

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
FESTIVAL EMBRACES KANSAS CITY COMMUNITY
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On Oct. 6, SGI-USA members, family and friends in the Westside Hispanic and African American community in Kansas City, Mo., attended the Victory Over Violence Family Youth Cul-ture Festival titled "Protecting Our Children, Securing Our Future." The event was held at the Tony Aguirre Community Center, a place committed to providing a safe, comfortable and caring place for children in the neighborhood.

The specific goals of the festival were aligned with the goals of the VOV pledge to "Value my own life, respect all life and inspire hope in others." The uniqueness of the event evolved as many great ideas and suggestions were brought to a series of planning meetings about how to engage in community outreach activities. To support the campaign, a beautiful multi-colored wall of lotus flowers, lily ponds, butterflies and dragon flies representing the members' hours of prayer emerged at the SGI-USA's Kansas City Community Center.

In reflecting upon the event, Kansas City Area Young Women's Leader Lisa Honn said that "a major challenge was being conscientious of cultural and language diversity issues in the Hispanic and African American community." For example, flyers were printed in both English and Spanish and the media campaign included advertisements about the festival in predominately Hispanic and African American community organizations, newspapers, radio stations, restaurants, bookstores, and businesses.

Twenty community organizations lent their support to the festival, including Kansas City Harmony, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kansas City, Headstart, Domestic Violence Network, the National Conference for Community and many more. As plans were finalized, volunteers from each organization worked hard and used their talents to make the event successful.

The festival itself, the first of its kind sponsored by the SGI-USA in Kansas City, featured songs by Mary Moore and St. Monica's Choir, jazz music, skits dealing with drugs and addiction and musical performances by the Chameleon Theater and the Prairie Wind Dance Ensemble which sparked shouts of joy, dancing in the streets and lively conversation.

There was never a dull moment. Children and adults sat in a revved-up D.A.R.E. car brought to the event by the Kansas City police department. They had opportunities to learn origami and how to play taiko drums. A raffle drawing of games and prizes excited the children, and the many activities were enthusiastically embraced by the neighborhood.

Alvin Brooks, mayor protem of Kansas City, congratulated the SGI-USA and all individuals and organizations working to bring an end to violence and proclaimed Oct. 6, 2001, as Victory Over Violence Day in Kansas City. Rey Chavez, director of the Tony Aguirre Community Center, expressed his appreciation and admiration not only for the hard work, but for creating such a wonderful event that touched many people. He expressed the desire to do more activities throughout the year with SGI-USA members.

For more information about the Kansas City Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival, please visit the festival Web site at <http://pages.prodigy.net/sgi-kc>.