

**SGI PRESIDENT HONORED IN PUERTO RICO
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On April 24, Poet Laureate Day in the Puerto Rican city of Manati, SGI President Ikeda was named Poet Laureate of the New Millennium. A section of the city's Francisco Alvarez City Library was also named after President and Mrs. Ikeda.

Also on April 24, the city of Carolina named President and Mrs. Ikeda honorary citizens and presented them the key to the city. "It is a great honor to be giving this proclamation and title to a genuine fighter for truth and justice," said Carolina Mayor José Aponte de la Torre.

The city of Manati is located in the northwestern part of Puerto Rico. Framed by the Atlantic Ocean, it is the site of Western civilization's first settlement on the island. Juan Ponce de Leon built the first Hacienda here in the 16th century.

The Hall of Poets, bearing the name of renowned poet Manuel Joglar Cacho, regaled the SGI-USA delegation with its beautiful Athenian façade, reaffirming the city's nickname, the Athens of Puerto Rico. A beautiful melody could be heard from the hall's entrance, played by master cellist and SGI-USA member José Daniel de Jesus.

Mayor Juan Aubín Cruz Manzano presented the city ordinance naming President Ikeda Poet Laureate of the New Millennium to SGI-USA General Director Danny Nagashima. A donation of 100 books from President and Mrs. Ikeda was made to the Francisco Alvarez Marrero City Library. The books included selections from such illustrious poets as Pablo Neruda and Federico Garcia Lorca, as well as titles from President Ikeda such as *The Princess and the Moon* and *The Cherry Tree*.

"I am delighted and deeply moved to receive this distinguished recognition as Poet Laureate of the New Millennium," said President Ikeda in a message. "I am deeply touched to be recognized here in the Hall of Poets of Manati. Please accept my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for your generous consideration and good will.

"As the humble successor of the past presidents of the Soka Gakkai in Japan and on behalf of millions of SGI members in 165 countries, I'm honored to accept this award. I also feel great pride to have a section of the city library named after Kaneko and I.

"We consider that our life work is to share the importance of culture with others, especially with youth. I hope that the 100 books donated today will allow more youth to follow in the footprints of culture, so they themselves may be inspired to contribute and protect the culture of their country.

"In closing, please accept my best wishes for the further development and prosperity of your historical city, Manati, its visionary mayor Juan Aubin Cruz Manzano, as well as its glorious citizens."

Mr. Nagashima also bestowed the SGI-USA Liberty Award upon Mayor Cruz, which is granted in acknowledgement of an individual's outstanding contribution to society. Mayor Cruz joyfully accepted the award and proclaimed, "This is the first flower of a new friendship."

"This ceremony was a celebration of poetry," said Jose Luis Vargas, Puerto Rico young men's leader. "President Ikeda's experiences are engraved in his poetry, his qualities are transformed into poems. This great honor signifies Puerto Rico's cultural openness, a wish to open our doors to the world."