

GET REAL

BY STEVE MORTAN, SGI-USA HIGH SCHOOL LEADER

This month SGI-USA is holding our annual Commemorative Contribution. I think it is great that we have an opportunity to participate in this event. SGI is a non-profit organization, but the reality is that there are still expenses to be paid (such as community centers, copy machines, supplies, bookstore, and special events such as youth activities and culture festivals, just to name a few).

Last year, I made a goal to contribute a certain amount and I was able to achieve it during the last week of the activity. I felt so victorious! This reminded me of when I was 16 and I participated in the Special Contribution that year.

I was working at a fast-food restaurant and I got paid every two weeks. I really wanted to participate in the contribution campaign because I had so much appreciation for our organization. To this day, I still cannot think of any other organization that treasures youth and gives them such a great opportunity to grow.

At that time, the boss would send employees home if business was slow. I tried my best to get more hours. I would work extra hard so I would not be the one he'd send home. My efforts paid off, and I got the amount of hours I needed. I received my second check of the month and it was the last day of the contribution campaign, so I went straight to the bank to cash my check. I was still in my work uniform— minus my hat and apron.

I drove to the community center smelling like a charbroiled hamburger. At the community center, the women's division members were there smiling. They congratulated me, and I felt victorious. It was something I'll never forget. I always had complete conviction that not only was I helping the organization, but I was also making a good cause for my own future.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, "In this life your sincere offering becomes a prayer for the fulfillment of your every desire and a treasure" (*Learning From The Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 23).

It is not the amount that matters but the spirit behind the offering. If you haven't yet , I hope you have a chance to joyfully participate and challenge this activity.