

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVAL—GETTING FOCUSED
BY JAMES HERRMANN, SGI-USA YOUTH LEADER**

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Hello Everyone,

Thank you very much for all of your efforts and support of our recent May Commemorative Contribution Campaign. As we enter the summer months, members in every SGI-USA zone are enthusiastically preparing for their upcoming SGI-USA Family Youth Festival. This year, SGI-USA will hold 26 such festivals throughout the United States. The focus of our youth activities throughout the summer and fall will be to achieve absolute victory in these festivals and to successfully hold seven dynamic youth conferences at the Florida Nature and Culture Center.

With 26 culture festivals and seven FNCC conferences, 2001 will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and rewarding years in our organization’s recent history.

What makes 2001 significant is that we have sounded the first bell of the second set of Seven Bells. This time signifies the beginning of a new era, a time in which the youth of America take full responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism in our country.

In his message for May 3, Soka Gakkai Day, SGI President Ikeda states, “The unprecedented spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism that we see in each region around the world today started from the pioneering efforts of devoted individuals” (May 18 *World Tribune*, p. 11).

SGI-USA is no exception. In fact, many of our pioneers who spread this Buddhism in America did so in an unfamiliar culture and with a severe language barrier. Despite these setbacks, they were able to courageously lead thousands of people to happiness.

Regardless of what position we hold in the organization or what role we play in this summer’s events, it is up to each of us to have our own resolve for kosen-rufu. As President Ikeda continues: “It is always individuals with a strong sense of commitment and responsibility who open up the way for kosen-rufu.” Indeed, President Ikeda is a model of commitment to kosen-rufu and we can use these festivals to develop the same commitment ourselves.

To what extent do I take action for others? Do I possess a strong sense of responsibility for kosen-rufu? How much have I challenged myself to do *shakubuku*? These are the questions that we must sincerely and objectively ask ourselves. The answers to these questions will determine our own happiness and the success of our daily lives.

Let’s keep in mind that all these exciting activities are a vehicle for each of us to realize our true potential. They enable us to renew our resolve to spread this Buddhism throughout America and strengthen our seeking spirit toward the mentor–disciple relationship.

In President Ikeda’s May 3 message, he also states: “Together with all of you, I renew my pledge to spread the ‘Buddhism of human revolution’ around the globe.

The Daishonin states, ‘I entrust you with the propagation of Buddhism in your province’ (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 1117). In light of these words, we each have a unique and noble mission that has been entrusted to us by the Daishonin to ensure the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law in our respective communities and regions. In the Daishonin’s Buddhism, those who are aware of their profound mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth are precious beyond measure.”

Developing heightened awareness of our profound mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth is the purpose of all our activities. When we are united in purpose, when we are each striving to do our human revolution and are actively challenging ourselves to do *shakubuku*, a brilliant new era will emerge in America. The time has come! Now is our chance! Let’s unite and press forward courageously toward a year of unprecedented victories.