

A VISIT TO SUA FAMILY DAY BY KARINA BARRIOS, LOS ANGELES

How do I begin to describe this place — this haven we watch being built from the ground up? On Aug. 5, there was a family day held for those interested in attending Soka University of America located on top of a hill in Aliso Viejo, Calif. My whole family made the trip in support of my sister, whose desire is to be part of the first 100 students to attend this university. We were late, arrived during lunchtime (perfect timing, in my opinion) and offered a personal tour around the grounds.

Our guide spent almost an hour trying to construct an image of what the campus would be like when completed. This construction project is supposed to be the eighth largest in California — pretty impressive, I might add. There is to be a Student Services building — sort of like a town square, completely with a post office, banking services and even a market. The dormitory was quite impressive, too. Each room had its own bathroom and every floor had its own laundry and living room. In terms of a facility, there is nothing quite like it. But there's more to it than just the buildings.

The faculty chosen is apparently nothing less than excellent. There are 17 now on board who were selected from among many applicants. I've heard some speak, and they've already inspired my life. With their sincerity to educate, mold and serve those new students, I'm sure that strong heart-to-heart bonds will be made. This is quite significant, for these students will be at an age where finding out who they are will be crucial. To have this magnitude of faculty guiding these students, it seems almost impossible not to succeed.

Which brings me to those 100 students. What lies ahead in their future seems boundless. They will be given the opportunity to be pioneers of the 21st century. What types of sports, art, music, literature, language and culture are taught will be their choice.

It must feel so wonderful to know that you have already left footprints behind, that tradition began with you.

It's important to realize the significance of this very moment, to have deep appreciation for all those who have contributed to the realization of a dream passed on from one mentor to another. I can't explain the excitement I felt and still feel, or the wonderment that such a place exists, for this is where the lions and lionesses will dwell, accomplishing their mission "as world citizens in solidarity for peace" — where great people are going to develop into great leaders, and where the struggle for peace will begin.