

CONNECTING ONE TO ONE THE POWER OF VISITING FRIENDS

A pioneer women's division member in Chicago once remarked that there are no shortcuts to kosen-rufu. Then she added, "except through home visitation."

The greatness of the SGI lies in our one-to-one connections, our very heroic efforts at the grass-roots level. Some refer to it as making "life-to-life connections." Others call it working on the "front lines." There's something special about going out of your way to encourage a friend in their home and offering warm words of inspiration and hope. It makes an impact on that person's life.

What is it about home visits that leads to the happiness of each member, and further, the growth and happiness of all members in the SGI? How can we confidently wage a "care campaign" toward our youth gatherings on March 16 and our district introductory meetings in March?

HISTORY

First Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was a towering intellect who hoped to reach many people through his written works. Having failed to attract many people through his writings, he then attempted to convince others about the value of Buddhism through holding lectures and other large forums. Yet, he was not able to convince many people to join the Soka Gakkai.

Makiguchi realized that kosen-rufu would only be achieved through one-to-one dialogue. The growth in the early days of the Soka Gakkai can be traced to Makiguchi's tenacious efforts to engage individuals in sincere and open discussion. He expanded his core of like-minded friends, and that spurred a dynamic propagation movement (see Sept. 19, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 14). SGI President Ikeda states: "If you only attend large meetings, you cannot come to know the participants as individuals. You cannot communicate one to one. Small meetings are very important. A strong, powerful solidarity can only be built through one-to-one dialogue" (Oct. 13, 2000, *World Tribune*, p. 7).

PRACTICAL TIPS

SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima determined last year to complete 1,000 home visits and was able to accomplish this in less than one year. Many people were moved to take similar action, setting their own home visit goals. In the process, they realized how difficult it was to schedule home visits around a gamut of meetings. Since then, many youth leaders have reported how valuable home visits are in strengthening heart-to-heart bonds and raising capable leaders to care about each member. General Director Nagashima wrote of five things he learned as he visited members last year:

- The heroes of kosen-rufu are the members.
- We must always deepen our conviction in the Gohonzon. When we chant, nothing is impossible.
- When we strive to understand President Ikeda's guidance, we will naturally practice Buddhism exactly as Nichiren Daishonin intended.
- The SGI family is precious and beautiful.

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- Each member is invaluable.

For our March 16 meetings, we can also focus on the following guidelines:

- 1) Make visiting inactive youth a priority; make your own personal goal for inviting guests and visiting members.
- 2) Meet with friends, dialogue on the basics of Buddhism and encourage them to come to our district meetings and youth gatherings. If you aren't comfortable explaining Buddhism, invite a friend to come along.
- 3) Enjoy your struggle!

Exactly as General Director Nagashima mentioned above, home visits are not just for the sake of others—they are also an enormous source of inspiration for ourselves. When we visit members, share the greatness of this practice and encourage one another, our lives are refreshed. We are ready to challenge life's difficulties again based on faith. The same can be said about *shakubuku* (introducing others to Buddhism).

SHAKUBUKU

To care about a friend, to share a part of your life with them in times of suffering, particularly your Buddhist faith, is the greatest act of compassion. And in turn, it completely revitalizes your life. To do this, we must muster the courage to look beyond our own shyness or personal discomfort and care about another person's life as much as we do our own. The source of this courage exists no other place than within our life and can be brought out when we chant for others happiness.

However, as youth, let's not pray for others' happiness in a passive way, expecting that someone else will help them become happy. Let's pray passionately and set ourselves in motion to be the ones who will help people become happy.

During the month of March, let's think of one friend, one family member or one neighbor whom we really know is suffering and whom we want to introduce to this Buddhism. With this person in mind, let's pray to muster the courage and compassion to help him or her become happy.

Listed below are some quotations from President Ikeda about propagation.

“Spreading the Daishonin's teaching is the most compassionate practice we can undertake as human beings—a practice that simultaneously enables us to develop ourselves. Moreover, because it guides people to happiness and peace, it is the ultimate expression of friendship.”

— *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 2, p.238

“If you really make Buddhism and faith the basis of your life and have pride and confidence in that, your discussions will just naturally become dialogues on Buddhism. If you find yourself unable to do so, it is because you have somehow built a fence around Buddhism in your mind. It hasn't permeated every aspect of your life and thought.

“And if every time you talk about Buddhism you become defensive, tense up and look severe, people won't be receptive to what you have to say. For us, Buddhist dialogue is the most natural, effortless expression of our humanity.”

— July4, 1997, *World Tribune*, p. 5