

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
ORANGE COUNTY FESTIVAL RECEIVES PRAISE
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SGI-USA's Orange County Region held its 5th annual summer festival on July 29 at the University of California, Irvine's Aldrich Park. The festival was sponsored by the local SGI-USA youth to celebrate Victory Over Violence with the theme "Taking Action for the Sake of Peace," and gathered more than 5,000 people. There were more than 20 performance groups, ranging from traditional Japanese dance and martial arts to hula dance, Hip-Hop dance and a brass band.

Commendations were received from California Governor Gray Davis and City of Irvine Mayor Larry Agran, and a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition was received from U.S. Representative Edward R. Royce. Governor Davis stated in his commendation that "this year's festival will celebrate tolerance and friendship, and promote a message of Victory Over Violence. On behalf of the people of California, I commend SGI-USA for its outstanding contributions to the community. The organization's commitment to peace and harmony serves as an inspiration to us all."

Mayor Agran, who presented his commendation in person, said that "the festival, coupled with the coming of Soka University of America to Orange County, represents the increasing international character of our county. It also represents an opportunity to underscore new ideals of peace, justice and understanding in a county that desperately needs these things".

In addition to the performances, there was a Victory Over Violence booth, an environmental exhibition, art displays, food booths and children's activities. Youth leader Margaret Kasahara said that the "focus of our group has been dialogue." She pointed out that everyday acts of violence include putting oneself down as well as others. In a musical skit demonstrating the festival's theme, the Youth Division Brass Band sounded off back and forth with a jazz group, each group jeering the other, until finally they came to respect each other's music.

Jimmy King, Orange County Region young men's leader said, "I've really been inspired by the young people and how they have stood for the cause of nonviolence. I feel like we are going to achieve peace through their actions. They are the ones who will lead the world to peace through their own resolve."