

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
'LIVING AS CHAMPIONS' IN ATLANTA
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MARTIN AND GLORIA SYLVESTER**

On July 28, more than 1,000 members and guests were warmly welcomed to Southeastern Region-Tri-Area's Family Youth Festival. Although the sunshine was punctuated with rain, the spirits were high and smiles were bright throughout the festival. It was truly a family event—a celebration with picnics, booths and a show featuring stunning performances.

Youth division members from the Atlanta Area, Northside Area and Atlanta South Area were the driving force that planned, researched, implemented, communicated, monitored and protected the activities from beginning to end. All the committees approached their responsibilities with a sense of mission and a “daimoku first” attitude. They included a Performance Committee, Booths Committee, Hospitality Committee, Transportation Committee and Promotion Committee.

The festival was held at the historic Lynwood Park Community Center, in the heart of one of the first African American home-owning communities in the South. Ms. Pat Martin, executive director of the Lynwood Community Corporation, has lived on the same street in Lynwood since she was 7 years old and was on hand with opening remarks. She said of the performances: “They were wonderful. I was excited even before everyone got here.”

During the early afternoon, the park resounded with Latin American and West African rhythmic harmonies. The performances radiated with youthful zest and family participation. Chandra Reeves, age 28 and a member of the SGI-USA since she was 7 years old, choreographed the opening number, “Magalena,” a big hit that got everyone's blood pumping. The ecstatic young women had practiced for weeks and appeared in brightly colored skirts and leotards in this Afro-Cuban number.

The men's division, about 40 strong, performed “Beautiful Women,” dedicated to the women in the audience. The “From Boys To Men” number included rousing hip-hop dance performances by the younger men.

A group of young women and women's division members known as the Fortune Fan Dancers performed the song “Happy Face.” Their unity and grace sent pulses of happiness out to the audience. This group of more than 30 women, under the direction of choreographer Julie Kang, practiced for more than a month to ensure they inspired unity.

The Bopping Buddhas, which included four brave women and one man, brought the house down with their sometimes hilarious rendition of Tina Turner's “Disco Inferno.”

Rainbow District displayed its creativity with a fashion show depicting the life-conditions of the Ten Worlds. Their clever presentation had lots of style and a clear demonstration of the meaning of each of the different worlds.

Michael Rico, an SGI-USA member for 12 years, gave the audience a real treat with a performance on the Spanish guitar.

A swing-dancing couple brought energy and electricity to the stage, along with a chorus of five women dressed in 1920s costumes, who danced to the lively swing tunes. Audience participation escalated to an enthusiastic roaring ovation. It was a snappy, jazzy dance number, and the dancers seemed to be having the time of their lives.

The program closed with the Voices for Peace Chorus singing together with the audience a heartfelt rendition of “Ode to Joy.” Their determination to keep advancing together with SGI President Ikeda was very moving to the audience. This was the perfect ending to Atlanta's wonderful family festival.