

## NEWSBRIEFS

### NORTH CAROLINA

#### **Vocal Ensemble Performs at Cultural Festival**

The SGI-USA North Carolina Vocal Ensemble began a new phase on Jan. 24, responding to SGI President Ikeda's call to bravely and vigorously create connections in the community. Its debut public performance was at the 13th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Cultural Festival in Raleigh, hosted by North Carolina State University's African American Cultural Center. The 17-member group represented four ethnic groups, in ages ranging from 5 to 50-plus. The audience was energized by a program that included reggae, blues, a freedom song and "What Can I Do, America?" accompanied by keyboard, congas and other percussion instruments.

— PADMINI SRINIVASAN HANDS

### BRAZIL

#### **Soka Gakkai Presidents Honored by Brazilian City**

In a ceremony held Jan. 20 at the Municipal Council Building of Duque de Caxias, a city in Rio de Janeiro state, Brazil, Soka Gakkai first and second presidents Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda were honored for their achievements in building the foundation of the Soka Gakkai. City councilors Nivan de Almeida and Jorge Amorelli were on hand for the occasion along with Municipal Culture Secretary Stélio Lacerda, Vice Secretary Guttemberg Cardoso dos Santos, and President Francisco Ouixaba Sobrinho of the Duque de Caxias Academy of Literature and the Arts.

The decision to pay tribute to the Soka Gakkai's first two presidents was made during a council session on Dec. 3, 1997. Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro state's second largest city, has now recognized three successive presidents of the Soka Gakkai, having presented Mr. Ikeda, the third president and current leader of the SGI, with a certificate of commendation, honorary citizenship and the Order of Duque de Caxias in 1996.

— *Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER*

### BRAZIL

#### **SGI President Recognized by Brazilian City**

SGI President Ikeda was presented in absentia with a certificate of commendation from the Brazilian city of Macuco in the state of Rio de Janeiro in honor of his outstanding contributions to the welfare of humanity. The conferral ceremony was held at the Macuco Sports Club on Dec. 18, 1997, during celebrations commemorating the founding of the Brazilian city two years ago. Mr. Ikeda was one of several individuals acknowledged by the city assembly for their remarkable achievements. On hand for the event was Mayor Maurício Bittencourt, along with a number of state and city councilors.

— *Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER*

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