

## GREENVILLE DISTRICT — GREENVILLE, S.C.

The members of Greenville District in Greenville, S.C. had been encouraged by the efforts of our neighboring districts, particularly Charlotte, N.C., to have open meetings that brought in more guests. So in planning our November Commemorative General Meeting last year, we decided to list our meeting in the local newspaper's weekly church directory.

We had not been this brave—or brazen—before for a number of reasons, including the cost of the ad, the need for a consistent meeting place and the possible attacks from fundamentalists or crank calls. Still, we decided to go for it and placed the ad two weeks before our district meeting last November.

Wow! What a response. For the November meeting and several weeks after, we had over 20 calls from genuinely interested people — and absolutely no crank calls! We had six guests at the general meeting, two of whom became members this past May. Another 10 to 15 guests who couldn't make the November date came to subsequent meetings. And if we didn't have a meeting to suit a guest's schedule, we'd create one.

Of particular note, a student at a local university was very interested in our SGI activities and Buddhist philosophy, so he told his comparative religion professor about our discussion meetings. Consequently, we've had about 20 students come to meetings for the past nine months as a class assignment.

Also, it just so happened that the local paper was doing a series of articles on religious tolerance this spring. The reporter came to one of our meetings, and her article about Buddhism brought in even more interested people!

We have had great fun meeting new people and introducing them to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Although a newspaper ad may not be appropriate for every district, the effect of listing our November meeting in the paper brought new life to our activities for months afterwards. It showed us that standing up with a little courage for our Buddhist practice can bring amazing results. I think we'll do it again this November!

— *NANCY Q. GREER*