

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
OMAHA FESTIVAL SPARKS DIALOGUE
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More than 200 SGI-USA members and their guests from the Omaha, Neb., area gathered on July 29 at Fontenelle Park for a Family Youth Festival celebrating the new century. Members traveled from throughout Nebraska and Iowa, with one member traveling all the way from South Dakota.

The festival began with a presentation of Victory Over Violence by the youth. They have been doing the presentation for schools in their communities and are determined to make a difference in society. After presenting information about the VOV campaign, they led the members in small group dialogues designed to help people recognize the role that violence plays in our lives.

At noon, everyone gathered for a picnic lunch. Conversation resounded as people gathered in small informal groups, getting reacquainted and making new friends while they ate.

After lunch, several study groups gathered. An introductory group talked with guests who were unfamiliar with the SGI, while others sought to deepen their understanding of Buddhism.

At the same time, the children gathered to do their own activity. Twenty-four children ranging in age from 3 to 10 participated in the making of goop, a homemade substance similar to silly putty, but much more flexible. The children were quite absorbed and had a wonderful time.

A culture show was presented at 2:30, and everyone was encouraged to participate. Several friends of the SGI performed along with the members. The show opened with a play about the life of Beethoven and his realization of finding joy even in the midst of suffering, followed by a rousing rendition of "Ode to Joy."

Next, the children sang "This Little Light of Mine" with bright, smiling faces that definitely lit up the stage. Young women choreographed and performed a modern dance, and finished to much cheering and applause. The parents of one of the performers also attended the festival and said they are "really pleased their daughter has become involved with the SGI, and we will support her efforts to continue."

A guest who participated in the introductory discussion indicated her intention to attend more activities, stating, "I really liked what I heard and I was impressed by the SGI-USA members."

Everyone left the festival in high spirits, determined to move forward in their communities and show actual proof of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.