

# SEIZE the Day

SPECIAL YOUTH  
PULLOUT SECTION

During the remainder of this year, 43 SGI-USA Family Youth Festivals will be held throughout the United States. Some of the zones have created their own logos for these events. We would like to share logos from Hawaii's festival that will be held on July 7 and Northeastern Zone's festival to be held on July 14.



## Hawaii's Family Youth Festival

By Donovan Takushi, Hawaii

An open drawing was held and a logo chosen from among those submitted to accompany our powerful theme for the Youth Family Festival this summer: Victory Over Violence, Youth Standing Together for the Sake of Peace. Simply put, the chosen logo is an exact visual interpretation of Hawaii's carefully chosen theme.

Members of the SGI-USA, as well as members of society, will view the hand-drawn logo that conveys the spirit of peace and unity we want to create among the youth of Hawaii.

The children are represented as faceless, fearless, hands interlocked, boldly standing together on the symbol they humbly represent—peace.

The title has been splashed in a brilliant purple, a color that represents peace. The youth in the picture, in perfect accord with the fashion trend of today's youth, don bright colors as if their spirit and unity were bursting through the fabric. Because these represent youth both inside and outside the SGI, they are faceless. The peace symbol they stand on has been modified and is shining with gold, a color synonymous with strength. This peace symbol extends the lines past the oval shape, breaking through its boundaries and limitations. It is a peace symbol representative of today's youth. It is a unique symbol that expresses the youth's determination to fight injustice with a stand-alone spirit in their respective regions. ●

## Northeastern Zone Family Youth Festival

By John Kasahara, New York

The excitement of the members can be felt everywhere. The youth have been meeting every Sunday for rehearsals from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and various committees have also been meeting on weeknights and Saturdays.

One such committee is the graphic arts committee. About three weeks ago, they were given the mission to create what would be the logo for the entire Northeastern Zone Family Youth Festival. Several days later, after struggling for hours, they narrowed the list down to four. After much dialogue with all the youth representatives and leaders, they were able to finalize the logo to one incredible design. It is titled "Emerging of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth." The primary designer of this logo was a young man named Justin Durgonsaeng. Justin has been practicing Buddhism all his life and through this family festival activity, has been able to reignite his commitment to kosen-rufu.

The rehearsals each Sunday have been held at the New York Culture Center. However, as of June 3, they have been held at a local elementary school. The school was picked solely because of its close proximity to the culture center.

At the practice, one Byakuren member noticed a pile of books sitting on a desk outside of a classroom. When she looked closely at the top book, she realized that it was the children's book *The Princess and the Moon* written by SGI President Ikeda. It was so amazing that at a regular school, there would be a book by President Ikeda. A few people looked at the book and saw that it was quite worn and obviously a favorite among the many young people at this school.

This family festival has proven to be an opportunity for all of the Northeastern Zone to gain so much with our primary mission being to empower the younger youth who will shoulder the responsibility of kosen-rufu. It is the chance for everyone to set personal goals, break through their own struggles, unite as one under the leadership of President Ikeda and cry out on July 14 that the youth of the Northeastern Zone have achieved a tremendous victory! ●



## Achieving True Success in Life

By Seshia Abe, Fairfield, Conn.

I have been practicing Buddhism since I was born. My mother was attending Mothers Group meetings when I was just a baby. I began attending Boys and Girls Group meetings after I turned 5 years old. This was when I started to chant.

For as long as I can remember, I have heard the sound of my parents chanting.

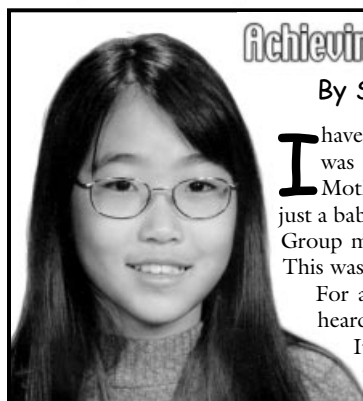
It always had an interesting attraction to me. It was strange because

the sound was different from any other. I was also curious about what Nam-myoho-renge-kyo meant. Although I didn't really know anything about chanting at that time, I wanted to join my parents, so I did. After a while, chanting became very tiring and I thought that I had other things to do. But I noticed that I was a little happier when I chanted and that encouraged me.

I wanted to get better grades, so I decided to chant more and go to all of the Boys and Girls Group meetings. Since last year, I have been very successful in school. I became a top honor student and last March, I received the Tomlinsonite Award that is bestowed on students for academic achievement.

Next, I decided with my mom and dad, that I wanted to challenge myself with the SGI-USA Entrance Examination held on April 22 this

(*"Success..." continued on Page D*)



Seize the Day will be running a monthly column called "Young Disciples." Each installment will be written with two ideas in mind: to explore the mentor-disciple relationship; and to discuss some of the many actions SGI President Ikeda has taken in the name of peace.



# YOUNG DISCIPLES

## Cherishing One Individual



By Paul Lim  
Torrance, Calif.

“For 16 days, I witnessed first hand how tirelessly President Ikeda worked for the sake of the members — exhaustively sharing and implementing his grand vision for America, yet never losing sight of a single individual.”

Having grown up in the SGI, I was always aware of who SGI President Ikeda was, but only in the most superficial sense. My father often told me what a great leader he was and how he had inspired so many people. Our living room always had a picture of President Ikeda, and with much awkwardness, I would explain to my friends who came over why he was not a family member. The only connection I had with President Ikeda was through my father. In February 1990, that all changed.

President Ikeda arrived in Los Angeles for what would become a historic 16-day visit. I had the opportunity to participate behind-the-scenes during his visit. As a wide-eyed 22-year-old, I was excited and at the same time anxious about the opportunity to see President Ikeda in person. I chanted many hours before and during this time. I'd like to share one particular experience that left an indelible impression on me.

One afternoon, I was assigned to open and close the front gate of the Malibu Training Center. At that time, President Ikeda was leaving the center en route to a meeting with the late Dr. Linus Pauling. From inside the car, President and Mrs. Ikeda waved to me as they went through the gate. Soon after, I watched as two youth leaders came running toward me with a sense of urgency. They told me that President Ikeda wanted to present me with a gift and to thank me for all my efforts. I was surprised, to say the least. They continued by saying that this gift was not for me, but was in fact for my mother. My surprise turned into puzzlement.

I was asked to contact my mother as soon as possible. I called her and found out that she had actually been trying to get in contact with me. Her voice was hoarse and she sounded tired; I knew something was wrong. I told her not to worry and that I would come home immediately. When I arrived home, I learned that my uncle had suddenly passed away of respiratory failure at the age of 51. Although my uncle lived in Thailand, the news of his death devastated my mother.

My mother's father died when she was an infant and it was my uncle that helped raise my mother

and supported her family. He had been a father to her, and in a way, his death was like losing her father all over again. I could tell my mother was suffering deeply. Her eyes were bloodshot from crying.

It was at that moment that I remembered that I had a gift to give her on behalf of President Ikeda. When she opened the gift and saw that it was a pair of beautiful sandalwood prayer beads, her face immediately lit up. In that instant, I watched her face change from anguish to appreciation and joy. President Ikeda's consideration had touched her beyond words. It is a moment that I will never forget.

As I was driving back to Malibu, I felt so appreciative toward President Ikeda. I was so moved by his thoughtfulness, his consideration to treasure one person, my mother, in the midst of such a hectic schedule. Right then, I decided that I would challenge myself to learn from him and contribute in some way to kosen-rufu.

For 16 days, I witnessed first hand how tirelessly President Ikeda worked for the sake of the members — exhaustively sharing and implementing his grand vision for America, yet never losing sight of a single individual.

I realize I still have a long way to go in becoming a capable disciple. But I am confident that the path to becoming humanistic lies in the mentor-disciple relationship. Since 1990, whenever I read President Ikeda's encouragement, I have absolute confidence that there is no separation between what he says and what he does. In his New Year's poem for 2001, I was reminded of President Ikeda's spirit to cherish each person:

*From one individual to another,  
Starting in our immediate environment,  
From small, modest efforts,  
Let us steadily carry on our movement.  
A commitment to treasure each person—  
In that daily, unceasing practice  
Lies the dynamism  
To transform the entire planet.*

(Jan. 1 World Tribune, p. 3) ☉

# YOUTH *Study* JULY 2001

## Securing a New Century



By Ken Saragosa  
SGI-USA Vice Youth Leader

The following is part one of a two-part essay on “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land.”

Once there was a traveler who spoke these words in sorrow to his host....Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, and dead bodies lie side by side like planks on a bridge...[W]hy is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?

The host then spoke: I have been brooding alone upon this matter, indignant in my heart, but now that you have come, we can lament together. Let us discuss this question at length...

I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have looked a little at the scriptures for an answer. The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that sages leave and do not return. And in their stead devils and demons come, and disasters and calamities occur. I cannot keep silent upon this matter. I cannot suppress my fears (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, pp. 6-7).

The essay “On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land” is one of the most famous of Nichiren Daishonin’s writings. It was written while the Daishonin was in his 30s and was the first major scholarly essay he wrote after he began to teach Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. In many ways, it marks the formal beginning of his effort to bring peace and happiness to society and the people through propagation of the true Law.

The entire essay is written in a question and answer format, with a “traveler” seeking to understand why his country — 13th century Japan — was suffering so much. At the time, Japan was in economic and political turmoil, and disease, famine and death were common. The dominant religion in Japan was Buddhism, and since the religion promises peace and prosperity, the traveler was wondering why the nation was in such difficulty. The “host” represents the Daishonin, who explains to his guest that although Japan seems to embrace Buddhism, actually the teachings that most of the people embraced were not Buddhist at all. He explained that the suffering that people were experiencing was the result of embracing an incorrect view of life. The point of this essay, then, is to show that by practicing the correct teaching and upholding the correct view of life, a person can not only become happy himself, but can actually help to transform society.

But what lessons does this essay teach us, who live in the United States in the 21st century? The format of this essay — discussion between a skeptical “guest” and a confident “host” — is the spirit of propagation through patient dialogue and is kind of an example or exercise to model. By the end of the dialogue, the guest is fully convinced and embraces the Daishonin’s teachings, accepting Nichiren as his teacher and mentor.

In the first question the traveler wonders: “What is wrong? What error has been committed?” In general, the view of the traveler represents an erroneous view that the Daishonin will refute and correct, but in this first question, we see a spirit of honest and open seeking.

Today of course, very few people would ask why disasters or tragedies occur. When we watch the news and hear of another shooting spree at a high school, or of some horror committed in some distant country, do many people ask “Why?” or do most people wince, shrug and say it’s “just life.”

In asking “What is wrong? What error has been committed?” a belief is expressed that things shouldn’t be that way; that if people are suffering and the world is in disarray, it’s not the natural state of affairs — it’s because something is wrong. More to the point, asking these questions expresses hope that there is some way to correct what is wrong, to fix the error and to find a way for us to create a better world where atrocities don’t happen. We need to return to this kind of attitude, to ask ourselves when we see the world we live in: “What is wrong? What error has been committed,” not to look for false answers, but to see the ways in which we are responsible and can take responsibility for the world in which we live. ●

Look for part two of this article in the July 27 issue of *Seize the Day*

### QUESTIONS for discussion

1. How is the conviction and spirit of propagation that the Daishonin expresses in this essay related to a spirit of tolerance?

2. What do most people look to as the basis for their happiness? In your view, does society embrace a “correct view” or an “incorrect view”? What are the “misleading teachings” of contemporary America?



# Trailblazers!



By **Wendi Gotanda**  
**Los Angeles Coastal  
Region Student  
Division Leader**

## Living with Purpose

This lifetime will never come again; it is precious and irreplaceable. To live without regret, it is crucial for us to have a concrete purpose and continually set goals and challenges for ourselves. It is equally important that we keep moving toward specific targets steadily and tenaciously, one step at a time.

— SGI President Ikeda,  
*Faith Into Action*, page 35

As members of the student division, attending college is our first big step into the realm of adulthood. For many of us, this is the first time in our lives we are living away from our families and are faced with the task of truly taking responsibility for our lives. While many times we may question our own judgment when dealing with problems, this is the time when we can cultivate the strongest core of character.

Like many other students, when I first started college I was ill-prepared to take full responsibility for my actions. Because my professors did not take attendance, I felt that I could skip class, telling myself that it was OK—I would study the material on my own time. Rather than go to class diligently, I would hang out with friends instead. Because

I failed to take responsibility for my education, I earned the first “D” of my life in my first semester in college.

From this experience, I was awakened to the fact that I have to take ownership of my own life. If I want to succeed in school and in life, then I need to take the actions that will help create this success. I have come to realize that what is gained from my college experience depends completely upon the earnestness by which I approach life.

Because we are college students, we have the unique opportunity to interact with others that share our same academic interests. At our respective universities are countless other young adults—SGI members and non-members alike—that are gaining a wonderful education and carry the firm belief that we are the future. As we strive to meet the goals we have set for ourselves at school, this is the perfect opportunity to share our Buddhist philosophy with our colleagues in academia. There is perhaps no better time than in our college years when it is perfectly natural to set lofty, life-changing goals for ourselves. Rather than just remaining as lofty goals, we have the full ability to realize our dreams based upon our Buddhist practice.

As we welcome in this first year of the new century, there has already been tremendous growth for our student division. Within the last year, several new campus clubs have sprung up throughout the nation. In the Los Angeles

Coastal Region, four new campus clubs have been started in the Santa Monica, Long Beach and Torrance areas. This is a trend that I’m sure is mirrored throughout other cities around the nation that have universities nearby. We have also seen students across the nation working with the junior high and high school divisions to spread the message of non-violence through the Victory Over Violence initiative.

In the last few years, the student division has also been fortunate enough to have conferences each summer at the Florida Nature and Culture Center. This conference—to be held this year August 2–5—is another opportunity for us to create bonds of friendship and jumpstart our practices. In attending the student division conference last year, I was grateful to meet so

many inspiring students. In sharing our struggles and triumphs with each other, we all left the conference with renewed spirits and refreshed vigor to share Buddhism with others at our schools.

As brothers and sisters in faith, let’s continue to strive for success in all that we do. Toward our zone family youth festivals this summer, let’s be the first ones to stand up and take action. As we ring in the second set of Seven Bells, the youth of the SGI are poised on the brink of breaking through to greater growth and development! ●

**‘I have come to realize that what is gained from my college experience depends completely upon the earnestness by which I approach life.’**

*(“Success...” continued from Page A)*

year. I wanted to learn more about this Buddhism that my parents had been practicing since I was born. I studied the exam material with the help of my parents and Mrs. Jane Corwin, who is a women’s division member. She came over to my house at least twice a week to help me study. My district members even set up a study meeting for me. Studying helped me understand and become more interested in Buddhism. I learned about Nichiren Daishonin, Soka Spirit and what Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means.

I understood most of the exam material. But I became very worried the day before the exam. I couldn’t answer some of the questions I had been studying. The next day, I heard that my friend Shayna would come to support me at the testing site. This encouraged me to do my best. Jane and my mother came, too. We all went to Bergman’s Cafeteria where the exam was being held. I didn’t want to let everyone down, and I especially wanted to pass the test for myself.

I realized that I was probably the youngest person at Bergman’s Cafeteria and I was worried when I saw all of the adults and teenagers

that were taking the exam. But I didn’t want to chicken out after I studied so much. SGI President Ikeda says: “What is defeat in life?

It is not merely making a mistake; defeat means giving up on yourself in the midst of difficulty. What is true success in life? True success means winning in your battle with yourself. Those whose who persist in the pursuit of their dreams, no matter what the hurdles, are winners in life, for they have won over their weaknesses” (*The Way of Youth*, p. 107).

So I tried my best and I passed the test. Passing the test let me know that I am starting to understand the basics of Buddhism and encouraged me to learn much more in the future. Studying and practicing Buddhism will help me become happier in life, make me want to do better in school, be a better friend and appreciate other people more.

When I think about all the things that are going on in my life, I want to strengthen my practice and study. My determination is to participate in the orchestra for my zone’s family youth festival. I will try to challenge and grow in faith so that I can have the greatest future. ●

**‘Studying and practicing Buddhism will help me become happier in life, make me want to do better in school, be a better friend and appreciate other people more.’**