

**RAISING AWARENESS IN MILWAUKEE
BY ANDREW GARFIELD
MADISON, WIS., CORRESPONDENT**

More than six months of behind-the-scenes efforts by SGI-USA members paid off with the showing of the Victory Over Violence exhibition in the main rotunda of the Milwaukee County Courthouse, Nov. 13–17, helping to raise awareness of violence in the community.

In addition to the VOV exhibition itself, which featured photomurals and a video provided by the Youth Peace Committee of SGI-USA, the event included an exhibition of artwork by children in the Milwaukee Public Schools and SGI-USA Boys and Girls Group members throughout Wisconsin. Two brightly colored displays of 1,000 origami cranes, folded and hung decoratively by women's division members, also drew compliments from passers-by.

The event culminated in a visit on the final day from Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist, who presented organizers with a proclamation designating Nov. 18, 2000, as SGI-USA Victory Over Violence Day. The proclamation lauds the contributions made by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda to peace and education, and recognizes the efforts of Milwaukee SGI-USA youth to create a peaceful society.

Wisconsin members staffing the event called the public response overwhelming, as they collected more than 1,700 signatures for the VOV pledge. Many of those who signed requested extra copies of the pledge bookmark and VOV button to give to friends and family. Taking three extra bookmarks, one woman remarked that she thought reading the pledge would positively inspire her children, who often encounter violence in their neighborhoods and schools.

Wisconsin Area Leader Jean Kovac commented: "This was our first effort to reach out to the community on such a large scale and all aspects of it were successful. Inviting people to sign the VOV pledge, in particular, gave us a great opportunity to talk about the power of one person to change society."

The event also served as a holiday collection site for the donation of new, unwrapped "peaceful" toys for Sojourner Truth House, a Milwaukee-area shelter for victims of domestic abuse. Barbara Kueny, development director of the shelter, said, "We support this effort to raise awareness of the devastating effects of violence, especially on children, who represent our future."