

BRIAN'S EXPERIENCE
THE REWARDS OF SINCERITY
BRIAN SIMMS, FRESNO, CALIF.

During my time at Fresno High, I did not care about being there. I began ditching class. My mother would constantly ask about progress reports and report cards. I played the slick role; I made up all kinds of excuses and always lied to people who were trying to help me. Because of my mother's naïve nature, I took advantage of her. I told her I was being harassed by gangs and asked if I could transfer. Believe me, she did not want to do this, but she changed her mind and allowed me to transfer.

At McLane High School, I manipulated the situation again. I began cutting class again, worse than I had at Fresno High. I was going to my cousin's house and getting high, drinking all day, knowing I should be in school. But still I didn't care. My mother fooled me and came to the school. She was hurt because I lied and used her for my means. I was not proud. Then these words came from her mouth with anger: "No education? Get out!" Then I found this:

Those who live their lives to the fullest, unperturbed by the noisy clamor around them, are victors in life. Never give up. If you persevere in your efforts, someone will definitely support and protect you. Never lose hope. In the long run, being unable to go to school for two or three years is not such a big deal. Some people, for various reasons, even drop out of school. (*Discussions on Youth*, vol. 1, p. 69)

SGI President Ikeda's guidance was great. It helped me see what my mother was trying to tell me. It gave me a reason to ease up from getting high and drinking and going to parties.

A couple of days after my 18th birthday, I was spending the night at my cousin's house. I was asleep and woke up because of this sharp pain in my chest. At that moment, all I could think about was why didn't I get my life together. And I passed out. Later, I went to the doctor to find out what was wrong with me. They gave me a chest X-ray, but they couldn't find anything.

I was at a youth division meeting and I told my area leader, Keiko, what happened. She was very worried. That's when she started coming to my house, chanting and talking with me. She told me she believed in me when I had no hope. I was happy, and then I realized what my mission was. It was to achieve everything I wanted in life. So I focused on graduating. My goal is to finish school. I made a promise to my area leader, my mom and myself. I went to enroll at the adult school on March 1, 1999.

Since my enrollment in school, everything had been going great, except that my mom, who had been sick for a long time, was in a lot of pain. It became hard for her to take my cousin to school. So, I started to take him. I ended up dropping two of my morning classes to help my mom. I knew that since I did that I would have to take six classes. That meant I would be there morning and night, plus independent studies for the two classes I had dropped.

I needed money for the bus, plus the independent study, so I asked my family

members and they all helped me. My grandfather gave me money for my bus pass until the end of the school term. I worked for my uncle to get the twenty dollars for my independent studies book. Now my graduation is in sight: I will receive my diploma on May 31, 2001, and everyone in SGI's Central Valley Area is invited!