

**MATTEA'S EXPERIENCE
REALIZING MY GOAL
MATTEA HARMON, NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.**

Hi! I'm 15 years old and have been chanting since I was 4. Last year, I applied for a summer program called Leadership Development Summer Institute. This program gives high school students the opportunity to meet with people in positions in government, media, business and nonprofit organizations so that we can learn how our society works. I applied because I believed it would be a good experience and it seemed interesting. After my interview, I was told that I would be notified in about six weeks if I was accepted into this program. I chanted a lot that I would be accepted.

However, six weeks had come and gone, but I received no response. Those who had applied to LDSI and other programs had been notified that they had been accepted. Also, the deadline to respond to the invitation had passed. I believed that I had not been accepted to the program, so I went on with my summer plans and I did not think of LDSI anymore.

But in late May 2000, I presented a poem at a discussion meeting that I had been asked to write. A few days later, I received a phone call at 10:00 at night. I had been accepted into the program. I was really surprised, and the next day I called back to say I would be happy to join the LDSI program.

I started the program on June 19, 2000. It had many benefits, including meeting top public leaders like Mark Green, Rick Lazio and David Dinkins. I received a \$1,200 stipend and a one week trip to Washington, D.C. We interviewed top federal government officials and did some sightseeing. This experience has proven to me that daimoku and this Buddhist practice works.

I am determined to develop my leadership skills and improve my public speaking and confidence as much as possible. I hope that I can use my leadership skills to bring about kosen-rufu in the future.