

## IMPRESSIONS OF LAST YEAR'S STUDENT DIVISION CONFERENCE

### *Nicholas Witkowski, Jackson Heights, N.Y.*

After a period of time, when I was not practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, I reintegrated myself into the SGI after attending the Student Division Conference last summer at the FNCC. By meeting with other students who seek to transform their environment in accordance with the guidelines President Ikeda has laid down for the student division, I was able to renew my commitment to practicing this Buddhism with absolute confidence of its validity.

The conference directed my practice by constantly pushing me to reevaluate my relationship with President Ikeda. The question I have asked myself each day since then is: "How can I promote kosen-rufu as a student in accordance with the will of my mentor in life?"

What a wonderful opportunity we have as students to unite each year and reaffirm our commitment to our mentor and ourselves. I am so excited and look forward to seeing all of you again this summer!

### *Mitsuko Noro, Allston, Mass.*

The opportunity to meet and spend time with 180 seeking students from all over the United States was an amazing experience. Each participant convinced me that world peace is not a far-off dream.

I felt President Ikeda's heart the whole time and came to realize his expectations toward us are enormous. I went home full of determination to respond to President Ikeda.

Soon after, I was appointed the New England Region student division leader. There are four campus clubs in the New England region. Many of the students who went to the FNCC conference became region-level leaders.

The trip to the FNCC became my starting point and I will never forget the determinations I made there.

### *Emily Jen, Los Angeles*

I attended many workshops during the few days at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, but what I valued the most was the time spent meeting and having dialogue with my fellow student division members. We shared experiences, laughed together and cried together. I was able to open my life to others as well as to myself.

I was so encouraged by the students I met and inspired about how they started campus clubs at their colleges. I was fired up to return to the University of California at Los Angeles and establish our own campus club!

That following November, a few other students and I got together to establish the UCLA Value Creation Society and held our first introductory meeting! I am currently the president of UCLA's VCS club and am determined to win in my studies and share this beautiful practice with my friends and classmates. I will never forget the day we established our club, when UCLA's clock tower chimed SGI President Ikeda's favorite song, "Ode to Joy," all throughout the entire campus.

My heart is filled with so much compassion for all student division members and

I will do my best to continue chanting vigorously every day to encourage and support those I met last summer at the FNCC!

***Kevin Michael, Goleta, Calif.***

No words can truly express the joy and gratitude I have for attending last year's Student Division Conference. It profoundly affected my life. Not only was it a great learning experience, but a great opportunity to make some new life-long friends.

I had the benefit of talking with great people like Daisaku Leslie, James Herrmann, Wendy DeSouza and Danny Nagashima. I can honestly declare that my life condition had never been so high in my life.

Upon my return to Santa Barbara, I was brimming with residual energy that lasted for over a month. I felt so much energy and compassion welling up from my life.

The grounds on which the FNCC are located is breathtaking. The food was excellent, the weather gorgeous and nothing was left to be desired.

I encourage everyone to attend at least one conference at the FNCC. I guarantee that it will be a life-altering experience!

***Tony Geisler, Rockville, Md.***

Going to the FNCC is an experience that I cannot easily describe. Last summer, I made my fifth trip there. Again, I was blown away at the good time I had. No place in the world gives me a better feeling of euphoria. Everyone has heard about the FNCC's great facilities and amazing food, but there is so much more.

There is no better place to be encouraged or to renew your faith; I have done them both. The friendships and bonds provide a lifetime of memories. The amount I have learned is phenomenal. I feel like a new person each time I travel there.

There is nothing better than meeting new people and seeing old friends. Hanging out with people your age that you can relate to is such a great feeling. Few things can combine fun and spirit all in one. The experience is forever and I implore everyone to go and taste the life of the FNCC.