

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
NORTHWEST YOUTH ROCK SEATTLE PARADE
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Who's in the house? SGI's in the house! When SGI's in the house, we rock it all the way down!" When the SGI-USA Pacific Northwest Zone youth performing groups marched down Seattle's streets for the annual Seafair Torchlight parade, their spirit as well as their performance pumped up the crowds.

The SGI-USA Dance Group and Color Guard bedazzled thousands of spectators with their routines and cheers. The Music Corps played a collection of songs that included a jazzed-up rendition of "Ode to Joy," while the Fife and Drum Corps kept grooving to the beat with a hip-hop inspired drum cadence.

This year, the SGI-USA garnered lengthy coverage by local TV news stations. Several shots highlighted the SGI-USA performing groups while commentators talked about the mission of the SGI-USA and the youth division's Victory Over Violence campaign.

"We're trying to unite everyone together and show Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism to the people," said Music Corps member Brandon Silvestre. "We really want to show people who we are and what our mission is, which is to create peace throughout the world."

Some 117 SGI-USA Pacific Northwest Zone youth participated in the event, some traveling from eastern Washington, Oregon and Alaska. Heather Bartlett flew in from the town of Stewart along the Alaskan-Canadian border to march in the parade.

"My determination is to show everyone that Alaska is here!" beamed Heather, who carried the new SGI-USA Seafair banner. "We might be far away, but we're just as close, in all of us working for the same cause. It doesn't matter what part of the earth you're from, we can all come together and make it happen!"

This year's participation in the parade broke new ground for the Pacific Northwest performing groups. A new group, the Color Guard, was formed and the Fife and Drum Corps members all played drums. New youth took the helm of leadership and members with no previous parade experience participated.

Despite many obstacles, the youth performing groups persevered and emerged victorious, as a group and as emerging leaders for world peace.

"The encouragement helped, with everyone encouraging each other saying, 'You can do it!' or 'I'll help you with that,'" said Lucille Jun, a member of the Fife and Drum Corps. "I recently went to the Florida Nature and Culture Center for the Youth Performing Groups Conference. From that and from this Seafair parade, I learned that it's our responsibility as youth to stand up and really go for it. We can't wait for other people to say, 'Here, do this.' We really have to do it ourselves."

The parade was a kickoff to a family-oriented Victory Over Violence campaign, to be celebrated by each area in the Pacific Northwest Zone.