

## AROUND THE SGI

### **New SGI Chapters Created in Slovenia, Hungary and Bulgaria**

On March 31 and April 1, SGI representatives from 12 East European countries—Poland, Czech Republic, Yugoslavia, Slovenia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, Slovakia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia, Lithuania and Ukraine—gathered together at the SGI-Austria Culture Center and pledged to work for peace in their respective regions. SGI President Ikeda sent a message of encouragement, lauding their gathering as a beautiful garden of “human lotus flowers” and a symbol of SGI humanism that contributes to the resurgence of joy among people. It was also announced that on May 3, official SGI chapters will be created in Slovenia, Hungary and Bulgaria. In Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, SGI members gather for discussion meetings each month. In 1999, “Dialogue with Nature,” a collection of President Ikeda’s photographs, was hosted in Budapest, Hungary. The exhibit’s success became the catalyst for the growth of SGI-Hungary.

### **SGI Members in Macedonia Work and Pray for Peace**

In February, SGI members in Macedonia held their first discussion meeting in Skopje, the capital city. Members gave experiences of applying Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and overcoming difficulties in their daily lives and shared their hopes to establish security and happiness for all of the Macedonian people.

Just recently, a group of ethnic Albanian rebels, calling themselves the National Liberation Army of Macedonia, clashed with Macedonian government forces along the Macedonian-Kosovo border. SGI-Yugoslavia Chapter Chief Masaru Katano, who attended the SGI discussion meeting in Skopje in February, commented that every SGI Macedonian member is determined to see to it that the sun of peace rises once again in their country.

### **SGI-Germany Creates Chapter in Former East Germany**

SGI-Germany will establish its first chapter in the former East Germany this year, the 10th anniversary of Germany’s unification. Clemens Amme and Julia Amme will be appointed as co-leaders of Sachsen-Thüringen Chapter; SGI-Germany Chief Advisor Peter Kühn will serve as adviser. The SGI-Germany members in eastern Germany are presently preparing for the inaugural meeting scheduled for May 3. On the same day, the SGI’s World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition will open in Seifhennersdorf City, Germany.

### **Monument With SGI President’s Words Erected in Australia**

A monument inscribed with a quote from SGI President Ikeda was unveiled at the Perth Zoo, Perth City, Western Australia on March 21, Harmony Day, a day for reflecting on and celebrating Australia’s cultural diversity. The unveiling was part of official commemorative events for Harmony Day, sponsored by the Western Australia state government. Western Australia Premier Geoff Gallop (who is also Minister for Multicultural Interests) and local elementary school children participated. The monument stands in Harmony Garden, established with the help of SGI-Australia members. It is inscribed with the following quotation from President Ikeda’s 2000 Peace Proposal: “As we enhance our respect for the sanctity of life and human dignity through our daily

behavior and steady efforts toward dialogue, the foundations for a culture of peace will deepen and strengthen, allowing a new global civilization to blossom.”

### **Brazilian City Dedicates Park to SGI President**

On March 16, Triunfo City, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, dedicated “Professor Daisaku Ikeda Park,” located within the Corpo Santos Culture Center. The center supports cultural activities for children in João Pessoa Town. Triunfo Mayor José Ezequiel Meireles de Souza commended Mr. Ikeda as an individual who has contributed to peace and has strengthened bonds between people through advancing compassion, education and culture. A plaque was placed in a prominent location in the park with an inscription paying tribute to “Professor Daisaku Ikeda,” the “illustrious humanist and pacifist,” and “his noble contributions to the prosperity of humanity.” A gazebo stands on one end and brick walkways weave a geometric maze through a grove of trees that provide shade to visitors, who can relax on the white park benches placed throughout the park.

*Courtesy of SOKANET (www.sokagakkai.or.jp)*