

MAKIGUCHI GARDEN BLOSSOMS IN CALIFORNIA
BY JAMIE LIPTAN
STAFF WRITER

The Makiguchi California Native Plant Garden was dedicated at Beyer Elementary School in San Ysidro, Calif., June 6, in honor of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. The ceremony coincided with the 130th anniversary of Maki-guchi's birth.

Expressing SGI President Ikeda's appreciation to the school, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima announced that the SGI president would be donating 100 cherry trees to the garden. Mr. Nagashima also announced an SGI-USA donation of 33 children's books to the school's library.

Josie Hamada, a teacher at the school for nine years and 26-year SGI-USA member, dreamed of creating the garden to help the students learn responsibility, build strength of character and take pride in creating something themselves. "Gardening teaches teamwork," she explained. "In the garden, you don't talk badly about one another. If kids learn how to behave in the garden, they'll behave outside the garden as well."

Inspired by Makiguchi's educational philosophy of a partnership between parents, teachers and students, she led the children in cultivating the ground where the garden would be planted. The garden, which was designed with the help of Josie's husband, Steve, is populated with plants native to the state of California.

San Ysidro is located two miles from the border between Mexico and the United States. Of the 620 students at Beyer Elementary School, 98 percent call Spanish their primary language. Consequently, they often struggle with the American educational system. Josie's dream for the garden is that it will inspire the students to overcome the stigma of disadvantaged circumstances and create a bright future for themselves.

Also dedicated at the ceremony was the Beyer Community Garden, to be tended by the local citizens, and where trees were planted in the names of Makiguchi, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., President Ikeda and legendary Mexican-American activist Cesar Chavez.