

New Los Angeles Building To Center on Friendship
By JOHN BATES, Correspondent
Los Angeles, Sept. 21

Amid bouquets of balloons and a fanfare of brilliant smiles, the Los Angeles Friendship Center tonight welcomed its first wave of members to celebrate, along with a host of state and local dignitaries, the opening of what SGI President Ikeda has called a “palace of victory.”

“This is a celebration for SGI members throughout the world!” proclaimed SGI Vice President Hiromasa Ikeda, promising that, although he had arrived to find the United States in a “very turbulent situation,” historians of the future would look back on Sept. 21, 1998 as “the day our Friendship Center opened and sent into society the people who created the 21st century.” He asked those assembled to be confident that while their local efforts may seem nothing extraordinary, “you are actually spreading the message of the SGI globally.”

He then delivered a message of congratulations from his father, President Ikeda, on the completion of the building, “a precious manifestation of faith,” which through the members unity and efforts to “sink deep roots of trust in the soil of society” will become “a castle of friendship.”

In his opening remarks, General Director Zaitzu asked Mr. Ikeda to convey to his father the SGI-USA members’ gratitude for this “wonderful present for all of Los Angeles and beyond...this launching site for worldwide kosen-rufu.”

State and local officials enthusiastically praised the center and its purpose. Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, speaking on behalf of the L.A. City Council and Mayor Richard Riordan, proclaimed Friendship Day in recognition of the “stellar example of SGI’s witness to peace”; U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer’s office conveyed her personal Excellence in Education Award to President Ikeda for his efforts to promote educational and cultural understanding; and proclaiming an SGI International Day of Youth, Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke offered a warm “Welcome to our community! This beautiful, beautiful building is a place of prayer and dedication...where friends can gather and friends can be made.”

The youth division, which sponsored and orchestrated the entire event, provided stirring vocal, instrumental and modern dance performances throughout to express the spirit and intent of the Friendship Center — to provide an oasis in the city of Los Angeles.