

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
VOV FESTIVAL LIGHTS UP HAWAII
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Hawaii's SGI-USA Family Youth Festival lit up the Neal Blaisdell Arena in Honolulu, June 7, with the theme "Youth Standing Together for Peace." Hawaii's governor, Benjamin J. Cayetano, proclaimed July 1-7 Victory Over Violence Week throughout the state, and proclamations and congratulations were received from dignitaries all over the state.

"Awesome," was the refrain echoing from the insiders and spectators as they described the festival. The event was ground breaking in many ways. It brought together a wide range of community co-sponsors and scores of exhibitors who support youth and nonviolence.

Renae Poarch, Teen Coordinator for the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse & Legal Hotline, which co-sponsored the festival, enjoyed working with everyone and was a great spokesperson for the event on radio and TV. She commented that she is looking forward to working together with the SGI-USA in promoting VOV in Hawaii. Marsha Joyner, president of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Coalition-Hawaii, another co-sponsor, set up an exhibit booth, enjoyed both performances and gave congratulatory remarks at the evening show. Ms. Joyner was so impressed with the celebration that she has requested the VOV exhibit for the Nagasaki Peace Bell ceremony on Aug. 9 in Honolulu.

Hand-stamped purple VOV ribbons attached to bookmarks (left) inviting the public to the festival were distributed to more than 150 locations throughout the state, including retail stores, malls, gas stations and restaurants.

The production team amassed an incredible amount of talent for the festival from a wonderful cross section of youth from the multiethnic groups of Hawaii. An impressive cast of 1,000 was drawn from all over the state, with youth from the SGI-USA making up 20 percent. Duncan Sheik, SGI-USA member and popular recording artist, was the featured headliner, stopping in Hawaii from his world tour to perform at the two festival shows in support of VOV.

The blended voices of the performers and audience rang out Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" during the finale, with a very special version performed by the 200 voice First Samoan Congregation Christian Church of American Samoa in their native Samoan language.

"It was nice to see the efforts of so many people promoting and working for a better future for youth around the world," said Lance Ikawa of Kuponon Kane, a Hawaiian band that performed in the festival. "We will always support VOV because it is our future and we need to take care of it."

"I enjoyed being part of the Samoan dance," said 10-year old Rashad Matthews. "My mother cried when I danced because we are Samoan, and she was so proud of me. The SGI-USA members treated me like I was part of their family."

Adding pageantry to the event was a very distinguished guest, King Tauf-Ahau Tupou IV, who traveled thousands of miles from his island kingdom of Tonga to join the evening festivities.

Promotion for the festival created many new partnerships. A ticket booth was set up at the Ala Moana Shopping Center, the largest mall in Hawaii, as well as a telephone hotline for information. Media coverage of the festival was outstanding, with newspaper articles appearing before and after the event. Another first was a public service announcement

announcing the festival and VOV theme created by FOX 2 TV, which ran on all major TV stations. Interviews with SGI-USA youth gave local TV personalities opportunities to discuss VOV and the important concept of passive violence, the latent cause for active and physical violence. Duncan Sheik also appeared on both radio and TV supporting VOV, wearing his purple ribbon.

“I really enjoyed the festival,” said Mel Whang, an exhibitor from Family Planning Services. “Everywhere I went, the staff was helpful and cordial. I was very impressed by everything. Now that I understand what VOV is all about, I will definitely promote others to join in.”

The commitment of the youth standing together for the sake of peace provided a model for all who witnessed their efforts. United in their stand against violence, they are looking forward to continuing the VOV momentum in Hawaii.