

**YOUTH PERFORMING GROUPS CONFERENCE 2001  
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From July 19–July 22, youth from across the country came to the Florida Nature and Culture Center to participate in the 2001 Youth Performing Groups Conference, “Building a Bond of Trust Within—Mentor and Disciple.”

These talented young people challenged themselves to go to Florida despite the strenuous rehearsal schedules they were facing back home as they prepared for their family youth festivals. Challenging themselves to develop their faith and stretch themselves even more for the sake of the Mystic Law, the participants showed a tremendous amount of heart and an amazing seeking spirit. Each one brought something unique and helped make it the best performing groups conference yet!

This year's conference marked a new step forward for the SGI-USA Youth Performing Groups. In order to better support and cultivate the dance groups which youth are forming across the country, national dance leaders were appointed for the first time. Johnny Pastor and Diana Campos will be taking responsibility as the young men's and young women's SGI-USA youth dance leaders. With this fresh departure, the members of the Youth Performing Groups were able to make a determination to continue advancing in the 21st century based on establishing the mentor–disciple relationship as their foundation.

Since this conference coincided with SGI President Ikeda's founding of the Fife and Drum Corps 45 years before on July 22, 1956, the youth took the opportunity to create a mission statement and send it to President Ikeda with their photo and the signatures of each participant. The pledge reads:

We, the members of the SGI-USA Youth Performing Groups dedicate ourselves to:

- Building a unified creative force strengthened by a nationwide network of friends.
- Being on the frontlines of society promoting mutual respect, continually seeking training, and encouraging individual growth.
- Changing the world by inspiring the hearts of humanity through our performances and lives.
- Realizing our Buddha nature and helping others to do the same by propagating Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the 21st century.

Other highlights of the conference included a lecture on the mentor–disciple relationship and discussion with SGI-USA Youth Leader James Herrmann and an interactive performance and leadership session created by the members of the Southern California Zone.

However, the best part for many of the youth involved was the opportunity to share their skills with each other at the talent show on Saturday night. The show

featured amazing performances, including dance, taiko drums, singing and several music corps performances. The show was successful and the participants were so excited that their enthusiasm carried over into an impromptu jam session after the concert. Later, the youth gathered in one of the dormitory lounges and gave performances throughout the night.

For all who attended the conference and were able to experience the power and passion of these youth, it was abundantly clear — the future is here!