

**EXPERIENCE—DAVE GOODMAN, SICKLERVILLE, N.J.**  
**STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE**  
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*If you've seen the hit movie The Sixth Sense, then you've seen SGI-USA Philadelphia Region's young men's leader. Dave Goodman appears briefly in the scene in which the boy with the sixth sense, Cole, played by Haley Joel Osment, takes his psychiatrist, played by Bruce Willis, to the home of a family in which one of two daughters has just died. Her father is given a videotape by the boy and the father watches the tape—in joy and then sudden horror—as he learns the truth about her death.*

*No doubt you are focused on the father, but Dave Goodman appears to the left of the father, and although he has no speaking lines, he is photographed at close distance so that he is easily recognizable. Dave has also acted in the movies Snake Eyes and Philadelphia Diary.*

*I talked to Dave about his practice of Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism, family and career.*

*In person, you notice Dave right away. He has an actor's charismatic, charming look. His face lights up when he smiles or laughs. But as I talked to him, I could not detect any of the typical vanity or egocentricity common to many actors.*

**WT:** How long have you been practicing Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism? What is important to you about your practice?

**Dave Goodman:** When I look back on the past 23 years of my Buddhist practice, I truly see how fortunate I've been. My mother first told me about chanting in 1974 and I started practicing in 1976. Throughout my practice, the one message that men's and women's members have tried to make very clear was, "Faith equals daily life." All the meetings, all the activities, all the conventions meant nothing if we didn't show actual proof in our daily lives. I heard this many times, but didn't really put this concept into practice.

**WT:** What happened to change this? How does this relate to your career as an actor?

**Goodman:** After graduating from high school, I went from one job to another, and deep down, I dreamed of being an actor but didn't have the courage to embrace this dream. In 1988, one of my women's leaders, realizing my struggles and sensing my frustrations, shared SGI President Ikeda's guidance that you have to give 100 percent wherever you are because you never know where that road will lead you. When I got a job at a telemarketing center, I determined that even though I didn't know where this job would lead me, I was going to make a stand and become the best employee there.

Every morning, during gongyo, I determined to win at my job and be a great employee. Within six months I was promoted to a trainer, then supervisor, then shift manager. Then the company offered me a significant raise to run a shift that was having serious production, attendance and discipline problems. Within two weeks of taking over this shift, it had made a total turnaround and was outperforming the other two shifts. Within two years I was promoted to call center manager.

Although I was having success, I was feeling empty inside. I received guidance, and began chanting to pursue my dream. As soon as I began taking acting classes, I realized that this is where I belong. I learned that basing my life on the Lotus Sutra and the Gohonzon can only lead to happiness. Performing at Freedom Theater, where I had

enrolled, reawakened a dream I'd had inside for years, and it is also where I met my wonderful wife.

**WT:** Was this the beginning of your performing career?

**Goodman:** No. I worked at a consulting firm, which took up too much of my time—12 to 15 hours a day and sometimes six or seven days a week. I did not know how I could earn a living with acting or modeling. So, I decided that I would become a teacher. After discussing this with my wife and chanting about it, I determined to get a college degree in education. I could then pursue the theater at night. My SGI training had taught me to do my best in everything. I was on the dean's list every semester.

My wife and I still needed extra money. She suggested that because I have “a certain look,” I should send my picture to places that were doing videos and that this would take less time than rehearsing in theater night after night. Eventually, my headshots made their way to local talent agencies, and an agent immediately began sending me on auditions for corporate videos and local TV commercial work.

Of course, all the while, I continued doing activities for kosen-rufu, including Soka Group and participating in district activities. So much work came in that during my second year of college, I knew I had to make a decision: either finish college or begin taking all of these jobs and throw myself into this new career.

I chanted a lot, searching for an answer inside of myself that I knew must be there. I didn't have the courage to acknowledge it. Then I read a line from the writings of Nichiren Dai-shonin that struck me in a way it never had before. It summed up everything: “A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward.” My wife said, “You've always wanted to be an actor.” Well, here was the opportunity, and I just needed to step up to the plate and at least take a swing at it.

So I did. I've been a professionally paid actor for the past three years and plan to keep swinging at it. Sometimes I strike out, sometimes I hit a single. I might even make it to second base. I know one thing. I'll keep on swinging until I start smacking home runs every time I step up to the plate.

**WT:** How do you balance everything? If your Buddhist practice is the foundation for everything, and you're happily married, and you have a 3-year-old daughter, and you're the region young men's leader, which means a lot of SGI activities, how do you do everything without shortchanging anything?

**Goodman:** I sought guidance from a young men's leader before I got married as to how to be a good husband. He encouraged me to always strive to earn the respect of my wife. Based on this, I've always tried to balance out everything in my life, because that is the only way she would respect me! I've always tried, no matter how hectic my schedule is, to spend time with my wife and daughter.

Even though my wife knows how important work and the SGI are to me, she also knows how important my family is as well. I have always tried to put President Ikeda's guidance that faith manifests in daily life into practice.

**WT:** How much do you think your Buddhist practice has affected all of these areas of your life—your marriage, your daughter, your career—your sense of well-being?

**Goodman:** When I look at my life, I see how fortunate I am, and my fortune is a direct result of my Buddhist practice. I am convinced of this. I also feel that I have a deeper mission than just being a successful actor. Helping others to overcome their sufferings becomes more and more important to me as time goes on. Sometimes it is hard to reach out to others, and sometimes it's easy, but this is the way to achieve kosen-rufu. I know

that my training during my youth has been a time for me to “build a solid foundation of faith,” as President Ikeda says. From this solid foundation, I can accomplish my dreams.

At the age of 33, I am determined to continue to embrace the few years I have left in the youth division so that when I graduate, I can be one of the pilots, as all the SGI members are, of kosen-rufu.