

**DENVER CHERRY TREES—MESSAGES OF HOPE
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ROCKY MOUNTAIN CORRESPONDENTS**

This year, the cherry trees planted faithfully by SGI-USA Rocky Mountain Region members came into full bloom.

For 12 years, Colorado members have been consistently planting the delicate little cherry trees. They wanted to beautify their city and replenish the trees that once grew along Cherry Creek and in other parts of town.

They also wanted to express their feelings about the mentor-and-disciple relationship. SGI President Ikeda has often written about the cherry blossoms in bloom on the day that his mentor, Josei Toda, died (April 2, 1958). Always remembering that day, President Ikeda has determined to establish world peace.

By caring for the trees, the members feel they are forging the same connection with President Ikeda.

In 1989, Federico Pena, then Denver's mayor, told members at the opening ceremony for the Denver Culture Center that he felt the cherry trees represented hope for the future. He said, "People need to learn from the SGI's example of commitment and energy, which members bring not only to Denver but to the whole world."

Last year, just a few days after members planted cherry trees for the close of the century, violence broke out at Columbine High School. A black cloud seemed to hang over the city. However, people of all backgrounds banded together, and the black cloud turned into a vision for nonviolence. When the cherry blossoms burst forth this spring, it was a message of hope from the universe.

Many SGI-USA families came out April 16 to enjoy the sunshine after the previous day's snow and participate in the tree planting. This year more than 100 trees were planted in three separate locations along Cherry Creek. A new variety of weeping cherry trees was introduced, their life span expected to be more than 1,000 years.

Colby Valdez, 10, has been coming to the tree planting with his parents since he was a baby. He started planting trees himself when he was 3. This year Colby helped the Boys and Girls Group plant their own cherry tree located directly in front of the Denver Culture Center. Since it is of the weeping cherry tree variety, they expect to enjoy many years—or even many lifetimes—with this tree!