

TRAILBLAZERS!

BY DAISAKU LESLIE, SGI-USA STUDENT DIVISION LEADER

In January of this year, I received a wonderful opportunity to attend a training course in Japan. Honestly speaking, before leaving for Japan I was experiencing major turmoil in my life. I had just been appointed a national student division leader. I felt that I was not capable enough and that I had no vision for the student division to share with my mentor on this trip. My stomach was churning queasily. I chanted with my entire being to overcome this feeling. Specifically, I chanted to develop friendships with those whom I accompanied on the trip, to be true to myself and that each of us would have the most amazing experience with President Ikeda.

On one occasion we attended a dinner meeting, and something prompted me to jump out of my seat to ask President Ikeda a question. At the crucial moment, I thought about the sufferings of my fellow members with whom I had been fighting together on the front lines of our organization.

In his answer, I felt he was sharing his vision for the student division of the SGI-USA. He said that to overcome the darkness of depression and despair, it is of utmost importance to introduce others to this Buddhism, to provide people the opportunity to hear about this great practice. He said that we should read good books and conduct dialogue with our friends who are suffering until they are able to transform their consciousness to one of infinite hope. He also stressed the importance of discussion meetings as the most effective means to share with our friends the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin and the activities of the SGI. It was tremendous guidance!

As he was leaving the dining room he passed by me and tapped on my shoulder stating, "You are the Daisaku of America, I am the Daisaku of Japan." In these warm words of encouragement, I felt that President Ikeda was encouraging me to have confidence, to have conviction in my mission as a student division leader. Essentially, he was telling us that we are all young presidents of the Soka Gakkai.

The student division has a great mission: Based on the conviction that our studies themselves contribute to kosen-rufu, become great leaders in every field and become the new backbone of the SGI. With unbreakable bonds of friendship, let's create a tidal wave of propagation and with tenacious action and profound philosophy let's double our student division membership by May 3, 2001!