

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
AUSTIN MEMBERS HOLD TIMELY FESTIVAL
BY BARBARA FELLMAN AND MARK BLOCKUS
AUSTIN, TEXAS, CORRESPONDENTS**

The Victory Over Violence campaign took on special significance in Austin, Texas, on Sept. 23, when the members of the SGI-USA's Austin and Killeen chapters held their Family Youth Festival, the first such event following the tragic events of Sept. 11.

Members united and determined to use the tragedy as a springboard to show the power of the SGI movement for peace and to bring this message to the community. Approximately 500 members and guests gathered at Reagan High School in Austin under beautiful sunny Texas skies.

Austin Mayor Pro-Tem Jackie Goodman was on hand for the opening ceremonies. After a moment of silence in honor of the Sept. 11 victims, she addressed the attendees: "This is an enormously significant event. The decisions we make as individuals will also influence the decisions we make as a country. Thank you for making this world a better place."

Ms. Goodman presented a proclamation declaring Sept. 23 "SGI-USA Victory Over Violence Day" in Austin and a Certificate of Honorary Citizenship to SGI President Ikeda.

The "Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace" exhibition provided great background information for the community to understand the SGI's commitment toward a nonviolent approach to global problems. Ms. Goodman toured the exhibition, which was held in an adjacent building on the high school campus, commenting on how impressed she was with the SGI's efforts for peace.

Lisa McMillan, a 16-year-old high school student and SGI-USA member, delivered a heartfelt keynote speech, which she stated had changed from when she began writing it before Sept. 11. "Victory Over Violence is changing our environment and ourselves so that everyone can enjoy peace and security in their land," she explained. "We must overcome domestic violence, international violence and all other forms of negativity within our lives. We, the youth of today, must become happy in our own lives so that present and future generations can live a life of happiness and peace."

Explaining the theme "The Youthful Colors of Victory!" she said: "As youth in the SGI, we come from a diverse background of races, colors and beliefs; thus the youthful colors. Victory is because we as global citizens will overcome the prejudices and hatreds that still exist in this world today. Victory Over Violence is not an easy process but it begins with us, the Youthful Colors of Victory!"

The performance began with a beautiful rendition of "America the Beautiful" by Beverly Johnson, followed by "Jedi Training School," a *Star Wars*-based skit showing the power of faith.

The centerpiece of the festival was a seven-act play called *The Lion Has No Rage*. Written and staged by a friend of the SGI, David Kyle, the play provided a cohesive story line into which many different types of performances were interwoven. The goal was to allow each youth to participate, and to be flexible enough to include anyone's talent. Among the varied, interspersed performances were a rock duet of Oasis songs, a piano/violin concerto of Massenet and Brahms, an original hip-hop dance by Killeen young women, an Indian dance and a karate demonstration by the Boys and Girls Group members.

A local Austin hip-hop artist, MC Overlord, known for promotion of nonviolence in his lyrics, had the members dancing in the aisles to four of his upbeat songs.

All audience members joined in singing “Ode To Joy,” led by Beverly Johnson and accompanied on violin and piano by Dohee Kim and Yongsun Kwan.

Members of the community rallied their support and a number of organizations participated, including the Austin Fire Department, which set up a display as a memorial to the firemen who lost their lives in New York. Phenix & Phenix Publishing, the locally based publicists for Middleway Press, displayed the books *The Buddha in Your Mirror*, *The Way of Youth* and *For the Sake of Peace*, as well as promotional brochures and bookmarks. The walls were covered with art exhibits from a local grade school and the Del Valle Correctional Institutions, as well as a Victory Over Violence display created by the SGI-USA youth.

Two TV stations covered the event on the evening news. They interviewed SGI-USA youth to gain young peoples’ perspectives on the Sept.11 tragedy and to gather their thoughts on the first experience of war in their generation. Lisa McMillan responded confidently to the interviewer’s questions, saying, “Our culture of violence can only change by giving hope and courage to future generations.”