

DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL

NEW LEADERS BLOSSOM IN SEATTLE

Photo by DIXON HAMBY



On Nov. 11 at the SGI-USA Seattle Culture Center, 128 new youth leaders are appointed. The appointments furthered the SGI-USA's goal of having young men's and young women's leaders in each district by the end of the year. Youth appointments will continue to be made in the new year.

AIMING TOWARD FURTHER GROWTH

Photo by NORIKO KAKUSHO

By TED MORINO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

In the midst of his busy November schedule, SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima made a whirlwind trip to Oklahoma City, Columbia, S.C., and Fort Walton Beach and Fort Lauderdale in Florida to express his appreciation to the members in each area for their dedication to their communities and to encourage them in their efforts in propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. It was Mr. Nagashima's first visit to Oklahoma City, Columbia and the Gulf Coast area since being appointed general director in December 1999.

At a guidance meeting at the Oklahoma Community Center on Nov. 12, Mr. Nagashima expressed his gratitude to the members for attending (some from as far away as Lawton, Tulsa and Dallas) and said: "Oklahoma was a target of terrorism in April 1995. We recently experienced more terrorism in America. It is important in Buddhism to recognize the significance behind such horrendous occurrences. As the Daishonin states: 'Great events never have minor omens. When great evil occurs, great good follows' (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1119). We accomplish this by returning to the basics of faith, practice and study."



PLEASE SEE GENERAL DIRECTOR, 3

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima encourages members in Miami, Nov. 15.

DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL ★ DISTRICT SPECIAL

SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S AUG. 21 SPEECH — PART 1

THE ULTIMATE WAY OF LIFE

‘Nothing is more noble than people dedicated to kosen-rufu,’ SGI President Ikeda says. ‘They enjoy good health and are fulfilled. They accumulate boundless good fortune and benefit. This is the ultimate way of life.’

Part 1 of SGI President Ikeda's speech at a joint training session for leaders of the Hokuriku and Shinetsu regions, held at the Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, Japan, Aug. 21.



‘Your efforts are building a solid foundation of faith and kosen-rufu, and creating a great river of happiness that will endure in your family for generations to come,’ says SGI President Ikeda.

Thank you for your efforts to attend this Hokuriku-Shinetsu joint training session!

The long-awaited completion of the Hokuriku Training Center is scheduled for next month. Congratulations!

To the members of Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures in the Hokuriku region and the members of Niigata and Nagano prefectures in Shinetsu, thank you for the tremendous efforts you have made amidst the harsh climates of your respective areas. [These regions are known for their heavy winter snowfalls.]

Each of you can be confident that your hard work is laying the groundwork for the victory of your entire family. Your efforts are building a solid foundation of faith and kosen-rufu, and creating a great river of happiness that will endure in your family for generations to come. I wholeheartedly praise you as champions of the spirit, benefit and actual proof, the likes of which are without match in Japan — no, the entire world.

Nothing is more noble than people dedicated to kosen-rufu. Such people are devoted not only to their own happiness but also that of others. They enjoy good health and are fulfilled. They accumulate boundless good fortune and benefit. This is the ultimate way of life. And it is the absolute promise of Nichiren Daishonin, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

The ancient Greek philosopher Plato, of whom I am very fond, said, “I cannot but say what appears to me to be right

and true.” And the towering German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, from whom I have learned much about literature, asserted: “The truth must be repeated over and over again; because error is repeatedly preached among us.... Everywhere, in fact, error prevails, and is quite easy in the feeling that it has a decided majority on its side.” We must continue to speak out for the cause of good. We must continue to speak out for truth.

Some people struggle in earnest. Some are defeated by struggle. And some give up without even trying. Only those who struggle until the very end can attain Buddhahood. Such people are life's true winners.

All of you are advancing kosen-rufu in the place where you have a profound mission.

Your efforts have adorned the Shinetsu region, birthplace of first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and the Hokuriku region, birthplace of second president Josei Toda, with a proud victory of kosen-rufu. This year marks the 130th anniversary of President Makiguchi's birth and the 50th anniversary of President Toda's inauguration. I can imagine the joyful smiles of these two great predecessors, who are surely applauding all of you.

The Daishonin praised his follower Abutsu-bo, our senior

in faith who lived in Shinetsu [which includes Sado Island], saying: “You deserve to be called a leader of this northern province. Could it be that Bodhisattva Pure Practices has been reborn into this world as Abutsu-bo and visited me? How wonderful! How marvelous!” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 300).

Each of you is truly a “leader of this northern province” in the 21st century. I hope you will leave behind an eternal, indestructible history as leaders of our significant movement in Hokuriku and Shinetsu.

The Hokuriku and Shinetsu regions both span very large areas. Day in and day out, the members of the women's division, in particular, travel far and wide, taking action for the sake of the Law, for friends and members, for society and for the future. In recognition of each of your efforts, I have presented one of your women's leaders with the words “Hardest Working Women's Leader in All of Japan.”

The Daishonin says: “A woman who takes this efficacious medicine [of the Mystic Law] will be surrounded and protected by these four great bodhisattvas [Superior Practices, Boundless Practices, Pure Practices, and Firmly Established Practices] at all times. When she rises to her feet, so too will the bodhisattvas, and when she walks along the road,

they will also do the same. She and they will be as inseparable as a body and its shadow, as fish and water, as a voice and its echo, or as the moon and its light” (WND, 415).

The path along which you, the members of the women's division, are advancing is the path of happiness, hope, harmony, good fortune and benefit. And it is eternally endowed with the four virtues of eternity, happiness, true self and purity [which the four bodhisattvas represent].

The Daishonin was well acquainted with the Hokuriku and Shinetsu areas. In addition to Niigata and Sado, places where he underwent severe persecution, he writes of such locales as Tono-oka, present-day Iida City, in Shinano, present-day Nagano Prefecture, Lake Suwa and Tateyama in Etchu, present-day Toyama Prefecture, and Hakusan in Kaga, present-day Ishikawa Prefecture.

All of you are advancing kosen-rufu in a place where you have a profound mission. The Daishonin is without a doubt praising you. There is no question that your lives will be filled with wonderful good fortune and benefit.

It is important that leaders pay tribute to the great achievements of their fellow members.

SUA has received a warm welcome from all sectors of American society.

The first entrance ceremony

for Soka University of America, Aliso Viejo, is on Aug. 24. Nothing could make me happier than being able to actualize the magnificent dream of President Makiguchi and President Toda, two brilliant educators from Shinetsu and Hokuriku.

Local newspapers in both of these regions have given prominent coverage to the opening of the university. And people from every sector of society in the United States have expressed keen interest in and voiced high expectations for the school.

As you may have heard, *The New York Times*, one of the world's leading newspapers, ran a front-page story on the school on July 25 (see the Aug. 10 *World Tribune*, p. 1). Similar articles have in fact appeared in newspapers across the United States.

On Aug. 16, the Associated Press sent out an article on the opening of SUA, which was picked up and used by a total of 40 major media organizations, including CNN, ABC News and *The Washington Post*. The Aug. 17 *Chicago Tribune* ran an article under the headline “New College Touts Global Awareness; Buddhist-Inspired California Campus Hopes to Be Model.”

In addition to introducing the school, the coverage included impressions by members of the first matriculating class, who chose SUA because of its founding principle of world peace. The university's curriculum and ideals were also introduced, along with reports of the faculty members' enthusiasm to help realize a system of true humanistic education aimed at fostering global citizens.

On Aug. 19, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a feature titled “A New-View University; Education: Backed by a Japanese

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Buddhist Group, Soka University in Aliso Viejo Emphasizes Peace and Liberal Arts." The almost full-page article covered the school's ideals, facilities, unique system and curriculum. It also included the voices of faculty and students.

The *Los Angeles Times* article described SUA as a college founded on Buddhist ideals, stating: "By starting a college in this country, Soka Gakkai is following an American tradition. Many private colleges in the United States have a religious foundation...even USC (the University of Southern California), which was started by Methodists, or Harvard..."

My appreciation for the warm welcome SUA has received not only from the local community of Orange County but from all sectors of American society.

In Soka education, students are the foundation of the school.

Those who have visited the SUA campus have all voiced profound understanding and approval.

Dr. Linus Pauling Jr., son of the late Dr. Linus Pauling, who attended the dedication cere-

mony on May 3 earlier this year, said: "The finest building at Soka University of America is the student dormitory, which is situated on top of a high hill. The treasures of a university are the students who study there, graduate and go on to contribute to society. This reflects the spirit of the founder, Dr. Ikeda, who loves young people and entrusts them with the future."

Students are most important. Students are the foundation of the school. This is the original spirit of Soka education as expounded by presidents Makiguchi and Toda.

For a time, President Makiguchi served as principal of Shirogane Elementary School in Tokyo. In addition to his administrative duties, he was responsible for teaching language and mathematics, and occasionally ethics and other subjects.

Even as the school's top administrator, he remained on the frontlines of the education scene, always interacting with his beloved pupils. In fact, many of his students have today recorded their fond reminiscences of him to be kept for posterity.

Experiencing failure and making mistakes are opportunities to self-reflect and advance.

President Makiguchi also taught calligraphy. He once explained the fundamentals of this art as follows: "Since calligraphy is an expression of the individual's personality, it is natural for each character to vary a bit. At the same time, however, there is one thing they should have in common; they should blaze with hope and optimism for the future." President Makiguchi always encouraged development and undying hope.

He also often said: "As human beings, we must continually advance. And we must do so with a sense of purpose. Of course, we will inevitably experience failure and make mistakes along the way. Such times are opportunities to self-reflect. Without self-reflection, we cannot progress. Some people will say that to reflect on oneself is to dwell on the past and therefore nothing positive can be gained from it. However, self-reflection is not the same as regret, even though they are often confused. Noth-

ing can come of regret. Self-reflection leads to advancement." His words are profound.

At that time, students were required to memorize the *Imperial Rescript on Education*. [This decree was issued in the name of Emperor Meiji on Oct. 30, 1890, setting forth the guiding principles of education in Japan. It served as a powerful instrument of political indoctrination and remained in effect until the end of World War II.] Many teachers aggressively forced the children to learn it by heart.

But President Makiguchi took an entirely different approach. For example, in explaining the article "In a time of emergency, you should courageously offer your life to the State," he said: "Peace is important. We should focus our thoughts on peace. As long as we safeguard peace, there will be no 'time of emergency.'"

One of his students reminisced: "Mr. Makiguchi did not teach militaristic education in the least. He taught that peace is the only way. This was completely unheard of back then." As the world was plunging headlong toward war, President Makiguchi promoted

peace education.

In addition to outlining the concept of "humanitarian competition" in his work *The Geography of Human Life*, President Makiguchi articulated an idea similar to the current concept of preventative diplomacy. He emphasized that war could only be prevented by working to build confidence among the parties involved.

President Makiguchi's greatness lay in his courage, foresight and conviction. The deeper one delves into his life, the more this becomes apparent.

"I will turn even the poorest student into an outstanding one." "I will enable every student to surpass me." Such was the unwavering compassion and spirit of President Makiguchi, and of his successor, President Toda.

I am delighted to see the members of the Education Department, a gathering of teachers who are carrying on this very spirit, standing up and carrying out splendid activities in Shinetsu, Hokuriku, around Japan and throughout the world.

To be continued in an upcoming issue.

FROM GENERAL DIRECTOR, 1

At another guidance meeting, held on Nov. 13 at the South Carolina Community Center, Mr. Nagashima energetically spoke to the members who traveled all the way from Greenville, Charleston, Augusta and other neighboring cities. Touching upon the depths of the Buddhist teachings, he stated: "The importance of fusing our lives with the Mystic Law is the touchstone, allowing us to move from the microcosm of our innate Buddhahood to the macrocosm of the world and universe and gain the wisdom to live with the courage and vitality of a lion. Our elevated life-condition is the most important attribute we will be able to carry with us after death. As the Daishonin states, 'Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world'" (WND, 64).

At yet another guidance meeting on Nov. 14 at the new Gulf Coast Activity Center located near Fort Walton Beach and Pensacola, the general director encouraged pioneer members, expressing his hope that they become vital players in propagating the Daishonin's



Members in Oklahoma City welcome SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima for his first visit to the area, Nov. 12.

Buddhism in the Gulf Coast area, rich with nature's beauty: "Let's refresh our *shakubuku* spirit, which is vital for our happiness. Nothing is impossible when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo wholeheartedly. Great joy and conviction well up from within. People today, especially after Sept. 11, are seriously looking for something that can be the source of fearlessness. The time has truly come for us to share Buddhism with them for their peace and happiness."

The final leg of Mr. Nagashima's guidance trip was the Miami Community Center,

where he attended a guidance meeting on Nov. 15. Thanking local members for their sincere efforts in propagating the Daishonin's Buddhism and nurturing new members in faith, he stated: "The spirit to spread Buddhism is what makes us courageous. Practicing for ourselves and others allows us to manifest our compassionate nature and develop good fortune. Sure, spreading Buddhism is a difficult task, but the more you try the more you will experience joy in your life. Let's win in life by showing great actual proof. Victory based upon our sincere and vigorous daimoku



Members enjoy General Director Nagashima's encouragement at the South Carolina Community Center, Nov. 13.



The general director visits the new Gulf Coast Activity Center, Nov. 14.

and consistent effort in propagating will cause our kosenruffu movement to gain further momentum."

—Michael Abrams, Roberta Burton, Jim Dreisbach, Scottie Hazelhurst, Rossalynn Littleton and Michell Rogers contributed to this article.

Photo by WING LEE

Photo by TED MORINO

Photo by TED MORINO

MOCKINGBIRD DISTRICT — DALLAS

Mockingbird District Hosts World Peace Meeting



It was a typical 100-degree day in Dallas on Aug. 5. But inside the SGI-USA's Dallas Culture Center, the refreshing breeze of kosen-rufu in action could be felt. It was really more of a mini-festival than a monthly World Peace Prayer Meeting. The standing-room-only audience was joyfully participating in a Texas-style celebration of peace, culture and education. Hosted and prepared by Mockingbird District, this unabashed display of appreciation for the SGI used the theme "We pledge to be the starting point."

As they say in the theater, "the muse descended that day," and everyone felt her shimmering presence in the collage of music, song, dance, visual arts, experiences, laughter, tears and applause. Mockingbird District is fortunate to have many artists, so it was inevitable that



Members of Mockingbird District in Dallas gather on Aug. 5 for their mini-festival at the Dallas Culture Center.

they would really put on a show. All the divisions were represented, from the Boys and Girls Group to pioneer members with several decades of Buddhist practice. Every individual participated in the preparation as well as the presentation, which

was a major factor in contributing to the total success of the morning.

Their desire to be an inspiration for others by participating in SGI activities was evident right from the start with a strong and vibrant gongyo. As

a result of this meeting, some of the guests decided to join the SGI-USA. Members who had not been active for a long time reappeared at meetings in the following month. Many members felt revitalized and were making new determina-

tions. A veritable epidemic of enthusiasm reigned.

A video of the event was made and is being sent to SGI Italy members as a gift for having supported one of Mockingbird District's members, Deborah Weaver, with their daimoku while she underwent major neck surgery in Dallas. Deborah began practicing in Milan and lived there for 10 years while she enjoyed a successful career as a ballerina. Even before her June surgery, Deborah pledged that she would dance for the August World Peace Prayer Meeting "even if all I can do is wave a scarf around the stage." Just seven short weeks after surgery, Deborah indeed danced on the stage to a finale piece she had also choreographed. "I was fortunate to have really strong, disciplined training right at the beginning of my Buddhist practice," she said. "Failure was not an option."

"I felt this activity brought us together as a family," said James Bates, one of Mockingbird District's leaders. "It made me feel like now I can achieve anything." **WT**

District Sponsors Pennsylvania VOV Activity

By GABRIEL HOUGHTON
PENNSYLVANIA CORRESPONDENT

On a cool September day, just a few days after the Sept. 11 terrorists attacks, York District in Pennsylvania gathered 150 SGI-USA members and friends for "Victory Over Violence: Create Peace and Unity In Our Community." It was based on the district members' wish to bring the spirit of "Create Peace" — the region-wide Family Youth Festival held a month earlier in Washington, D.C. — to their community.

"We held this event to raise capable youth in the SGI-USA and reach out to the community," expressed York District Men's Leader Robert Lee, "to show love, appreciation and create something positive for the community."

The activities included a multicultural display of visual arts, performances by African, Korean and Japanese dancers



The SGI-USA Baltimore Area Korean Dancers entertain the audience at York District's Victory Over Violence activity.

and drummers, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament and the Gandhi, King, Ikeda exhibition.

"I have a dream..." resounded with 17-year-old Rachel, a

guest who came out to take a stand against violence. Her friend, David, also 17, said of the terrorist attacks, "Differences

between people can be worked

out in a peaceful manner." David had copied some lyrics on his jacket to let the world know how he felt: "Stop this War!"

Keynote speaker Anthony

Kemmerlin Sr., a "violentologist," spoke about the importance of training others in violence intervention, management and prevention. Kemmerlin is a former gang leader who now counsels youth in the prison system to help them overcome their violent pasts. With regard to the events on Sept. 11, he stated: "We [the United States] must set the true example for the rest of the world. Other areas of conflict will observe how we handle the current situation."

SGI-USA Baltimore Area Men's Leader Clint Tearnan, in his opening remarks, commented on why the SGI holds these types of events: "Our activities are models for a peaceful society. Our values and culture bring a whole new perspective to other people and society. The cooperative values that the SGI supports are emerging in business, the arts, culture and education." It unites society, he said. **WT**

Photo by GABRIEL HOUGHTON

EXPERIENCE — BILL RAY, VISALIA, CALIF.

Winning Through Faith and Perseverance

Police Officer Bill Ray develops the strength to never give up, based on Nichiren Daishonin's words 'Continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens.'

I first encountered Buddhism nearly seven years ago at the age of 40. My life at that time was an unbelievable mess due to a deep, crippling depression. Being a police officer required that I handle not only my problems but others' as well. However, due to this illness I also suffered physically and intense chest pains landed me in the cardiac intensive care unit. I took a medical leave of absence, filed a worker's compensation claim and, while on disability, tried to figure out what to do with the rest of my life.

Despite the stress inherent in my occupation, I had always been able to do the work. I took pride in my job, in protecting the citizens of my community and bringing to justice the criminals who victimized them. Now, I could no longer do this.

While on leave, two of my supervisors visited me at home. What I had expected from them was the kind of support that I would have given a fellow officer facing difficulties. I truly believed in the brotherhood of police officers and still do. Instead, in reaction to my sudden absence from work, I was informed that I was no longer on active duty and had my badge taken from me. In addition, the chief of police issued a memo forbidding anyone in my department to have any contact with me. The motivation for this action is still a mystery to me, although I suspect it had to do with my filing a worker's compensation claim. I felt as though I had been thrown away like an old piece of equipment. My feelings of anger and uselessness reached such new depths that I contemplated suicide.

Within a week, a local emergency room physician who was also a reserve police officer paid me a visit. I had heard through a friend that he was a Buddhist, so I started asking



Bill Ray and Emiko Fryar have purchased a new home, where they enjoy holding discussion meetings.

him questions, just out of curiosity. Normally, I would not have asked such questions due to prior bad experiences with some organized religious groups, but my situation had become so desperate I was willing to try almost anything. And, I took an interest.

My friend told me about the benefit of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and how it functions as "good medicine" for your life. He continued to encourage me during his frequent visits, despite the personal risk he was taking in defiance of the department's order forbidding anyone to talk to me. This soon led me to try chanting. I had nothing to lose.

After my first 30 minutes of chanting to the Gohonzon in my sponsor's home, I felt happy for the first time in months. When I chanted, my problems were no longer at the center of my life. After years of suffering, I suddenly felt hope again. As I would later learn, this was the beginning of a process where my life would change immensely for the better. However, I still had my negativity to deal with.

Unemployment, poverty, unremitting anxiety, health problems and low self-esteem were daily issues I had to deal with. My friend encouraged me to challenge the severe reality of my life and view it as an opportunity for growth. When seeking encouragement, rather than engaging in long

philosophical discussions, our conversations led us repeatedly to the Gohonzon where we would chant daimoku.

Initially I found this a bit irritating. Functioning as an "excellent physician," though, my friend encouraged me to chant with him, often for hours at a time, and together we studied *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*. As I struggled during these very difficult times, the words of the Daishonin seemed to come alive. I read "Happiness in this World": "Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the law" (WND, 681).

Written to a 13th-century samurai warrior with a liking for sake, I thought this writing had a special relevance for me. Though at first my mind would often wander, making it difficult to chant, keeping the words of the Daishonin in mind enabled me to continue. As I did so, my life-condition grew stronger and chanting daimoku became much easier. Chanting for hours on end, though sometimes difficult, turned out to be the very best thing I could do. In time, I developed a strong determination to "continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo no matter what happens."

I felt I was getting stronger inside. By comparison, my personal situation seemed slow to change. Soon I moved into cramped, single-room living quarters and received the Gohonzon. The times that followed were filled with hardship. While going through highs and lows, my chanting and my connection to other SGI-USA members became my safety net.

Having left my old job on adversarial terms, I found my applications for police positions consistently rejected. Despite my desperate situation, opportunities presented themselves at crucial moments. I found a job as a youth counselor 10 miles from home. Having no way to get there, at the last minute I obtained a functioning car by trading my guitar and hand-gun for it.

To make ends meet, I took on numerous additional part-time jobs, often working three at a time, seven days a week, with no time off. After a year and half of struggling, doing things like delivering court subpoenas, department store security and farm labor, I was offered a job as an investigator for check fraud cases at the Visalia Police Department, a well-known agency. Though I was a non-sworn, part-time employee without benefits and at low pay, I challenged myself to do the best job possible and show actual proof of my Buddhist practice. Soon I was suc-

cessfully preparing cases for trial and obtaining convictions. After three years, I was over-seeing as many as 200 active cases that earned me recognition within my department. This led to a promotion to a full-time position in the Violent Crimes Unit.

Still, my effort to find a full-time sworn peace officer's position met with continual dead-ends. Without it, my police certification from the state allowing me to work as a police officer would soon expire. I felt angry and discouraged. Just when it seemed things were at their worst, when I felt I could no longer continue and was ready to give up, I remembered the Daishonin's words "Continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens." At that most crucial moment, my life suddenly changed and I began to break through my obstacles.

One year ago, the state of California hired me as a full-time sworn police officer in a position ideally suited to my needs. With my prior investigative and patrol experience, I now train new officers just beginning their careers in law enforcement. I do my best to nurture in them the confidence that the power to win over any problem lies within.

One of my greatest benefits is having met Emiko, a beautiful woman whose determination in Buddhist practice has encouraged me immensely, and we have built a foundation for our lives together. We recently purchased a new, two-story home, something that was previously unimaginable to me, where we regularly hold meetings for kosen-rufu.

In just less than seven years, my life has totally transformed. Though I have achieved outward success, nothing compares to the change I have experienced inside. Low self-esteem has been gradually replaced with confidence and my crippling depression is a thing of the past. Best of all, I have developed the strength to never give up by living the Daishonin's words, "Continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens."

—With help from Joseph Rogers, M.D.

Bill Ray can be reached by e-mail at ojisan99@hotmail.com

AN ESSAY BY SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA

The Dynamism of Youth Creates Peace

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

‘Some 450 valiant seekers of the Way traveled to Japan in high spirits from 50 countries and territories,’ SGI President Ikeda writes of the first SGI Youth Training Course of the 21st century. ‘The dynamic spirit of these youth will surely give rise to phenomenal contributions to peace on the international stage.’

When the 19th-century British astronomer Sir John Herschel was in his late teens, he suggested to his friends that they should “do their best to leave the world wiser than they found it.” Kanzo Uchimura, a Japanese thinker and writer who admired Nichiren Daishonin, cited these famous words of Herschel in *The Greatest Legacy to Posterity*.

Through the mystic workings of destiny, we, the 6 billion members of the human race, have been born together on this blue orb that is Earth! Yet the Earth cannot break free from the pall of violence, conflict and suffering enveloping it.

All people wish for happiness. All people wish for peace.

Many philosophers and religious figures have taken on the challenge of realizing these shared dreams of humanity and making the world a better place. Now we, the SGI members, have stood up resolutely! We have embarked on a journey toward our eternal goal of worldwide kosen-rufu, a movement based on profound compassion for all humanity.

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On Sept. 9, the first SGI Youth Training Course of the 21st century came to a successful close. Some 450 valiant seekers of the Way traveled to Japan in high spirits from 50 countries and territories. Hearts blazed with a desire to learn about Buddhism and a pro-



Participants in the first SGI Youth Training Course of the 21st century visit the Napoleon Plaza in Hachioji, Japan, Sept. 7.

found, magnificent solidarity for peace forged by mutual bonds of conviction began to develop among them. This brought me tremendous joy. The dynamic spirit of these youth will surely give rise to phenomenal contributions to peace on the international stage.

I was deeply moved by them. They were so sincere. They were so courageous. They were so overflowing with wonderful seeking spirit. How first and second Soka Gakkai presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda would praise them! How the Daishonin would applaud them!

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Looking back, the first time a group of members from overseas visited Japan was in November 1961, when we welcomed 68 representatives from the United States. Many of them were Japanese women who had married Americans and gone to live in the United States.

In October of the previous year, I had made my first trip to North and South America, taking the initial step in my

activities for world peace. Many of the Japanese wives I met on that occasion spent their days crying and feeling sorry for themselves, unable to adjust to life in a foreign country. But when they arrived in Japan a year later, having newly awakened to their mission as pioneers of kosen-rufu, their faces were radiant. They brimmed with truly admirable determination.

Everyone was impressed by them. Everyone was surprised by their sense of commitment. People talk about their visit even today. It was our first international training course, and it took place exactly 40 years ago.

We have many more conveniences now than we did back then, but it is still a challenge to travel all the way to Japan for the sole purpose of learning about the Daishonin’s Buddhism. I am sure that behind the joyful presence of each of the 450 people on this year’s SGI Youth Training Course, there were 450 unique, noble human dramas.

The Daishonin praised a female follower, who made the

long journey to his place of exile on Sado, saying, “The length of the journey traveled in pursuit of the Law represents the strength of seeking spirit” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1223). I, too, have the highest praise for the youthful champions of kosen-rufu: May you always be in good health and enjoy brilliant triumph and success!

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One day during the training course, the Japanese support staff offered to take some of the SGI youth to a famous sight-seeing spot. The members, however, politely declined, saying they were in Japan to deepen their bonds with their mentor and their understanding of Buddhism, and that they had no spare time for play. I also heard of another overseas member who, when he learned that a leader he was speaking with was from Kansai, was overjoyed and exclaimed: “Oh! The Kansai spirit!”

The seriousness of the visiting youth conveyed an ardent, single-minded desire, almost like a prayer, to grasp the

essence of the Soka Gakkai spirit and engrave it in their lives before returning home. When speakers at various sessions in the course opened the floor to questions, hands would shoot up immediately throughout the audience. Even during breaks between sessions, many youth would seek out leaders and ask for guidance on specific issues. Soon there would be small clusters of people scattered throughout the meeting room engaged in friendly discussions with the aid of interpreters.

The members were not only interested in solving personal problems; they also sought advice and answers for their fellow members back home. Some came from places wracked by political instability. Others came from places mired in economic crisis or recovering from the devastation of a major earthquake — situations causing suffering and hardship to great numbers of people.

Many of the youth came to Japan with the profound awareness that the future of their respective countries rests on their

Courtesy of SEIKYO PRESS

shoulders. "We want to learn the spirit of 'Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land!'" "We will realize peace and social prosperity for our countries!" With this resolve, they listened intently to every word that was spoken during the training course, so that they could confidently share what they heard with their fellow SGI members back home.



One respectable youth, with the support and encouragement of his fellow members, traveled all the way from Cameroon in Africa as his country's sole representative on the training course.

This young man joined the SGI five years ago. As the manager of a gasoline station, he carefully saved for the trip to Japan. During the entire week he was here, he says, his fellow members back in Cameroon were sending daimoku for his growth.

I am told that he diligently took notes throughout the training course, filled with a strong sense of mission to realize a Century of Africa. I can imagine him thinking: "My personal development is directly linked to the advancement of peace in my country. It all depends on how much I can learn and make what I learn a part of me. It will all become the foundation for kosen-rufu in Cameroon!" How inspiring and praiseworthy!

The Daishonin said to one of his followers, "I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1117). Everything comes down to the individual. Everything comes down to the disciple. It is by basing ourselves on the inner resolve to personally take responsibility for the advancement of kosen-rufu that we embark on the path of mentor and disciple of the SGI.

This SGI spirit has begun to pulse vibrantly in the lives of youth across the globe. I say to the youth of Japan: "Learn from the rest of the world! Follow the example of the dedication of your fellow members overseas! Do not fall behind!"

The human revolution of a single individual can change history — when I contemplate this drama enacted by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, I cannot contain the excitement in my heart.



On Sept. 8, at a gathering attended by these youth from around the globe and represen-



SGI President Ikeda encourages SGI youth leaders participating in the youth training course at the Seikyo Shimbun Building in Tokyo.

tatives of the future division in Japan, I received a national decoration from the Republic of San Marino, located in central Italy. I dedicate this honor, which I accepted together with those who will champion the cause of world peace in the 21st century, to all of our members in 177 countries and territories.

The Republic of San Marino, established 1,700 years ago, is

renowned as the oldest republic in the world. I hope that our members will join hands with people everywhere and build a republic of humanity, where freedom and equality reign, in the 21st century.

The Italian reformer Joseph Mazzini said that in whatever land we may be, wherever people are fighting for right, for justice, for truth,

there are our compatriots. The curtain has fully risen on the second chapter in our movement for worldwide kosen-rufu! The entire globe is the grand stage for your endeavors! Never forgetting that courageous fellow members are always struggling in earnest somewhere in the world, please continue to expand ever wider the SGI's net-

work of human harmony!

May you always enjoy good health and live long, fulfilling lives!

This essay was published in the "Thoughts on *The New Human Revolution*" series in the Oct. 9 *Seikyo Shimbun*, the Soka Gakkai's daily newspaper.

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the new HUMAN REVOLUTION

SGI President Ikeda's novelized history of the Soka Gakkai

'PURE STREAM'

VOLUME 8, CHAPTER 3, PARTS 25-28

'Art is not a slave to ideology or politics, nor is it a slave to religion. It has a value all its own, and so it is only natural to recognize and treasure it.'

The concert celebrating the founding of the Min-On Concert Association featured a chorus, a musical ensemble and performances by a leading violinist and cellist. Then the president of a local music college gave a brief congratulatory speech on behalf of the other guests, followed by words from Eisuke Akizuki, who had been appointed Min-On's executive vice president.

Akizuki began by stating that the full name of the organization was Minshu Ongaku Kyokai, or "The People's Concert Association," and that its goal was to promote music widely for all to enjoy. He explained that at first there was talk of calling it "The Public Concert Association," but Soka Gakkai President Shin'ichi Yamamoto had suggested changing it to "people's" because it is the people who are the true sovereign of society and the nation,

and who play the leading role in fostering music and the arts.

Akizuki continued: "I would next like to introduce the five principles of the Min-On Concert Association. They are: 1) to promote a vibrant and thriving musical movement widely among the people; 2) to create and develop a new music for the people; 3) to promote music education for youth and raise the general level of music appreciation toward the realization of a rich cultural life for the people; 4) to deepen international cultural exchanges through music and establish friendly ties linking people around the world; and 5) to nurture musicians and present their finest works and performances at home and abroad.

"In order to develop a new musical movement of the people in accord with these five principles, the association will sponsor regular performances,



including those on the metropolitan level. Our goal is to create a new current in music culture that will return music to the people."

After Akizuki finished speaking, Hiroshi Izumida, a Soka Gakkai vice general director and now executive president of Min-On, asked the audience for its continued

support of the association and its activities. Next, the Fuji Wind Ensemble played the *Light Cavalry Overture* and other pieces, and for the finale, the famous Japanese composer and conductor Hidemaro Konoe conducted the march, *Old Comrades*.

When the performance was finished, the hall erupted in enthusiastic applause. This was the Min-on Concert Association's maiden voyage into society as the flagship of a new musical and cultural movement of the people. There were many guests in attendance that day, and they all expressed support for Min-On's guiding principles and goals. Such a flourishing of music born from the people had long been waited for.

At the time, the average person in Japan listened to popular music, but wasn't so familiar with classical music or opera. Tickets to such concerts were very expensive, most likely because promoters were looking to make a profit, which made them inaccessible to a large part of the population. Shin'ichi believed that the first priority of the Min-On Concert Association was to provide people with an opportunity to enjoy all types of music, including classical,

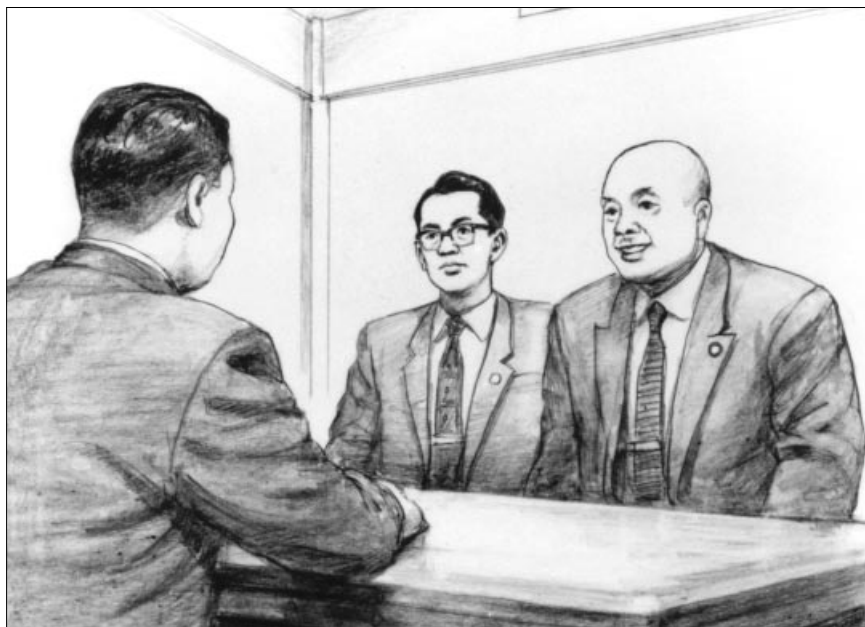
opera, and traditional Japanese. Music is for everyone. It is not the exclusive possession of the privileged or wealthy.

The Workers' Music Councils (Ro-On) was another major organization promoting musical appreciation at the time, but most people thought it was too political and ideological. In contrast to this group, in 1963, the same year of Min-On's founding, the Japan Federation of Employers' Associations established the Musical Culture Association (On-Kyo), but its scope was still rather small.

Shin'ichi was pleased with the prospect that both of these organizations might also offer fine music to a broad spectrum of people. His hope was that Min-On's birth would spark the creation of fresh culture by giving ordinary people more opportunities to experience music of the highest caliber.

During the concert celebrating the founding of Min-On, Shin'ichi was at Soka Gakkai Headquarters chanting for the success of the event and the association's growth and development. After the concert was over, Hiroshi Izumida and Eisuke Akizuki returned to the headquarters. It was just after 10:00 p.m.

"It was a great success," Izumida told Shin'ichi. "The



guests were very receptive to the founding principles of Min-On, and they expressed great hopes for its future.”

“That’s wonderful. Congratulations!” said Shin’ichi.

Akizuki elaborated: “Actually, until tonight’s concert, many people in the music world seem to have been of the opinion that the Soka Gakkai founded Min-On in order to use music and art to expand its influence.

“Also, one guest asked whether Min-On would avoid sponsoring performances of music related to any other religion, such as that celebrating Christmas. Since the Soka Gakkai does not compromise in matters of religion, this person thought that Min-On, as an affiliated organization, would reject any art or music that had religious overtones.”

Izumida then added: “Mr. Akizuki, there are some Soka Gakkai members who think the same thing.”

The Soka Gakkai has always distinguished clearly between superior and inferior, deep and shallow, and correct and erroneous when it comes to religious teachings. This is because whether we are genuinely happy or not is determined by the religion we uphold. Consequently, there were many members who felt uncomfortable about performing or listening to music that was related to other religious traditions.

Religion and art are certainly intertwined. Religion cultivates

the earth of our being, our life itself, while art brings flowers and the fruits of culture to bloom in that earth. But appreciating the art that is born from a particular religious tradition is not the same as believing in that religion. Though religious feeling may be the wellspring of artistic creation, once the art is created, it transcends religion.

A beautiful flower delights and refreshes the hearts of all people equally, no matter what soil it grows in. That is the power of beauty. The same is true of great art. It is this spirit that the German poet Heinrich Heine sang of when he wrote that once the peapod bursts open, the sugar peas inside are for everyone to enjoy.

To categorize art by its religious or ideological content and reject it on that basis is to reject humanity itself. Furthermore, Buddhism teaches respect for the dignity of life, of freedom and equality. It is a philosophy of compassion that enables us to bring our humanity to full bloom. Since the Soka Gakkai’s musical movement is based on Buddhism, it is completely mistaken to categorize and reject any music that is an expression of our shared humanity. This was Shin’ichi’s feeling and also his firmest conviction.

Shin’ichi addressed Izumida and Akizuki: “I am concerned about Soka Gakkai members falling into a narrow and dogmatic way of thinking. Our strictness is aimed at religious teachings themselves. We must make it understood by both our



The Min-On Culture Center in Shinanomachi, Tokyo.

membership and society that we are entirely open-minded when it comes to art and culture.

“Art is not a slave to ideology or politics, nor is it a slave to religion. It has a value all its own, and so it is only natural to recognize and treasure it. Furthermore, I have not the slightest intent to use the activities of the Min-On Concert Association to propagate Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism or bring music lovers into the Soka Gakkai. That must also be made very clear. My purpose in founding Min-On is to return music to the people. It is to create a

humanistic culture, join the hearts of people around the world through music, and to contribute to world peace.”

Shin’ichi spoke with determination: “Many religions have used art and culture and even the cause of peace as a means to expand their influence. Rather than seeking to develop and contribute to the arts, they have exploited them temporarily for their own interests. Such pretension, however, cannot endure. Eventually, the true intentions of such religions are exposed and those who were once supporters begin to leave. Deceit is always uncovered in the end.

“But our movement for culture and peace is different. Our goal is to contribute to the arts. We are serious about this. We are advancing a great movement for the people, for humanity.

“At first, many people will probably be skeptical about our motives, but eventually they will see that they are wrong. Thirty or 40 years down the road, they will appreciate the profound significance Min-On has come to have in society. At the same time, it is up to us to make that happen. I want Min-On to become a global music association. I want people to say that it revived the musical world, that it gave rise to wonderful music, and that it linked the hearts of people and united the planet.”

Izumida and Akizuki nodded deeply in agreement.

The Min-On Concert Asso-

ciation soon expanded nationwide, and in January 1965 it was incorporated as a foundation. It went on to make great contributions to music and art, growing into a major Japanese musical and cultural organization with 1.3 million supporting members.

Its activities were varied, and it sponsored concerts of a vast range of musical genres, including classical, popular and traditional Japanese. It also promoted free town concerts, as well as school concerts to contribute to the musical education of children and young people. And it started the Tokyo International Music Competition to discover and foster new musical talent.

As part of its international exchange activities, in 1965 Min-On brought an Israeli pianist to Japan, and in the following year the Soviet National Academy Novosibirsk Ballet. Later it sponsored Japan tours of such world-renowned companies as the Vienna State Opera and the Scala Theater of Milan. It also sent many Japanese musicians and dance troupes overseas. Its international exchange activities have extended to 76 countries and regions to date.

The establishment of the Min-On Concert Association through the auspices of the Soka Gakkai breathed fresh life into the world of music and art in Japan.

Daisaku Ikeda appears in the novel as Shin’ichi Yamamoto. The events take place in 1963.



The Scala Theater of Milan performs ‘Othello.’



WHAT LOVE IS NOT

Buddhism in a New Light

Soka Spirit Dialogue for the District

By SHIIN YATOMI

SGI-USA VICE STUDY DEPARTMENT LEADER



Love is not love..." As Shakespeare once wrote (Sonnet 116), what seems to be love sometimes may not be love at all. As much as the subject of love occupies many people's minds (and perhaps much of their time and money), their greatest concern seems usually confined to finding love or becoming lovable in the eyes of others, rather than the meaning of love or the capacity for loving. The underlying assumption of such an attitude may be that love is a feeling of pleasure and comfort only to be stimulated by an external object. The usual remedy for life without love, therefore, is to find that object—someone new and better.

Erich Fromm, a noted psychologist and social philosopher, considers love as an "art" that "requires knowledge and effort"; he defines love as "the active concern for the life and the growth of that which we love" (*The Art of Loving*, pp. 1, 25). If love is one's capacity to wish and act for the happiness and freedom of another person, a fundamental solution to the suffering of love must be sought not outward, but in the development of the character and inner strength that make us capable of loving more genuinely and powerfully.

To master the art of loving is to overcome the desire for control and dependency.

One of the greatest obstacles to the joy of loving is our desire for control. We sometimes mistake our wish to control others for our loving concern. We may think of ourselves as affectionate, yet our "love" may be a disguised desire to manipulate others for our personal gain. In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin often uses a mythic Buddhist creature called the "devil king of the sixth heaven" as a metaphor for the deep-seated human desire to control others. Indeed, another name for this devil king literally means the "heavenly being who makes

free use of others" (Jpn *takejizaiten*). Through his lively descriptions of this "devil," the Daishonin seems to indicate the importance of becoming aware and vigilant of our desire to use others as a means to our selfish ends.

Since dependency is essential to control, the devil king uses various schemes to make people dependent on him. One of his main tools to encourage dependency is manipulation through feigned affection. Despite the general perception of the devil king as a fierce monster, he is adept at appearing affectionate. To lure people and keep them under his control, the devil king is said to make himself look like a Buddha or parent.

For example, the Daishonin states, "The devil king of the sixth heaven is endowed with the Buddha's thirty-two features and manifests the Buddha's body" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 114). The Daishonin also quotes from a Buddhist commentary, which states, "So long as a person does not try to depart from the sufferings of birth and death and aspire to the Buddha vehicle, the devil will watch over him like a parent" (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 770). In fact, there is even a type of devil

in the Buddhist tradition called "the devil of compassion" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 526).

Those who are eager to control others often appear affectionate—"taking care of them" or "being nice to them"—with the aim of keeping them dependent materially or emotionally. In Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, the seemingly affectionate yet controlling husband Torvald Helmer reminds his wife, Nora, of his "love" expressed in the form of financial support: "My pretty little pet is very sweet, but it runs away with an awful lot of money. It's incredible how expensive it is for a man to keep such a pet" (Act 1, trans. by James McFarlane and Jens Arup).

The truth of love is found in our sincerity to act for the happiness and freedom of others.

It is easy to mistake control and dependency for love. The appearance of selfish love, however, like that of the devil king's, is only deceptive, for it is conditional to submission. As the Daishonin points out, the devil king is affectionate "so long as a person does not try to depart from" his control (WND, 770). Some people may give anything to their "loved ones" only to keep them dependent. Those obsessed with control, however, usually find it difficult to wish for the genuine happiness and independence of others. Instead, they would hope to see others deprived in one way or another in order to maintain their sense of superiority.

The test of our love, in this sense, lies in our sincerity to encourage and work for the self-reliance and freedom of our loved ones. As the Daishonin states, "The nature of this devil

king is to rejoice at those who create the karma of the three evil paths and to grieve at those who form the karma of the three good paths" (WND, 42). Those who thrive on domination may easily show pity for others in suffering, while inwardly delighting at the sight. For the misery of others affords those in control yet another opportunity to show their superiority and thereby remind those suffering of their need for dependency.

At the core of a relationship built on domination and subordination lies a profound sense of insecurity and powerlessness on both sides. Those who like to dominate cannot verify the meaning of their existence on their own, so they must derive a sense of power from the subjugation of others. Similarly, those who easily submit to an external authority cannot see their self-worth. So they feel impelled to become part of someone "better" and "stronger" by abandoning their identity and integrity. To such submissive people, control means protection against their own insecurity. Those submissive to an external authority do not see their lives as worthwhile to live for, but they cannot endure the emptiness of having nobody to live for either. So they must seek an external object with which to merge their identity so that they may not face the weakness and emptiness of their own lives.

This symbiotic relationship between the dominant and the submissive is disturbed when the submissive party uncovers his or her self-worth and develops the inner strength to become independent. Then the dominant party's insecurity will surface as frustration and anger. The Daishonin's following descriptions of the devil king illustrate his intense fear and anxiety in this regard: "When we thus draw near to achieving Buddhahood...the devil king of the sixth heaven, lord of the threefold world, reasons: 'If these persons should become Buddhas, I will suffer loss on two counts. First of all, if they free themselves from the threefold world, they will escape my control. Second, if they become Buddhas, their parents and siblings will also depart from the saha world. How can I stop this from happening?'" (WND, 1094). "When an ordinary person of the latter age is ready to attain Buddhahood...this devil is greatly surprised. He says to himself, 'This is most vexing. If I allow this person to remain in my do-

main, he not only will free himself from the sufferings of birth and death, but will lead others to enlightenment as well. Moreover, he will take over my realm and change it into a pure land. What shall I do?'" (WND, 894).

To love truly, we must free ourselves from the fundamental darkness within.

The devil king does not want anyone to attain enlightenment and become free since that would be a painful reminder of his own powerlessness and dependency. The paradox of this devil king, who "dwells at the summit of the world of desire and rules over the threefold world" (WND, 508), is that he is controlled by his own desire to control. The devil king is a ruler who cannot rule himself. The more control he has, the more of it he needs. He is perpetually driven by his inner weakness and insecurity, never feeling satisfied. He is a prisoner of the prison he himself creates. Although he is said to make "free use of others," he is never free in the innermost reality of his life. The devil king, therefore, is incapable of loving.

The devil king is said to dwell in the sixth and highest heaven of the world of desire, but his "love," if it could be so called at all, results only in profound unfulfillment and suffering beneath its heavenly pleasure. As William Blake knew, such selfish "Love seeketh only Self to please, / To bind another to Its delight: / Joys in another's loss of ease, / And builds a Hell in Heavens despite" ("The Clod & the Pebble," ed. David V. Erdman).

To love truly, we must be free. To be free, then, we must discover our innate self-worth. In the same sonnet quoted earlier, Shakespeare also wrote, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments." One of the greatest impediments to our ability to love is a delusion about the truth of our inner life—Buddhahood. Such delusion leads to powerlessness and dependency. The mythic devil king is symbolic of this delusion as the Daishonin says, "The fundamental darkness manifests itself as the devil king of the sixth heaven" (WND, 1113). To shed light on this inner "fundamental darkness" through strengthening our confidence in Buddhahood within our lives, then, is an essential practice for the art of loving. **WT**

Food for Thought:

- Do you see some examples of the "devil king's love" (in other words, control disguised as love) in your life? How do you deal with your insecurity and urge to control others in your relationships?
- Love that transcends the distinction between self and other may be considered as one of the cornerstones of universal human ethics. (For example, we may consider the Golden Rule in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Buddhist ideal of compassion for all living beings.) How is our capacity to love others important to stemming violence and creating peace? How can Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and its practice help us in this regard?

TALKING WITH OLD FRIENDS

EDITORIAL

By JEFF FARR
MANAGING EDITOR

'It will be exciting to make many new friends next year, but dialogue with our old friends is also of great value.'

One important part of the Year of Expanding Dialogue, the SGI's theme for 2002, will be talking with our old friends. Of course, it will be exciting to make



many new friends next year, but dialogue with our old friends is also of great value.

For most of us, these old friends include those who have,

for one reason or another, left our Buddhist community. Some are now trying other religions. Some say that they have given up on religion altogether. Some have joined Nichiren Shoshu.

But they are still our friends. Especially at a time like this — with all that has happened since Sept. 11 — hearing from us again can be very encouraging for them. It can even become the first step toward them practicing in one of our districts again.

The most important thing is the act of extending ourselves to these friends — this will surely expand understanding between us. Dialogue is not just talking; it includes the simple

effort, though sometimes challenging, to send that letter, make that call or pay that visit. Our old friends see that effort, which speaks volumes.

The 1999 movie *The Straight Story* makes this point. A 73-year-old man, Alvin Straight, journeys on a lawnmower from Laurens, Iowa, to Mount Zion, Wis., to make peace with his ailing brother. The brothers' relationship is so damaged that they have not spoken in 10 years. In a sense, Alvin's undertaking, despite his emphysema and bad hip, is the crucial part of his dialogue with his brother. His herculean effort is what communicates his love and reopens his brother's heart.

Perhaps we can think of our old friends in faith who are currently away from the SGI-USA as family members away from their family. Deep in their hearts, they must miss us a lot — and we miss them. They must have many things they want to share with us, and vice versa. We have a profound connection, after all. As the Daisshonin reminds us: "In the past, all men have been your father at one time or another, and all women have been your mother. In lifetime after lifetime, you have been indebted to all of these living beings, which is why you should wish that all will attain Buddhahood" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1527).

With this wish and with this prayer for them, let us talk again with all our old friends in the Year of Expanding Dialogue. **WT**

TIPS FOR ACTIVITIES

Five Tips for Raising Youth in the SGI-USA

By DAVID JORAY
MID-ATLANTIC BUREAU CHIEF

In the SGI, a leader's main function is to care for the members in their organization, to "raise" them in their Buddhist practice. This is, of course, a difficult undertaking. It can be especially challenging to raise young people in our organization, helping them to see the power of faith.

SGI President Ikeda has said: "Something that characterizes true leaders is that they are thoroughly dedicated to raising young people. When you put all of your energy into developing the rich potential of youth, both you and the organization are rejuvenated. I hope that you will find and raise people with great potential, allowing them to steadily rise and fully engage themselves. If you create such a flow, the future will open up boundlessly before you" (*Faith Into Action*, p. 192).

Here are five ways you can help raise the youth in your district:



1) Choose a youth.

Select one person you want to help develop. It can be anybody with whom you feel you can connect. President Ikeda has often said that if you can successfully raise one person, then you are doing kosen-rufu. **2) Find out what's going on in their lives.**

What are their dreams and aspirations? How are school and relationships? Don't be judgmental. Even if their primary goal seems as mundane as getting the latest video game,

support them in that endeavor (stopping short of buying them the game). Remember: Earthly desires equal enlightenment. After you begin to develop camaraderie with them, ask questions that will help you to discover what kinds of problems they are currently facing. **3) Chant for them.**

This is the most important step. I keep a notebook of the names of people I am concerned about. Next to their names, I write one or two words about their dreams and/or problems they want to achieve or overcome. This way, when I sit in front of the Gohonzon, I can look at their names and clearly focus on the issues facing their lives. This really works. **4) Communicate with them on a regular basis.**

Take the opportunity to ask them about their practice, if they want help with gongyo and to let them know what's going on. Consistency is the key — even if it's just a "Hi, how are you," it shows you re-

ally care and forms the basis of a relationship. Don't worry too much about being ignored, because when they feel they really need help, you will be one of the first people they come to. **5) Personally invite them to activities.**

People need to know that you care about them, not only as a member but also as a friend. This is usually reflected in the way you invite someone to a district activity. Taking a passive stance like "We're having a meeting on Tuesday, can you come?" or "Can you participate...?" doesn't show that you really want them to be there and will enjoy their company.

Instead, try being direct — not aggressive, direct. "Would you like to come with me to this meeting?" or "Would you like to help me with this presentation?" After that, go and pick them up, even if you think they can get a ride with someone else or with their parents (if they come from an SGI-USA family). Travel time together helps to build bonds.

In my area, we have many youth members who have grown up in the SGI-USA. To help them develop, we try not to rely too much on their parents for transportation. One reason why the children of members stop practicing is not that they don't want to, but rather because they are rebelling against their parents. By helping them to form relationships with members outside of their family, these youth can formulate a religious identity that is separate from that of their parents. This, in turn, will give them a better chance of consistently practicing throughout their teens, 20s and beyond. **WT**

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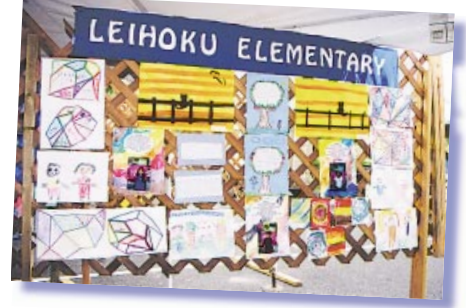
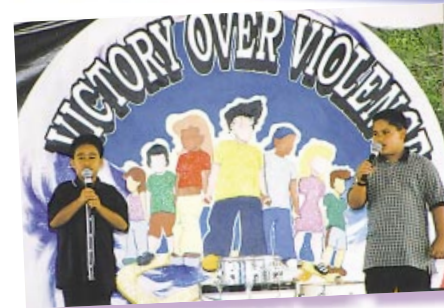
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Hawaii Youth Join Community Festival



Photos by GEORGE FUJIOKA, ROBERT GAGO and KEITH KAWAMOTO



By BRITANY EDWARDS
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The Westside Youth Festival, in its third year, was held on Oct. 27 at the Wai'anae Mall Shopping Center in Wai'anae, Hawaii. Joining in were friends and families from all over the island of Oahu celebrating the event's theme, "Victory Over Violence, Youth for Peace." This annual event brings together many organizations and schools of the Leeward community to sponsor and help plan with members of the SGI-USA in Hawaii.

The Department of Education has been involved in bringing the message of peace and nonviolence to its students in the 10 schools located in

the Leeward Coast, under the administration of Hazel Sumile, Leeward School superintendent. Guest artists Phil Yeh and Jon Murakami from Cartoonists Across America assisted in taking the VOV message and creative arts to three schools in the area and, together with students, created a mural at the festival to be donated to a local school.

This year, festival-goers participated in the day's activities of live entertainment, food and games, a late-night disco by local DJs Kutmaster Spaz and Crystal Rose, the Eurobungy Trampoline and Climbing Wall, and even a haunted house.

The youth from Oahu's west side showcased their talents and took a stand for world peace through art, entrepreneurship and onstage performances of song and dance. They also participated by being a part of the festival's many committees.

This year's event left many positive impressions on community businesses and supporters that participated. "This was my first year representing the library. I had a lot of fun meeting people from the community and really enjoyed the children," said Monica Delgado, library technician of the Wai'anae

Public Library, where many of the planning meetings were held. "It was really nice to see the students from the schools and other community groups getting involved and working together."

"It was great!" said Pua Kea from the Wai'anae Head-Start Program. She went on to say that it was "such a positive event for the community" and would like to participate once again next year.

Judy Sobin, executive director of Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, felt that "there was excellent participation from the community. Everyone was in good spirits."

Performers and community members were also enthusiastic: Audrey Bartholomew, an SGI-USA young women's group leader who volunteered for the event, performed a hip-hop dance number with a fellow member. "I was nervous because for the first time I was dancing in front of an audience outside of the SGI," she said. "But I chanted silently to myself and determined to put on a great show." She added that "this festival is a very good thing to remind everyone to put an end to violence during this time of war and bring everyone together."

Dr. Alean Cook-Palmer, a family

practitioner of the Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, joined the festivities and said that it was "exciting and encouraging to see budding young talent in youthful faces. It was also beautiful to see the organizations and churches coming together all for the sake of future generations."

Congratulatory messages came from all levels of government. Community sponsors, along with the SGI-USA and the Youth Peace Committee, included Nani O' Wai'anae, the United Nations Association-USA Hawaii Division, Wai'anae Coast Rotary International Club, Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline, Wai'anae Girl Scouts, Center for Global Nonviolence and Volunteer Legal Services. The festival co-chairs, Bernard Kuehu and Alison Ibara-Kawabe, were joined by youth representatives John Miranda and Naleisha Pelekai to help plan this year's event.

In light of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, the festival exemplified the spirit to never give up in the struggle for peace. This event proved that the unity of SGI-USA members and the community, now more than ever, can help move society toward peace. **WT**