

**SPEECHES GIVEN AT THE CEC TELECONFERENCE
EXPANDING THE DISTRICTS
BY JAMES HERRMANN, SGI-USA YOUTH LEADER**

First of all, thank you to all of the men and women's division members for supporting the youth this year during our March district introductory meetings. I have heard so many unforgettable stories describing your selfless efforts. Because of you, our nationwide results have been staggering!

I want to touch briefly on the subject of district expansion. Some of you may be wondering why we need to expand the number of our districts. The fact is, some of our districts are so large, it has become increasingly difficult to offer quality care to each individual.

As you know, caring for a single individual is the credo of our organization. Our organization exists for the sake of the members. Therefore, it's very important for us to look at the size of our districts and assess just how effective they are in offering each member the quality care he or she deserve.

When I worked as a nurse, I learned that the quality of care I gave my patients made a significant impact on their recovery. They each wanted to be treated as if they were the most important patient in the hospital. I noticed that the more patients I tried to take care of at one time, the less I was able to give them quality care. When I devoted my attention to one patient at a time, that person felt important and empowered, and he or she was better able to fight the illness. And they deserved to feel that way, to have that support.

In the same way, each of our members deserves individual support. In a district, the only thing that matters is the care we are able to provide each member.

As leaders, let's assess the condition and size of each district and it's ability to provide quality care. In cases where the district is too large, let's develop a plan together with the district leaders toward expanding into two or three districts. Giving birth to many new districts this year — in this new millennium — will bring freshness to our organization and dramatically increase the quality of care we provide for each member.

Now, shifting gears, I want to talk about this year's Zone Family Festivals. In January 2000, while I was in Japan, I reported to SGI President Ikeda about the great success of our 1st SGI-USA Youth Culture Festival in 1999. I told him about the many youth involved in the festival, who, struggling with very serious problems in their lives, had achieved a victory as a result of participating in the festival. I told him that as a result of this transformation, the youth of SGI-USA were now ready to initiate a new wave of propagation across the country. His response was simple and direct: "Wow! That is so great! I'm very happy to hear this. This is the greatest gift you could ever bring to me."

It is amazing what kind of impact one festival can have on the life of a single young person and on a generation of youth. Well, this year we're going to have 24 culture festivals across the nation gathering more than 100,000 people. It is truly an unprecedented opportunity.

Just consider a couple of the venues we are considering for this year's festivals: Madison Square Garden and the Los Angeles Coliseum — imagine the possibilities! We're not filling seats to sell a product. We're not selling tickets to a sporting event. We are initiating the Century of Peace in American society. Personally, I can't wait.

With my deepest respect and appreciation, I want to reconfirm that the key to this year's festivals is a united, four-divisional effort.

Together, let's usher in a new age by empowering a new generation of youth to take full responsibility for American kosen-rufu.