

## VICTORY OVER VIOLENCE — SEABECK, WASH. YOUTH SPONSOR VOV PICNIC

Early this past August, my oldest daughter, Kelli, asked me to attend a youth planning meeting with her in Seabeck, Wash. We were introduced to the SGI-USA Victory Over Violence youth campaign to end violence here in the United States. We watched a short video, which explained that to end physical violence we must put an end to passive violence. The discussion centered on what kinds of things might be done in own area to bring our message to local street kids. Kelli suggested a picnic at a park where a lot of kids hang out who deal with both physical and passive violence almost daily. There was a lot of discussion on the difficulty of putting on such a program on such short notice. I pretty much thought that was the end of her suggestion.

At our monthly World Peace Prayer meeting, Kelli caught me completely by surprise when she stood up and announced that her goal for this campaign was a picnic for local kids to get them to pledge to support nonviolence. The hope was to bring kids together and explain to them the incredible number of violent acts committed today by kids against other kids.

With the video as a centerpiece, the picnic was a success. So many totally unexpected benefits happened that it is hard to list them all. Members from different parts of the Northwest Peninsula Area participated with an enthusiasm that was nothing short of amazing. It showed what we could accomplish as a group through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and taking action. A local band with the very appropriate name—Born Victims—was invited to play. The band's drummer stated that this was the first time his parents, who are divorced, had come together to hear him play. We were able to get over 100 people to sign pledges and it was cool seeing all those kids wearing the buttons.

Several days after the picnic, I picked up Kelli from a friend's house. As we were driving home, she told me that the greatest feeling in the world was to see an idea become a reality. There were some difficulties and last-minute problems. We learned a lot from the experience, and with our little picnic as a first small step and a lot of prayer, we feel that we are that much closer to a real victory over violence.

— *KELLI HENNESSY*  
and *MICHAEL M. HENNESSY*