

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EXHIBIT OPENS ON MAUI
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SGI-USA's exhibition "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" opened on Feb. 22 at the Kaahumanu Shopping Center, one of Maui's premier shopping centers in Kahului. More than 80 community organizers, educators and other dignitaries participated in the event, which was cosponsored by a number of community groups. It was a night of heartfelt dialogue and sharing as guests at the exhibit paused in front of the panels, reading the text and poems and photographs that chronicled the challenges that children face worldwide.

A unique part of the exhibit — the Forest of Dreams — was created by the Maui members. More than 3,000 colored paper leaves were collected from Maui's school children and from the SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group in Hawaii and Guam. The leaves, carrying the young people's written hopes and dreams for the future, were individually attached to branches of trees. Since the exhibit's opening, many visitors come by each day and are graciously hosted by the SGI-USA docents. One more Tree of Dreams had to be erected because so many children who visited the exhibit wanted to have their dreams included.

There were proclamations and messages from various government officials including Hawaii Governor Ben Cayetano and Congressional delegates Neil Abercrombie and Patsy T. Mink. Congratulatory remarks were given by Maui County Council Vice-Chair Dain Kane and State Department of Education Deputy District Superintendent Lee Hoxie. Ms. Gail Gnazzo from the Maui Youth and Family Services addressed the topic of "Problems/Solutions Facing Hawaii's Children." General Director Zaitso closed with a message from SGI President Ikeda and words of appreciation to all of the sponsors and participants.

Entertainment was provided by many children's groups from throughout Maui — the Okinawan Paranku dance troupe; a Puerto Rican dance group Los Chiquitos; the statewide song champions, the 45-member Kihei School Treble-makers; the Kihei Youth Center and Paia Youth Center who performed traditional Hawaiian chants and hulas; and the Taiko Drum group.

For months the SGI-USA Maui Community Center had been abuzz with preparations for the exhibition's opening. No detail was overlooked in creating the welcoming and colorful atmosphere that greets visitors to the exhibit.

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