

**VOV WORKSHOP HELD AT SANTANA HIGH
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When Takayoshi Fujimura, an SGI-USA young men's district leader in San Diego, first learned of the tragic shooting at Santana High School in the small suburb of Santee, Calif., where two students died, he was determined to respond to his community in some way.

He encouraged a group of members to discuss actions they could take to encourage the community. "When SGI President Ikeda hears about something like this, he takes quick action," he said. "We should, too. SGI members are peacemakers!"

Members from all over the San Diego area responded to his call to action and a Victory Over Violence movement was soon underway. VOV is a community outreach program founded by the SGI-USA's Youth Peace Committee in August 1999. It focuses on the root causes of violence and provides group exercises and role-playing games to emphasize everyone's role in reducing violence in society.

It was the determination of the East Valley Chapter members, where Santee is a district, that SGI-USA would offer some type of outreach to the school's students. They learned the high school had their annual Peace Week Celebration planned March 19-23, even before the shooting occurred. They approached the school and, despite the short notice, the teacher in charge invited them to conduct a VOV workshop. The members had just a few days to pull their workshop together, but with the support of youth from all over San Diego, they came up with a great group and a fun schedule.

On March 20, just two weeks after the shooting, 85 students and three teachers filed into Santana's band room to attend the workshop. After introducing themselves and the VOV program, the meeting opened with two skits. The first skit addressed stereotyping and the second looked at passive, verbal and physical violence. The skits acted as icebreakers, introducing some causes of violence as well as opening everyone up to discussion.

Two hands-on activities from the VOV workbook took up the remainder of the workshop. Students mingled and spoke animatedly with others they were meeting for the first time. The meeting concluded with the VOV pledge of nonviolence, which everyone signed. Afterward, the VOV presenters also signed Santana's own peace pledge.

On March 23, at the finale of the Peace Week Celebration, the SGI-USA youth also presented a gift of six books to the school's library. The books included *The Way of Youth* by President Ikeda.