

**INTERVIEW**  
**March 16: Setting Your Own Goal**

**Ed Feasel, SGI-USA youth division leader, talks about the goal of gathering 10,000 youth for the March 16 commemorative meetings and inviting each one to have his or her own goal.**

**Q: What is the youth division focusing on right now?**

A: We're supporting the organizational focuses that General Director Zaitu outlined: developing our faith, nurturing youth and strengthening families. To nurture youth, we are now focusing on our March 16 commemorative meetings. As you know, this March 16 will mark the 40th anniversary of the "dress rehearsal for kosen-rufu" that the Soka Gakkai youth held with Josei Toda, the Soka Gakkai's second president, in 1958. At that meeting the baton was passed to the next generation, specifically to young Daisaku Ikeda.

**Q: What are the youth planning for March 16?**

A: We discussed this thoroughly with the regional youth division leaders at the Central Executive Committee meeting last December. We made a goal of gathering more than 10,000 youth across America. Of course, the commemorative meetings will be held locally, but it is our determination that collectively more than 10,000 youth will attend.

The men's and women's division members expressed their sincere desire to support us in whatever way possible toward this goal, which we deeply appreciate. Just as Mr. Zaitu said when he introduced this year's focal points, the entire organization must nurture youth.

**Q: How is each area preparing for these commemorative meetings?**

A: We want to use these meetings to spur a thorough home visit campaign. One of the things I hope we can bring up during the visits is the value of our publications. With the recent shift to a direct-mail system, I think many youth might have slipped through the cracks and aren't aware how simple it is to subscribe to the *World Tribune* and *Living Buddhism*. If we can take subscription forms with us when we meet youth, we can show them how easy it is and encourage them to renew. Also, the geographic reorganization that is happening in many parts of the country, along with the temple issue, makes it important for us to stay in touch with all youth and do our best to encourage them.

**Q: What do you want youth to come away with from March 16?**

A: While achieving the goal we have set is important, I think the most important thing is for all individuals to set their own goals to accomplish in their lives through this activity. I remember when I was in high school and a member of the brass band. My seniors would often have to drag me out of bed to get me to attend practices and meetings. At some point this all changed, though, and I became eager to participate. The change was that I had developed a goal — I had a dream to go to one of the best colleges.

I believe that it was through brass band activities that I developed the fortune to get accepted to and attend Yale University on a scholarship. In the same way, I hope the youth can have concrete personal goals in this activity.

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**Q: How do activities help youth accomplish their goals?**

A: I think that's an important question. Buddhism teaches us that it is important to practice for oneself and for others. Activities, like the March 16 commemorative meetings, allow us to strengthen both parts of our practice.

When we participate in activities, we often hear experiences and guidance that encourage us to develop our individual practice. Recently, SGI President Ikeda explained the importance of our individual practice for accomplishing our goals. He said that every time we do gongyo and chant daimoku, it's like starting the engine in our lives. How much we can accomplish depends on the size of our engine.

If we have a small engine, it will be a struggle to challenge even small hills, or small goals. With a large engine the steep hills are no problem.

He went on to explain that the way we enlarge our engine is also through our consistent practice of gongyo and daimoku. Activities also provide a great opportunity for us to challenge ourselves to encourage others.

This bodhisattva practice, to encourage others, is very important. I know for myself, there are times when I feel overwhelmed with my own problems. At these times I feel trapped and my first inclination is to retreat and focus on my own narrow world.

However, when I instead reach out and encourage others, I find myself developing a much broader perspective. President Ikeda has encouraged us to break out of our lesser selves and develop our greater selves. Our efforts to encourage others allow us to do precisely that. Based on the law of cause and effect, all of our efforts to encourage others become a great cause for victory in life. So, with this awareness of practicing for ourselves and others, we can all challenge our goals through this March 16 campaign and create a great victory in our lives.

**WT**