

# SEIZE the DAY

January 1, 2001 **A**

## Youth Focus on Propagation in 2001

### New Year's Message from SGI-USA Youth Division Leaders

**James Herrmann**, SGI-USA Youth Division Leader  
**Wendy DeSouza**, SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leader  
**Steve Mortan**, SGI-USA Young Men's Division Leader

**James Herrmann: Happy New Year!**

First, I want to thank all of the youth of SGI-USA for your amazing support and effort in advancing kosen-rufu in the United States in 2000—we advanced by leaps and bounds, achieving many victories. Together with Renu Jiandani and Cory Taylor leading the young men's and young women's divisions, each of you have indeed created an unprecedented history. I thank both Cory and Renu for their exemplary leadership. Without them, our progress would not have been possible.



**Wendy DeSouza**  
SGI-USA Young Women's Division Leader

**Steve Mortan**  
SGI-USA Young Men's Division Leader

Succeeding them as young women's division and young men's division leaders are Wendy DeSouza's and Steve Mortan—bright, courageous and inspirational leaders who will usher in a new era of development in the new century. Both in their 20s, Wendy and Steve's appointments itself signifies a new departure for SGI-USA. I look forward to working together with both of them. Wendy and Steve share their thoughts

later in this article regarding the upcoming activities for the SGI-USA youth. Please consider the contents of their article as the general direction for the youth in 2001.

Looking ahead, I want to share what this year's theme—"Year of Total Victory for The New Century"—means to me and what I feel our united focus as youth will be in this year.

As I prayed and pondered the significance of this theme, I recalled SGI President Ikeda's guidance: "March 16,

Kosen-rufu Day. The spirit of this day lives not in magnificent ceremonies or high-sounding words. It lives in victory. Victory is the most crucial thing in all endeavors. In life and in kosen-rufu, we either win or lose. I would like you to be absolute victors in both. No matter what excuses we try to make, giving in to defeat brings misery and loses us the respect of others. I hope each of you without exception will adorn your life with indestructible triumph" (*Faith into Action*, p. 73).

To me, showing "total victory" in all areas of my life equals showing measurable results and what I accomplish in my life is up to my determination and the clear goals I set for myself.

Likewise, what we accomplish as



**SGI-USA Youth Division Leader James Herrmann (center) together with SGI-USA Vice Youth Leaders (l-r) Cory Taylor, Ken Saragosa, Renu Jiandani and Kathy King.**

youth will be determined by our united focus. I firmly believe our focus in 2001 should be propagation. Let's awaken to our deep sense of mission in propagat-

ing this Buddhism in every corner of the United States. I'm confident this is the surest path to "Total Victory for the New Century."

We should begin by setting our own personal shakubuku target. Who will join the SGI this year as a result of our efforts? As we seek the answer to this question, let's pray sincerely and fight wholeheartedly to break through the limitations of our daily life, showing unrefutable actual proof in our daily lives.

### PROPAGATION

**Wendy DeSouza:** Let's focus on propagation in 2001. Our generation—the "20-somethings"—has the opportunity to implement new ideas. We've been waiting for this time. Many youth are working so hard to share Buddhism with others because they feel a debt of gratitude to President Ikeda.

**Steve Mortan:** The best way to reply to our mentor is through propagating this Buddhism.

Student Division Leader Daisaku Leslie shared with me an encounter he had with President Ikeda last year. During a dinner meeting in Japan, Daisaku asked President Ikeda how to encourage students who were suffering from mental illness, depression and other serious problems. President Ikeda went right to the heart of the matter, explaining

that the only way to help youth change their situation is through encouraging them to do shakubuku.

**Wendy:** To care enough for others to introduce them to the SGI will be our generation's challenge.

### March 16 Commemorative Meetings

**Wendy:** How can we create a natural, joyful propagation movement?

**Steve:** I believe everything comes down  
 ("MESSAGE" continued on page B)

### Timeline:

**January**—Kick-off meetings, home visitations, daimoku

**February**—Support Women's Division General Meetings

**March**—Hold introductory gatherings at the district level

**April-May**—Support our guests in receiving the Gohonzon and joining the SGI

**June-October**—Zone SGI Family Youth Festivals



## Blaze Bright New Horizons For The Sake Of Others

### New Year's Message From the Student Division Leaders

**Daisaku Leslie and Myeong Chung, SGI-USA Student Division Leaders**

Student Division

The dawn of American kosen-rufu has arrived! The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have emerged in this most significant year in the history of kosen-rufu. What kind of history can we create in this year—a year that will help determine the rest of this new millennium? What kind of SGI organization do we envision 100 years, 200 years, 1000 years from now? With these questions in mind, we are pioneering a new era of kosen-rufu together with SGI President Ikeda.

Society is in constant need of new ideas and a new philosophy. If we look at history, it has always been the youth—in particular, university students—who brought new ideas that propelled society forward. It is the mission of the student division members to blaze bright new horizons for the sake of others. Let this year, “Year of Total Victory for the New Century,” be the year the student division takes the lead in all endeavors for kosen-rufu as disciples of President Ikeda.

As you know, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, will be dedicated on May 3 and on August 24 it will welcome 100 students from all across the globe for its first class. This is such a significant time to be in the student division. President Ikeda will be instilling his heart directly into the youth with the expectation that we continue on the path of the lion-king and create an ideal organization here in the United States that can lead the world. Each of us will play an important role, not only this year but far into the future—not only in the United States, but throughout the world. It is up to each of us to realize that mission, asking: “What can I do? What can I contribute? What is the mountain I need to climb now?” We hope this year we will ask ourselves these questions.

In March, the youth will be commemorating March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, by sponsoring district introductory meetings. The members of the student division should take the lead in organizing these meetings and bringing friends so that we can share this great philosophy and the power of chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo. Let's create an atmosphere in which each person can shine and display his or her unique abilities.

In the summer, the youth will sponsor four-divisional SGI Family Youth Festivals in each zone. We can display our creative ideas and grow together with the seeking spirit to receive training in our lives. Through these festivals, let's create unprecedented unity.

In September, let's take the lead in promoting the importance of a college education, as well as Soka University of America, by sponsoring “University Fairs” together with the Junior High and High School Divisions. We will be able to have booths in which we share with potential college students the ins and outs of campus life, how to complete an application form, how to write personal essays, etc.

Throughout the year we would like to focus on studying the Goshu, chanting to eliminate the negative influence of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and challenging ourselves to participate in Soka Spirit activities.

As part of our Soka Care activities, we would like to focus on home visitation, propagation and raising student division leaders, as well as continuing the amazing growth in campus clubs. Let's also challenge our fellow stu-

dent division members to conduct monthly introductory meetings on campus and, toward March 16, lead the youth in Soka Care and propagation. As disciples, this is our mission. As practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism, this is our vow. Let's ask ourselves throughout the year, “How can I support and encourage my friends today?”

Nichiren Daishonin states, “From the time that I was born until today, I have never known

a moment's ease; I have thought only of propagating the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 965).

And President Ikeda stated in the poem “The Road to World Peace, A Garden for all Humanity” the following:

“The Buddhist Law will spread for

Ten thousand years and more, for all eternity”

This profound teaching of the Daishonin Is one we must never forget.

For its our mission.

As the above Goshu passage and poem from President Ikeda state, it is our mission to spread the Law. We are determined to create a natural movement of genuine friendship together and share this Buddhism. This is our time. Let's rise to the occasion and have no regrets. Let's win over ourselves today, here and now, and experience the real happiness of sharing with one another.

We look forward to working together with you to realize our dreams, experience joy and everlasting friendship and establish an ideal SGI organization based on the heart of President Ikeda. ♪

**“WHAT CAN I DO?  
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(“MESSAGE” continued from page A)

to our own determination for March 16, Kosen-rufu Day. Two years ago, the youth in my area of Riverside, Calif., met to discuss goals toward March 16. During our discussion, one of the youth suggested we make a goal of 100 guests. At first I felt like saying, “Are you crazy?” I then thought to myself: “Why not? This Buddhism is about making the impossible possible.” With this spirit, we struggled as if President Ikeda was right next to us—and we met our goal.

I also want to mention that the youth learned a great deal by supporting the February Women's General Meetings. The formula I observed was daimoku, home visits and bringing guests. This created an electrifying environment.

**Wendy:** The youth from the area where I practiced in Chicago last year also made the impossible possible. Our sincere women's division members supported us by bringing many youth to the meeting. Together, each one of us grew tremendously.

We should use the formula you mentioned—abundant daimoku, home visits and inviting guests.

#### Care for One Person

**Steve:** We should take to heart what President Ikeda said last year in September: “If you only attend large meetings, you cannot come to know the participants as individuals... A strong, powerful solidarity can only be built

through one-to-one dialogue” (Oct. 13, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

**Wendy:** Ultimately, our March 16 success will come down to whether or not each one of us can care for another person. Before November 18, I made a personal home visitation goal. I made visiting members a priority over from my other responsibilities, sharing my feeling about President Ikeda and trying to encourage each person in his or her daily life. Sometimes I also brought other people with me. I deepened my understanding of President Ikeda's heart and, as General Director Nagashima put it, how the members are heroes.

**Steve:** As youth, we have to be the ones who go out and convey President Ikeda's heart. Many youth have studied volume 10 of *The Human Revolution*. During the Osaka campaign, young Daisaku Ikeda tirelessly went out to the frontlines and inspired members one-on-one. He trained successors. With that same sense of responsibility, I hope the young men of SGI-USA will make President Ikeda our greatest example of a true leader. I want us to study how President Ikeda fought when he was in his 20s.

**Wendy:** I'm going to awaken my own spirit toward March 16 based on President Ikeda's example in Osaka. Why don't we study volume 10 togeth-

# A Mission Only You Can Fulfill

## New Year's Message From the Jr. High & High School Division Leaders

**C**ongratulations to all of you on arriving at this dramatic moment in history—the dawn of the new millennium, the first season of the next ten thousand years!

It can be said that century after century, human civilization has unfolded precisely so we can now be here, standing ready to welcome one of the most important twelve months in history.

“Year of Total Victory for the New Century” is the SGI’s theme for 2001.

The time is ripe for us to tap a new surge of energy, to revitalize our personal lives and come together with awesome force, constructing a truly happy society.

What kind of SGI-USA do you want to create?

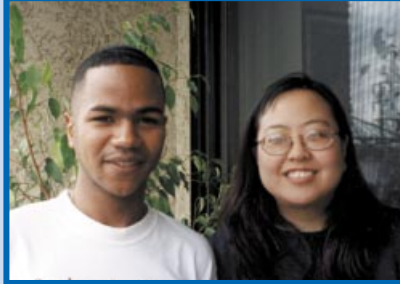
The organization is yours to establish. Imagine meetings being conducted as you want. Imagine the publications exactly reflecting your own thoughts and style. And imagine our SGI-USA community centers as locations where your friends and neighbors deeply desire to come.

Many years before SGI President Ikeda began leadership, when he was a youth, he had his first encounters with members in the Soka Gakkai. These people would remark that young Daisaku Ikeda was an odd fellow, not at all typical. In fact, he was often alone, estranged from members. Perhaps this was due to his early sense of charting a new course. A person with revolutionary ideas will not always find the environment perfectly welcoming. But, President Ikeda was undaunted by any lack of support; he moved forward, doing everything he could to create what he thought was an ideal organization.

You too can advance, blazing a new trail, generating ideas that have never been thought of. During the course of this year we will encounter several key opportunities for growth:

**(1)** In March, to celebrate March 16, Kosen-rufu Day, the youth across America will fully support each district’s introductory meeting. We, the Junior High and High School Divisions, want to be at the forefront of this effort. Let’s each find an exciting way to get involved in our district. Some of you are musical maestros. Some of you are poets. Some of you are promising young painters. The district is your place to take the stage and, through your talents, profoundly encourage others. And on that note, we should realize that all of us, with our diversity of personalities, have great experiences to tell. It’s always a positive surprise to discover how much we touch peoples’ lives just by sharing our personal struggles, our victories, our dreams.

Let’s use the March 16 meetings as inspiration to start the process of



**Jomo Thorne and Nobuko Kobayashi**  
SGI-USA High School Division Leaders



**Bobbie Stemple and Shan Serafin**  
SGI-USA Jr. High School Division Leaders

helping others grow. Knowing that, as Nichiren Daishonin wrote “If you light the path for others, you will have a clear path before you as well” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1598), we will find ourselves expanding our own lives as we introduce our friends to the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

**(2)** In commemorating May 3, Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, will be dedicating its campus. As we begin to understand the profound significance of this amazing place of learning, we begin to see how every single one of us — whether we attend it, teach there or simply promote it — plays an essential role in the mission of this great school. We will find ourselves aligning along the most effective path toward building a great world.

Soka University of America is President Ikeda’s realized vision. He has fought intensely to bring this remarkable institution to us. And it is our divisions, the teenagers of SGI-USA, who are directly in line to benefit.

We pledge to deepen our understanding of President Ikeda’s vision, to burn in our hearts his sense of compassion, to make as our own his dream for America.

**(3)** In the summer, each one of you will have a chance to participate in your zone’s SGI Family Youth Culture Festival. This will be an explosion of culture — an occasion for you to work side by side with your friends and family putting together an incredible display of talent and artistry. Please seize this opportunity! You will find it a wonderful time to make advances in your daily life, to increase your capability to win in everything you do.

Consider President Ikeda words:

“In this universe filled with countless stars and planets, you were born here, on this earth, at this time. That is definitely not an accident. There is a meaning to your having been born. You were born because it was a good thing for you to be born. You have a mission that only you can fulfill” (Nov. 10, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

We would like to pose this question to you, the future leaders of the world, “What can you do that no one else can do?” The quest to determine your unique missions is a valiant struggle. The road itself is a source of benefit and growth.

Best wishes and Happy New Year! We look forward to working with you, and we look forward to seeing your brilliant futures become a reality. ♪

Junior High & High School Division

er? We don’t have to have complicated strategies other than the basics of faith, practice and study.

As young women, my hope is that we can deepen our direct relationship with President Ikeda, conduct countless one-to-one dialogues that leave people with a renewed sense of hope, and seriously tackle study of Nichiren Daishonin’s writings toward March 16. My dream is for each one of us to become ambassadors of peace and justice by developing an unshakable conviction in faith.

### Plan for 2001

**Steve:** What’s our timeline toward the March Commemorative Meetings?

**Wendy:** At the December 2000 Central Executive Conference, youth leaders made a determination to gather 20,000 youth and guests at the March 16 meetings.

**Steve:** January is the month we suggested to hold kick-off meetings in the regions and areas and hold planning meetings for March. Our March 16 meetings will be four-divisional introductory meetings at the district level.

**Wendy:** Youth will spearhead this effort and unite with the men’s and women’s division members. Let’s also empower the next generation of youth leaders in their 20s.

We should keep in mind that our

March 16 meetings are not additional meetings. Rather, they provide an opportunity for the youth to sponsor the regularly scheduled district meeting in the month of March.

**Steve:** Throughout the month of February, we will support the Women’s General Meetings. Let’s do whatever they ask and help them realize a great victory. In addition, let’s continue planning and visiting our members.

For the month of March, we will celebrate with joyful introductory meetings in the districts. Centering on the districts, the youth will lead the way.

**Wendy:** Great! I want to add that our movement of propagation should move

toward April and May Gohonzon conferrals. Unless our guests learn gongyo, get connected to a district and receive the *World Tribune*, it will be difficult for them to take faith and join. Let’s help them get started on the right foot.

### Toward Zone SGI Family Youth Festivals

**Steve:** The result of March 16 will determine the success of our Zone SGI Family Youth Festivals. That’s why it’s so important that we start now.

**Wendy:** Our goal is to gather 100,000 members and guests throughout the country. Let’s unite with our mentor and sing “Ode to Joy”! ♪

**Let's Make Giant Strides in 2001!**



**New Year's Message From the Byakuren Leader**

**Hyon Moon, Newly appointed SGI-USA Byakuren Leader**

**Happy New Year, New Century and New Millennium!**

The century of women is finally here! What better time than now to be in the Byakuren, fighting alongside our mentor, SGI President Ikeda, to protect the members. It is my hope that we can develop unshakable confidence in ourselves and a strong seeking spirit toward our mentor.

During the first Byakuren General Meeting, held in Japan in 1977, President Ikeda asked us to become "queens of good fortune who shoulder the future of the kosen-rufu movement, and pioneers who lead the way toward the great future of the SGI" (*SGI-USA Byakuren Manual*, p. 1). This has been his consistent encouragement to us since then. What incredible trust and expectation he has for us!

Let's stand up and boldly reply to our mentor by believing that we have in ourselves what it takes to accomplish our mission. In the past, I have doubted my own capabilities and whether I could fulfill my mentor's expectations of me. I now realize these doubts were my greatest enemy in accomplishing my dreams, an obstacle in becoming the happiest woman I can be. Once we can break through the limitations we put on ourselves, nothing is impossible.

Nichiren Daishonin promised: "Whether you chant the Buddha's name, recite the sutra, or merely offer flowers and incense, all your virtuous acts will implant benefits and roots of goodness in your life. With this conviction you should strive in faith" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 4).

What we do as Byakuren members — such as cleaning the bathrooms or setting up meeting places before anyone else arrives — may go unnoticed by others. Please be assured, however, that your efforts have not gone unnoticed by the Gohonzon. Of course we will continue to face difficulties and tribulations — this is part of life. But, we can encourage and give one another hope, reminding ourselves that we will have total victory in the end.

I feel that this is not just the beginning of a new century or millennium, but a new beginning for each one of us. Rather than making small steps toward happiness, let's make giant strides! Through our total victory, let's prove the validity of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the greatness of our mentor.

President Ikeda recently stated that we should "all stand up together and brightly declare our indomitable strength to the world" in the new century. By uniting together, let's show the power of the Byakuren by becoming the core of the young women's division.

I am determined to do my utmost to care for every single member, basing all my actions on the Goshu and daimoku. Always seeking my mentor's heart, I am also determined to become the brightest person with a smile that never leaves my face. Let's do it together! ♪

**Fulfilling Our Gajokai Mission**

**New Year's Message From the Gajokai Leader**

**Eric Freedman, SGI-USA Gajokai Leader**



**Happy New Year!**

To my fellow Gajokai members, I want to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your amazing efforts last year in supporting the members from behind the scenes. As we have heard many times from our mentor, SGI President Ikeda, the greatest honor and fortune lies in a life that is truly lived for others. And that is exactly what you have been focused on all year. Congratulations!

The Gajokai has seen many achievements this past year, one of the largest being the triumphant gathering of the Gajokai, alongside the Soka Group and Byakuren members, at the second Youth Support Groups Conference last November at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. That was a new departure for the Gajokai entering 2001, which is designated as the "Year of Total Victory for the New Century." Together we made the determination that we would "raise the bar" in our own lives, challenging not only living the spirit of Gajokai in our daily lives, but developing an even deeper bond with President Ikeda through the mentor-disciple relationship. We pledged to fight side-by-side, sharing this great Buddhism with our friends and fully engaging in the same battle as our mentor — the battle to help awaken people to Soka Spirit.

For the Gajokai, 2001 will mark a year of exciting growth and change. We will have a new nationwide Gajokai Manual, new guidelines for joining and continuing as a Gajokai member, a new uniform and significant involvement in our organization's Soka Spirit and propagation efforts.

In order for all of us to continue challenging our

growth and involvement in the basics of faith, all Gajokai members will be asked to take on the challenge of sponsoring one new member each year. If unable to do so, let's support a new member's development, for example, teaching him or her gongyo or assisting with study.

President Ikeda has said: "Whether or not someone succeeds in helping others take faith in the teachings of Buddhism, the simple fact that he or she practices is in itself most praiseworthy. If you can feel heartfelt joy in being able to expound the Law and share it with others, your blessings will increase still further. Joyfully engaging in propagation and other activities is the spirit of Buddhism."

As Gajokai, we are the one's who have pledged to fight behind the scenes to protect the members and our organization. There is no more direct way than to be involved in the Soka Spirit movement. I would ask that each Gajokai member become active in the Soka Spirit daimoku toso in your area. If your area does not have a weekly or monthly toso, then please start one! Be the driving force in your area, be the one who leads the toso and the Soka Spirit study meetings, the one who makes a difference in your local organization and community. This is the fighting spirit of the Gajokai! I am committed to do everything I can to lead these movements in my local area, as well as introduce at least one person this year to the SGI.

My fellow brothers of the Gajokai, together, let's have amazing victories in our personal lives and in our respective areas. Let's revolutionize our lives, becoming young men who lead the kosen-rufu movement in America and who will confidently and joyfully welcome President and Mrs. Ikeda back to the United States. ♪

Behind the Scenes Group

**Let's Walk the Walk**

**New Year's Message From the Soka Group Leader**

**Ken Nakagawa, SGI-USA Soka Group Leader**



**Happy New Millennium to my Soka Group brothers!**

Let's make 2001 the year that we all walk the path of mentor and disciple. In order to walk the walk, we need to understand our mentor's heart. SGI President Ikeda is the original and eternal Soka Group member. Let's study and absorb President Ikeda's guidance, learning through his example as a youth supporting his mentor, Josei Toda. If we can walk this noble path throughout the year, then there is no question each and every one of us will savor total victory in our lives.

President Ikeda has stated: "Why have we, the SGI, achieved such remarkable development? Because we have wholeheartedly treasured each individual member as a child of the Buddha, in exact accord with the compassionate spirit of the Daishonin" (*Faith into Action*, p. 181).

This should be the underlying spirit of the Soka Group toward others and also one another. Soka Group is the training ground to fortify this compassionate spirit. I ask each Soka Group member to treasure one another with this spirit, as brothers who share the same mission. To the Soka Group veterans, please exemplify this compassionate spirit to the young men who will be joining us. With this spirit, we can form bonds of trust and respect. Young men will want to receive training in the Soka Group if they feel this spirit from its leaders. Let's make this an activity in which every young man who joins will seek out training with the utmost confidence that they will be a more capable person as a result.

To fortify the "compassionate spirit of the

Daishonin" within our lives, let's each determine to sponsor one new member this year!

At the Youth Support Groups Conference this past November, Soka Group representatives determined together to support fully the Soka Spirit movement with the attitude that Soka Group and Soka Spirit are synonymous. Please seek out your local Soka Spirit leaders and let them know that you want to support their activities. I'm sure they will be very happy! Let's chant for total victory against injustice and study about Soka Spirit more than anyone else. If you know any Courageous Heart Group members, please ensure they are happy and safe; be their personal Soka Group member. And let's hold monthly Soka Group meetings to chant and study about Soka Spirit.

President Ikeda stated: "I am like a stake in the water. As long as the stake is firmly in place, the ship of the people tied to the stake can remain stalwart. Then, even on stormy days, everyone can rest assured. Meanwhile, as everyone enjoys their security, the stake, out of sight in the cold water, stands firmly to keep the ship in place" (July 2000 *Living Buddhism*, p. 40). I ask all the Soka Group members to be like the "stake" in supporting our upcoming SGI Family Youth Culture Festivals this year. Let's do whatever it takes from behind the scenes to ensure total victory in these festivals.

And then, let's meet back at the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the Youth Support Groups Conference at the end of this year, rejoicing in the total victory in our own lives. Uniting with our Young Men's Division General, Steve Mortan, Soka Group brothers, "Let's walk the walk!" ♪