by a normal individual in daily life. Cory suggested we work to mobilize the energy and resources of young people in America by sharing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and life philosophy and support one another in raising more capable young people and moving forward to the future.

All of the youth are determined to challenge themselves in daily life and advance the kosen-rufu movement in New York by aiming toward May 3, 2001!

After the meeting, the members enjoyed pork soup, prepared by the women's division, just as the members did on March 16, 1958. ♪

It's Our Time To Stand!

On April 21-27, 2000, 19 youth participants from all across America attended the SGI Spring Training Course in Tokyo. Representing the youth of America, these individuals made the following declaration to SGI President Ikeda commemorating the

21st anniversary since the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood forced President Ikeda to resign as Soka Gakkai's third president on April 24, 1979.

— James Herrmann, SGI-USA Youth Division Leader

SGI-USA Youth Division Declaration

April 24, 2000

Twenty one years have passed since the corrupt priesthood revealed their true intentions, and you stood alone to protect the Soka Gakkai. Today we declare: It is our time to stand!

We will be the ones to protect the precious members. We will be the ones to spread the correct understanding so that not a single person has to suffer from misguided beliefs. We will raise a new generation of disciples who will ensure that the justice of the Soka Gakkai lives eternally. The compassionate practice of shakubuku, the strict way of mentor and disciple; this is the conviction of the youth of America.

The youth of America will fight eternally at your side. America will be the land where the justice of humanity is proven.

Signed:

James Herrmann	Ken Saragosa	Beth LaMure
Irene Wang	Haleh Monsour	Sherry Liang
Sanjay Gaur	Yoshihisa Nagashima	Aaron Franklin
Hyon Jee Moon	Rajni Kothiri	Nancy Bourg
Sonia Roza	George Ross, Jr.	Keith Beber
Ting-Ting Shih	Nobukazu Miura	Adam Gamble
Yolande Evans		

Youth Focus Toward July 3, 2000, Announced

A nationwide youth region leaders teleconference was held on Sunday, April 30, announcing SGI-USA's youth division focus toward July 3, 2000. In the next two months, we will unite our efforts toward: 1. Promotion of the World Tribune, and 2. Propagation—following up with the more than 5,000 guests that attended our March 16 introductory meetings. Below are excerpts from the speeches of SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leader Renu Jiandani and Young Men's Division Leader Cory Taylor.

Renu Jiandani: Every day when we do gongyo, we vow to think at all times to make causes for other people to become Buddhas. Isn't that amazing? Recently, everything about the *World Tribune*, people's experiences and determinations has been teaching me about this bodhisattva spirit.

Last week, I attended a memorial service for a member who had been practicing for over 30 years. He was a musician. Since he had no family, he had written his will 30 years ago. He put in his will that each person who attended his memorial should receive a three-month subscription of the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. There were over 200 people and more than half who attended this memorial were his non-member musician friends. I was so moved by the determination of this member to share the publications and to share



this Buddhism at his own memorial.

Recently, one pioneer woman shared with me that she had home visited a woman whose husband has cancer. She found out that this member is not receiving the *World Tribune* due to financial difficulties. She encouraged her by saying now is precisely the time for you to inspire yourself with President Ikeda's encouragement and strengthen your bond with President Ikeda. She encouraged her to save \$5.00 a month and until she was able to order the *World Tribune*, this pioneer member would bring over a *World Tribune* every week.

This woman made a determination to receive her own copy and they chanted together. The very next day, she received an unexpected check from an insurance company and immediately called this pioneer member and said I want to subscribe for one year. Through this encouragement this member experienced the power of determination which has already given her a new outlook on her present struggles.

One young man, Mike Firoved in Los Angeles, has simply been asking people one-on-one if they subscribe or have sent in their renewals. For those who do subscribe, he encourages them to do a gift subscription to someone they would like to introduce to this practice. He is really a very shy person but he made a determination that he wants everyone to have the *World Tribune* as their own personal letter

from President Ikeda. As a result, he has challenged his shyness and within the past week and a half encouraged 67 people to subscribe. He told me that he is experiencing so much joy in his own practice as he has been encouraging others about the *World Tribune*.

Cory Taylor: A dear friend of mine and cinematographer for National Geographic Television recently took interest in Buddhism. Having filmed the Youth Grand Culture Festival held in Los Angeles last fall, he witnessed the profound growth and change in the youth participants who put on this festival. He was moved by their courage and their extraordinary diversity. He decided, based on what he had witnessed, to start chanting with the desire that some day when he has kids, they will grow up in the SGI.

My friend is constantly traveling for work. Since he is rarely home, it has been difficult to be with him to teach him the basics of practice. But we kept challenging together. Recently my friend went to Borneo to shoot a film for CBS. He worked on a project with 10 other cinematographers — most of whom were more experienced than he. But, challenging to overcome his insecurities and resolved to do his best, he chanted furiously.

Within three days on the island — the director was using his footage as an example of excellent work to assist the others. He showed actual proof.



He quickly was offered the most challenging work and was recognized as one of the top professionals on the crew. Before his return to America, he planned a three day underwater diving trip with his fiancé on the island of Sipidan. But somehow his reservation was botched due to overbooking and he had to visit a neighboring island instead.

By day he and his fiancé would travel by boat to Sipidan, at night, they would return to the other island. One week ago, while he was on the neighboring island, religious terrorists kidnapped 20 tourists off of Sipidan where my friend would have stayed. The tourists have yet to be released. My friend felt he was protected by his faith. Returning to America three days ago, my friend recounted these stories to me and on April 27, he received his Gohonzon.

All across America, youth are engaged in a pitched battle of compassion — to share this philosophy with their friends so that they have the confidence to surmount any obstacle, to resolve any impasse, to become happy and to become value creative. We will welcome a whole new group of people into membership. And we will spread the teachings of Buddhism by promoting the *World Tribune*.

Uniting in purpose towards July 3, the Day of Mentor and Disciple, let's show President Ikeda proof of the power and passion of the youth in America with solid results. ♪

YOUTH *Study* MAY 2000

▶ **WANTED: Successors!** ◀

Recently SGI President Ikeda urged us as youth to achieve magnificent victories. He said: "If the youth division achieves magnificent victories for kosen-rufu this year, we can confidently pass them the baton of our kosen-rufu movement for the 21st century. But victory in any realm of endeavor can only be realized by arduous, all-out effort. We cannot win by pretending to work hard or by leaving things to others" (Jan. 28 *World Tribune*, p. 7).

Part of achieving magnificent victories as youth is coming up with new ideas that really encourage people and create value, but it is not easy. First of all, how do you know if your ideas are good? I think the key to making any idea good is to chant with the determination to live up to the mentor-disciple relationship. What is the mentor-disciple relationship? There is nothing extraordinary about this relationship. It is a beautiful human-to-human bond based on the disciple's sincere desire to understand the heart of the mentor and work toward achieving all their mutual goals. In the Soka Gakkai International, this bond with our mentor, President Ikeda, is exemplified in our spirit to constantly be on the side of the people's happiness, and to be a humanistic person who takes sincere action for the sake of the people, despite our own challenges and weaknesses. Heartfelt action taken toward this end expands our capability and spurs new growth in every direction.

But even if you have a great idea, how does one cultivate the inner strength to put new ideas into action? To call forth the inner strength required to create a new age, we must be committed to an ideal. Resolving to become triumphant in daily life, to understand the Soka Spirit movement and to take positive action in the community will generate a buzz of fresh activity.

And what do we do if others don't understand our ideas or even oppose them outright? In his youth, President Ikeda created new activities that were initially misunderstood by the men's and women's division. For example, when he first proposed a youth division sports meet, an event that later evolved into the current peace and culture festivals that the SGI holds today, the directors were dead-set against it. At that time, he announced to the directors: "I will not cause the organization any trouble or inconvenience. I promise that propagation will progress dramatically as a result of this event. And I believe that the significance of this sports meet will become more and more apparent with each passing year..." (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 5, pp. 197-99).

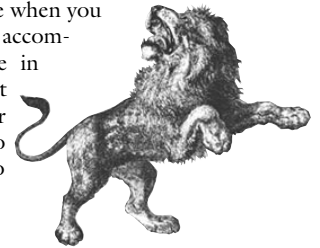
One of the first youth leaders during second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda's time made a strong declaration upon the formation of the new young men's division, saying, "Thousands of years of history show that it was always youth who brought changes to their societies. Unmistakably, our great religious movement must be carried out by youth." It sounds like the creation of a new age is up to us! What is required, therefore, is a deeply heartfelt determination to create something new that will eventually win over the hearts of everyone.

Waves of spontaneous, heartfelt activity from youth—successors who share a sense of responsibility for the future—are indispensable for the eternal flow of our world peace movement. With our eyes toward the future, let's show our mentor that we are ready to grab that baton and run with all our might! ♪

By Torilenya Jeffries, Texas

QUESTIONS for discussion

1. What qualities are necessary to develop to become a successor?
2. What activities can you create to widen the road SGI President Ikeda has created?
3. What qualities are necessary for us to cultivate to successfully carry out activities that help others?
4. Has there been a time when you passionately wanted to accomplish something positive in your personal life and met with resistance from your friends? What did you do to encourage yourself to reach your goal?



("Value..." continued from page A)

Youth division members from the North Area expressed the VOV pledge, "I will value all life," with a guitar duet of "Compassion Song," a rendition of the Bob Marley ballad "Redemption Song." East Area youth division members served up "Buddha Burgers" and the "Treasure Tower Special" at the Encouragement Café. A reading of SGI President Ikeda's poem "Youth, Scale the Mountain of the 21st Century"

accompanied by the violin was given by the Colorado Spring youth division members.

Bonnie Nash, Rocky Mountain Region young women's leader, said, "When we were planning the meeting, a lot of the young people involved were really able to delve into some heavy-duty issues like interdependency, global awareness, the value of life and Buddha nature." ♪

By Lisa Matsuo, Denver

MATERIAL REQUEST

SEND IN YOUR STUFF
Our youth publication is only as strong as what you bring us.

Poems, Articles, Pictures, Stories, Commentaries, Pulitzer Prize insight ...whatever you got, get it to us.

HOW?

Postal Mail:
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GET REAL!



By Steve Mortan, SGI-USA High School Leader

This month SGI-USA is holding our annual Commemorative Contribution. I think it is great that we have an opportunity to participate in this event. SGI is a non-profit organization, but the reality is that there are still expenses to be paid (such as community centers, copy machines, supplies, bookstore, and special events such as youth activities and culture festivals, just to name a few).

Last year, I made a goal to contribute a certain amount and I was able to achieve it during the last week of the activity. I felt so victorious! This reminded me of when I was 16 and I participated in the Special Contribution that year.

I was working at a fast-food restaurant and I got paid every two weeks. I really wanted to participate in the contribution campaign because I had so much appreciation for our organization. To this day, I still cannot think of any other organization that treasures youth and gives them such a great opportunity to grow.

At that time, the boss would send employees home if business was slow. I tried my best to get more hours. I would work extra hard so I would not be the one he'd send home. My efforts paid off, and I got the amount of hours I needed. I received my second check of the month and it was the last day of the contribution campaign, so I went straight to the bank to cash my check. I was still in my work uniform—minus my hat and apron.

I drove to the community center smelling like a charbroiled hamburger. At the community center, the women's division members were there smiling. They congratulated me, and I felt victorious. It was something I'll never forget. I always had complete conviction that not only was I helping the organization, but I was also making a good cause for my own future.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "In this life your sincere offering becomes a prayer for the fulfillment of your every desire and a treasure" (*Learning From The Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 23).

It is not the amount that matters but the spirit behind the offering. If you haven't yet, I hope you have a chance to joyfully participate and challenge this activity. ♪

Into the Storm: Pioneering a Wave of Peace

March 19, 2000... kosen-rufu for the new century has begun. The Rainier Area March 16 Commemorative Meeting was held at Oakbrook Elementary School in Lakewood, Wash. The year of youth has definitely taken off!

The youth of four chapters—Lakewood, Olympia, Parkland and Rainier—proved their capabilities by working together in perfect unity, *itai doshin* (many in body, one in mind). They showed the true spirit of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

The program began with a skit clarifying the significance of March 16. The youth produced various segments that blended together perfectly the history of presidents Makiguchi, Toda and Ikeda and the beginning of the Soka Gakkai. This performance was at times humorous and deeply stirring and the events that followed were as vibrant as the first blossoms of spring. This day could have been called a



spring grand culture festival.

The four chapters worked tirelessly to plan and rehearse an agenda that dazzled the members and guests, which included songs, dances, a skit and a performance by the Boys and Girls Group. After the performances, the youth presented certificates to the pioneer members honoring their dedication to SGI President Ikeda's vision and declared that the youth will not forget that they are heirs to this legacy. ♪

By Steve McNight, Pacific Northwest

Striving for True Leadership

SGI President Ikeda has taught me that being a leader means I must instill power in the people I lead. To lead for selfish gains will get us nowhere. To lead such a great organization as the SGI, we must have one thing in mind—the benefit of all people. President Ikeda's efforts create a sense of responsibility in me to inspire others to succeed. This issue was presented to me today (March 16) when I was stumped on what to say for this introductory meeting.

What I realized is that it is not easy to be

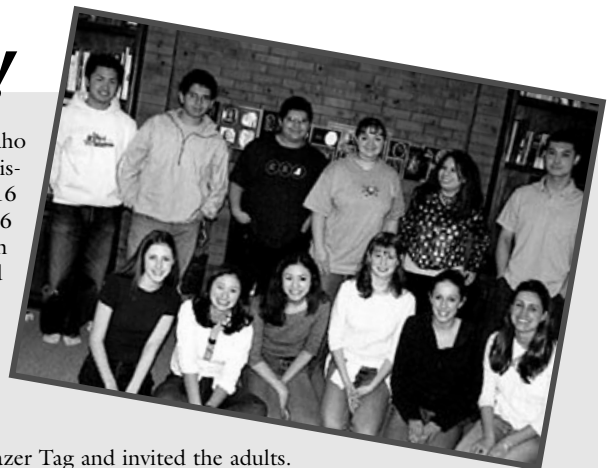
inspiring and help people bring out their individual power and, on top of that, help people realize their collective power. This is what President Ikeda does every day. And for this, I feel the deepest respect for him. From today on I will strive to become a true leader by helping others become true leaders. The future of kosen-rufu lies in our hands, the millions of us following our mentor, President Ikeda, and working together to show the power of our practice. ♪

By Jared Young, Seattle

Idaho Go!

What a great day for Idaho youth! We studied the history and spirit of March 16 and watched a clip of the March 16 video of the 1958 meeting with President Toda. Then we were fed by the men's and women's divisions—the traditional pork soup that was served at the famous March 16 gathering—plus yummy corn dogs. We topped it off with brownies.

The youth then voted to play Lazer Tag and invited the adults. We had a ball. ♪



By Betsy, Boise, Idaho