

Workshops Help Women Expand Their Outlook

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When the women from the North and Central Jersey territories planning board discussed how to best serve their members, they had two realizations. First, there were many talented women in New Jersey. Second, most women were seeking to develop their knowledge in key areas of their daily lives.

The result: a three-part seminar, "SGI-USA Women's Life Series: Toward the New Millenium," that addressed the issues of health, creativity and finance. The goal was to enable the attendees to broaden their outlook on life and their capability to share their wisdom with others.

"Because of the many roles women perform daily, the life of one woman has the potential to influence the lives of many other people," Zenobia Odiase, one of the planning committee members, said. "Therefore it is important that women, especially, develop into broadminded, well-rounded individuals. Exposure to differencet areas of information and cultures is one way we can achieve this."

Although it was open to all women and young women's division members, there was a limited registration. Would-be participants had to fill out an application and were requested to make a commitment to attend each three-hour session for three consectutive months at the New York Culture Center.

Information was presented through lectures, workshops and dialogues. The planners researched appropriate guidance in faith as well as practical advice and distributed supplemental handouts at each session.

The series opened with a health and nutrition seminar. A presentation by Dr. Harry Schick, a chiropractor, included the method and importance of correct breathing. Later, Dr. Cecilia Willis gave a talk on "Mental Health and the Ten Worlds." In between, during several workshops, members exchanged information on alternative methods for maintaining good health and healing. Topics included skin care, breast self-examination, herbs and exercise.

Greta Lyden, a member for almost 26 years, found the event to be very useful. When she applied what she learned to her chanting, she found that by breathing more completely, she could chant more rhythmically and with less stress. The quality of her daimoku was enhanced as a result, she says.

At the second workshop, members relaxed and enjoyed an afternoon of arts and crafts. They exercised and learned how to create decoupage and needlework. On a more serious note, they listened to a presentation on "How To Turn Your Talent Into a Business" by Cessarina Caro.

SGI President Ikeda has said, "Art is to the spirit what bread is to the body: a necessity without which it cannot renew itself." Pamela Yamamoto came to the workshop believing she didn't possess any artistic talent. She surprised herself when she became thoroughly engrossed by cross-stitching. According to Pamela, other women in her group found the project too tedious, but by concentrating on the task Pamela felt very relaxed.

The following week she purchased two cross-stitching kits. "It gave me a sense of accomplishment to do something creative," she said.

The last part of the series was on money management. Presentations were made on budgeting, credit and debit management and investing. Everyone's interest was piqued to learn that there were three types of interest collected on credit cards. Many were eager to go home and find out which system their credit companies were using because of the large

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discrepancy of fees.

Sheree Tillar-Ashe had always wanted to invest but felt it beyond her ability to learn how. The talk on investing changed all that. “The speaker made me feel that I can reach out and invest after doing a little bit of research,” she said.

The evaluations passed out after each workshop proved the series to be a success. For Pamela Yamamoto, it was a rare opportunity to share an activity with her mother.

“I had always been a little intimidated by the women’s division,” she said. “I thought of them as the mom division.” Now, she explains, she can see the women as her friends.

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