

## **ACHIEVING TRUE SUCCESS IN LIFE BY SESHIA ABE, FAIRFIELD, CONN.**

I have been practicing Buddhism since I was born. My mother was attending Mothers Group meetings when I was just a baby. I began attending Boys and Girls Group meetings after I turned 5 years old. This was when I started to chant.

For as long as I can remember, I have heard the sound of my parents chanting. It always had an interesting attraction to me. It was strange because the sound was different from any other. I was also curious about what Nam-myoho-renge-kyo meant. Although I didn't really know anything about chanting at that time, I wanted to join my parents, so I did. After a while, chanting became very tiring and I thought that I had other things to do. But I noticed that I was a little happier when I chanted and that encouraged me.

I wanted to get better grades, so I decided to chant more and go to all of the Boys and Girls Group meetings. Since last year, I have been very successful in school. I became a top honor student and last March, I received the Tomlinsonite Award that is bestowed on students for academic achievement.

Next, I decided with my mom and dad, that I wanted to challenge myself with the SGI-USA Entrance Examination held on April 22 this year. I wanted to learn more about this Buddhism that my parents had been practicing since I was born. I studied the exam material with the help of my parents and Mrs. Jane Corwin, who is a women's division member. She came over to my house at least twice a week to help me study. My district members even set up a study meeting for me. Studying helped me understand and become more interested in Buddhism. I learned about Nichiren Daishonin, Soka Spirit and what Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means.

I understood most of the exam material. But I became very worried the day before the exam. I couldn't answer some of the questions I had been studying. The next day, I heard that my friend Shayna would come to support me at the testing site. This encouraged me to do my best. Jane and my mother came, too. We all went to Bergman's Cafeteria where the exam was being held. I didn't want to let everyone down, and I especially wanted to pass the test for myself.

I realized that I was probably the youngest person at Bergman's Cafeteria and I was worried when I saw all of the adults and teenagers that were taking the exam. But I didn't want to chicken out after I studied so much. SGI President Ikeda says: "What is defeat in life? It is not merely making a mistake; defeat means giving up on yourself in the midst of difficulty. What is true success in life? True success means winning in your battle with yourself. Those whose who persist in the pursuit of their dreams, no matter what the hurdles, are winners in life, for they have won over their weaknesses" (*The Way of Youth*, p. 107).

So I tried my best and I passed the test. Passing the test let me know that I am starting to understand the basics of Buddhism and encouraged me to learn much more in the future. Studying and practicing Buddhism will help me become happier in life, make me want to do better in school, be a better friend and appreciate other people more.

When I think about all the things that are going on in my life, I want to strengthen my practice and study. My determination is to participate in the orchestra for my zone's family youth festival. I will try to challenge and grow in faith so that I can have the greatest future.