

**INTERPRETERS/TRANSLATORS/FOOD SERVICE CONFERENCE
HELD AT FNCC
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CORRESPONDENTS**

SGI-USA members gathered for the 1st Interpreters/Translators Conference and the 1st Food Service Conference at the Florida Nature and Culture Center, held jointly from Feb. 22–25. Ninety-one participants, many having endured snowy or rainy weather and flight delays, enjoyed four inspirational days together under the Florida sun.

Although seemingly unrelated, the joint conferences were a gathering of people who work behind-the-scenes to support the growth, well-being and happiness of others, while polishing their skills in their fields of expertise.

In his message to the Food Service Conference, SGI President Ikeda said: “The test of faith is to continue to strive in faith even when others do not take notice. Nichiren Daishonin says, ‘Where there is unseen virtue, there will be visible reward’” (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 907).

President Ikeda encouraged Interpreters/Translators Conference participants to “continue to study and polish yourselves throughout your life, while cherishing the words of the Daishonin, ‘It is the heart that is important’” (WND, 949).

Friday morning, the participants welcomed SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima for an invigorating joint session on the mentor–disciple relationship. Vice General Director Ted Morino led another joint session on the topic of Soka Spirit and the evolution of SGI-USA translations beginning in late 1990, when the SGI started to be attacked by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

Carol Woodard from Chicago expressed her excitement of being able to learn about the Nichikan Gohonzon from attending one of the workshops following the joint session, saying: “I was amazed by the in-depth explanation of the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichikan. Learning about his amazing spirit, I have a stronger motivation to help in the Soka Spirit movement.”

In a separate session, participants in the Food Service Conference shared their experiences in faith and their struggles in dealing with their demanding work environments. Kiyoshi Ishitani from Boston, Yumiko and Tatsunosuke Kawagoe from San Diego and Kiyoko Burch from Denver shared their experiences of supporting President Ikeda’s movements during his previous visits to the United States.

Senior Vice General Director Richard Sasaki led a session on the spirit of working behind-the-scenes. Acknowledging the difficulties the participants face in attending meetings and keeping in rhythm with the organization due to their work schedules, Mr. Sasaki stressed the importance of building a solid foundation in faith and continuously striving to improve one’s life based on faith.

The interpreters and translators expressed a renewed sense of mission, having gained a deeper understanding of the part they play in the kosen-rufu movement. One session was devoted to Kumarajiva’s role in the translation of Buddhism, and another session explored practical applications for communicating Buddhist philosophy in America.

It became clear to everyone that each activity involving the spread of Buddhism in the United States is actually a form of interpreting and translating, because we are promoting Buddhism in a culture that is not accustomed to Buddhist ideals and beliefs.

“Now that I have a better understanding of President Ikeda’s strong desire for translators

and interpreters to contribute on the frontlines of the kosen-rufu movement, I have a stronger sense of purpose,” said Denise Golding from Los Angeles. “Because of this, I want to help others gain more confidence in their abilities to contribute.”

Jennifer Yamazawa, a freelance interpreter from Raleigh, N.C., resolved that, “Based on what I gained from this conference, I will go back and create an interpreters/translators group in my area, even if I am the only one at first.”

Participants in the Interpreters/Translators Conference from various regions, and those representing languages such as Chinese, French and Spanish, were determined to have more participants from their areas and language groups participate in the next conference. Those in the Food Services Conference expressed their joy in participating in this joyful, historical first conference while already making plans to return to the second conference. Many participants from both conferences promised to return to the second round of conferences next year and share their growth and victories with everyone.