

## GREAT LAKES CHAPTER, BUFFALO, N.Y.

One subject. Four very different district discussion meetings. Following the lead of SGI-USA's Youth Peace Committee, youth division members in New York's Great Lakes Chapter made Victory Over Violence the topic of their August discussion meetings. And just like peach, cherry, orange and damson blossoms, all four of the chapter's districts broached the subject of violence in distinct but equally meaningful ways.

In Lake Shore District, youth division members initiated a discussion about hurtful words and stereotypes, and the insidious scars these can leave on our lives. Buffalo's Central Park District drew a violence tree to show how passive acts of violence, like name-calling and disrespect, can grow into physical violence.

"My mom used to talk about passive violence," said 13-year-old Jeffrey Ruiz from Central Park district. "She'd say 'Jeffrey, that's violent!' But it wasn't until the meeting that I learned the difference."

Jeffery and his parents attended the Victory Over Violence meeting in nearby Niagara Rainbow district too. There, young men's division members gave presentations on famous peacemakers Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

"The first thing I learned is that there's more than one Gandhi!" said young men's division member Randy Kirker.

Members in Great Lakes Chapter agreed the district meetings were just the beginning of their efforts to win over violence in their communities. But they were very successful first steps.

"We felt these meetings were important because they help parents and children alike to see that passive violence is the root of all violence," said Jeffrey's dad, Jim Ruiz.

—*SUSAN McDONOUGH*