

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS  
EL PASO COMMUNITY RALLIES AROUND VOV  
BY JUDY HYMAN  
EL PASO, TEXAS, CORRESPONDENT**

The SGI-USA's El Paso Community Center overflowed with SGI-USA members and friends as they celebrated the Family Youth Festival theme of Victory Over Violence, Oct. 14. A lively program, interspersed with pre-presentations by local organizations and musical groups, provided an interesting combination of education and culture to an appreciative audience.

A resolution presented by the county of El Paso congratulated the youth of the SGI-USA for their efforts in addressing violence in our country. A representative from the city of El Paso officially proclaimed October 2001 Victory Over Violence Month and invited youth leaders to participate at the city's upcoming memorial service for victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Among other highlights was a presentation by Yusef Shere of the Islamic Center of El Paso. Mr. Shere outlined traditions and beliefs prevalent in Islam, emphasizing that true Islam seeks peace and does not condone violence. "The word *jihad*," Mr. Shere said, "means struggle." He went on to say that a Muslim's constant struggle is to subdue one's own negative impulses and elevate the higher qualities in one's life—a concept Buddhists can readily appreciate.

The El Paso Border Chorders, a local men's singing group, entertained with a number of barbershop-style songs from the early 20th century and ended their presentation with a lovely rendition of "America the Beautiful." Tears came to the eyes of many as the audience rose to its feet in silent respect for this musical tribute to America.

Other guest speakers included representatives from the El Paso Shelter for Battered Women and the El Paso Child Crisis Center. Each spoke of the importance of teaching children to be nonviolent through good examples set by the adults around them.

Performances by the Eastwood High Nuevo Amanecer Folklorico Group, the El Paso Women's Division Chorus and the Youth Division Chorus rounded out the program.

In closing remarks, Michael Day, SGI-USA El Paso youth leader said: "We wanted to give each of you a token of our appreciation for your help in making the family youth festival a success. So, we handmade over 1,500 origami cranes. In Japan, the crane is a symbol of peace. It is said that if you make 1,000 origami cranes, your wish will come true. Let us never give up! Let us have the spirit of 10 million cranes! Let us joyfully create a culture of peace!"

After the program, tables piled high with food from many countries greeted guests and members. A small dance floor, accompanied by a DJ's selections, was soon filled with dancers reveling in the success of the festival.