

## **MOTHERS GROUP HOLDS FIRST MEETING IN NORTHEASTERN ZONE BY CARMEN RECALDE AND JANET BLAZEY NEW YORK CORRESPONDENTS**

More than 200 women gathered at the SGI-USA's New York Culture Center June 10 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the women's division. It was the first Northeastern Zone Mothers Meeting, and an opportunity to receive encouragement from Matilda Buck, SGI-USA women's leader. For the mothers who planned the meeting, it was a dream come true to present questions to Mrs. Buck collected from members about how to practice and pass on the gift of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to their children.

The meeting began with SGI President Ikeda's message to the members of the Mothers Group, which said in part: "In the course of our lives, there are times when everything seems to be moving smoothly and there are times when you experience storms of hardships and difficulties. However, no matter what difficult situations you may be in, it is up to your determination in faith to win an easy victory over these difficulties and lead a life filled with happiness."

A powerful experience was given by Elizabeth Vengen, who shared that at the age of 15 months, her son was diagnosed with profound deafness in both ears. With the help of her group leaders, she began a daimoku campaign that showed actual proof of the Gohonzon's power. Four-and-a-half years later, her son is speaking and hearing at normal conversational level with the help of a cochlear implant. The women in the audience were deeply moved and gave her a standing ovation.

The song "Hero," sung by the Mothers Chorus, echoed the sentiments of President Ikeda's message. The song was chosen to honor the strengths of mothers, their fortitude and resilience. The melodic refrain, "The hero lies in you," acknowledged that mothers are true heroes.

Then Matilda Buck, introduced as a mother and grandmother, was enthusiastically welcomed by the members. "In terms of raising children and taking care of our families, a mother's prayer is the most important thing," Mrs. Buck said. "*Myo* of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo has three meanings: The first is to open, in the sense that it enables a person to develop his or her full potential as a human being. The second meaning is to revive, that is, to revitalize or renew one's life.

"The third meaning, to be endowed, refers not only to our own potential, but to the fact that every aspect of our environment, every situation we encounter, is 'perfectly endowed' with what we need for our self-development. It means that every moment has great possible value; every circumstance can be transformed to support our growth."

In the past, many of the young mothers present were very busy with SGI activities. Mrs. Buck said: "Of course, when we have children, we cannot move in the same way. Instead of any regret, we should embrace our lives as parents as a way to develop ourselves and develop many new relationships. When we attend activities, we can bring a new perspective to our group based on these experiences."

When we are anxious about our children, she added, we should determine: "I will chant and take action for the best outcome. My child must become happy, no matter what circumstances they are in."