

EDITORIAL: SGI's Year of the Community

By FRED M. ZAITSU

SGI-USA General Director

Best regards to all of you, the *World Tribune* readers! On Oct. 22 at the 27th Headquarters Leaders Meeting in Japan, SGI Deputy President Einosuke Akiya announced the theme for 1999 as the Year of Victory in the Community for the New Century. Describing next year as an "important juncture as we move toward a century of humanity," he said that 1999 will be "a year in which each of us must display the vitality and wisdom we have developed through our faith in order to transform our communities into the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light."

As we prepare to finalize our own SGI-USA 1999 theme and activity guidelines at the Central Executive Conference in December, I wanted to introduce this 1999 theme for the SGI.

I am excited about this theme, and how perfectly it seems to match our recent progress in SGI-USA. We have just completed a thorough redesign of our organization, which focused on creating discussion meeting locations for members who live and practice in the same neighborhood or community to gather. For many members, this process has increased their civic awareness and awakened a renewed sense of belonging to their communities. In this respect, I sincerely hope that our SGI-USA districts and discussion meetings develop and continue to grow as sources of hope and encouragement for *everyone* in the community – for members, friends and neighbors alike.

To support this theme, the SGI also adopted three goals: The first is for SGI members to win in our daily lives. That faith equals daily life is one of the most important principles in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. We earnestly apply our faith to the very real difficulties we face day to day and take action producing very real breakthroughs and progress. No hardship is insurmountable when we tap wisdom through prayer and seriously exert ourselves at work and in all other spheres of our daily lives.

The second goal is for SGI members to develop trust and friendship in our communities. An important part of this is conducting activities that naturally appeal to the hearts and minds of people in the community, at the same time conveying Buddhist principles. Whether it was an opening of our children's rights exhibition, a dialogue symposium on the Earth Charter or a great discussion meeting filled with riotous laughter, I have often witnessed the great creativity we possess in accomplishing this.

The third SGI goal is fighting the injustice that obstructs the advancement of kosen-rufu. Any attempt to destroy the SGI and its movement — and thereby cause the people to suffer — cannot be tolerated. Especially that of Nichiren Shoshu and its priesthood. The growing interest American society is showing toward Buddhism makes this all the more urgent. Promoting an understanding and awareness of Nichiren Shoshu's distortions of Buddhism, both in and outside our membership, is thus so important. In addition, we must continue our efforts to help friends currently influenced by the distortions of Nichiren Shoshu.

The year 1999 will be truly significant as we work for American kosen-rufu and prepare to welcome the 21st century. I sincerely hope that each of you will make great strides in fulfilling your dreams, and that together we can welcome SGI President Ikeda back to America next year.

WT