

**PEACE FEST BRINGS PORTLAND TOGETHER
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A Peace Fest, co-sponsored by SGI-USA and the Oregon Peace Institute, was an all-afternoon event held at Portland State University on Feb. 3. Nineteen like-minded community organizations participated, along with guest speakers, films, music, workshops and circle dances.

In his message to the event, SGI President Ikeda said, "Thanks to all the members for this significant step forward."

The event coincided with the Portland showing of the "Linus Pauling and the Twentieth Century" exhibition. Local members wanted to create an opportunity to share the SGI's vision with their community.

Several local group representatives attended planning meetings at the SGI-USA Portland Community Center. "Through these meetings I learned that diverse groups could sit down together, put aside their differences, and accomplish our common goal of peace," said Barry Lince, an SGI-USA young men's division member.

Those who attended the Peace Fest were able to see eight panels of the Pauling exhibition, originally assembled for the U.S. Congress and displayed in Washington, D.C., which trace Dr. Pauling's life and accomplishments as a scientist, teacher and humanitarian.

The 19 supporting organizations, each advocating unique approaches and solutions to counteract violence and instill peace, were arranged around tables to disseminate their information and resources. Among them were the War Resisters League, Help Increase the Peace of Oregon, Amnesty International, Association for Communal Harmony in Asia, Multicultural Resource Center, City Repair Project, Oregon Uniting and the Alternatives to Violence Project.

Their mandates all had common threads: public education and dialogue, conflict resolution, opposition to war, strengthening connections and friendships, and bringing together all cultural, ethnic, economic and racial heritages in a spirit of tolerance and trust.

The Middle East Peace Quilts, an international community art project involving 300 Palestinians and Israelis living in North America, created a multicolored backdrop to each group's exhibit. Yehudah Winter, project director, offered that "each square in the 30 quilts was created by a different individual with their unique vision of peace."

The ballroom was lit by the SGI-USA's bright Victory Over Violence exhibit, impactful in its rich design with the energy and passion of youth. SGI-USA members carried out earnest discussions with community groups and citizens eager to learn how to make a difference for peace in society today. Guests were heard to exclaim: "Wow! Your video is so great!" and "Where have you guys been?"

After enjoying the displays, the guests assembled for the formal program, which began with words by Rob Gould, co-founder of the Oregon Peace Institute.

Richard Yoshimachi, SGI-USA Vice General Director, then spoke about the Pauling Exhibit. "The exhibition has received tremendous support from the scientific and academic community," he said. "I really hope that you will all take this opportunity to learn more about Dr. Pauling, and make a personal commitment to develop compassion toward other people for the betterment of the world."

Those assembled then broke up into groups to attend one of four workshops:

Compassionate Listening, facilitated by Building Bridges for Peace; a film presentation, *A Journey Towards Peace*, sponsored by Oregon Uniting; Victory Over Violence / Help Increase the Peace, led by SGI-USA member Lisa Harris Craner, along with the American Friends Service Committee; and the Girls' Initiative Network workshop, facilitated by SGI-USA member Kathy Wertz.

The enthusiasm for the Peace Fest was clearly evident in the shining eyes of the youth who worked hard behind the scenes to make this event a success. Lisa Craner felt that the Peace Fest was a steppingstone for SGI-USA in Oregon. "It has enabled us to grow as an organization," she said. "Here we have joined with the community in our efforts to respect diversity and promote Victory Over Violence in all areas of our lives."

SGI-USA member Leah Stenson commented: "This is the manifestation of all our efforts working together. It has set the groundwork for more Portland organizations to carry out joint efforts in the future. As great organizations pull together and join forces, they will be more effective."