

MOCKINGBIRD DISTRICT—DALLAS MOCKINGBIRD DISTRICT HOSTS WORLD PEACE MEETING

It was a typical 100-degree day in Dallas on Aug. 5. But inside the SGI-USA's Dallas Culture Center, the refreshing breeze of kosen-rufu in action could be felt. It was really more of a mini-festival than a monthly World Peace Prayer Meeting. The standing-room-only audience was joyfully participating in a Texas-style celebration of peace, culture and education. Hosted and prepared by Mockingbird District, this unabashed display of appreciation for the SGI used the theme "We pledge to be the starting point."

As they say in the theater, "the muse descended that day," and everyone felt her shimmering presence in the collage of music, song, dance, visual arts, experiences, laughter, tears and applause. Mockingbird District is fortunate to have many artists, so it was inevitable that they would really put on a show. All the divisions were represented, from the Boys and Girls Group to pioneer members with several decades of Buddhist practice. Every individual participated in the preparation as well as the presentation, which was a major factor in contributing to the total success of the morning.

Their desire to be an inspiration for others by participating in SGI activities was evident right from the start with a strong and vibrant gongyo. As a result of this meeting, some of the guests decided to join the SGI-USA. Members who had not been active for a long time reappeared at meetings in the following month. Many members felt revitalized and were making new determinations. A veritable epidemic of enthusiasm reigned.

A video of the event was made and is being sent to SGI Italy members as a gift for having supported one of Mockingbird District's members, Deborah Weaver, with their daimoku while she underwent major neck surgery in Dallas. Deborah began practicing in Milan and lived there for 10 years while she enjoyed a successful career as a ballerina. Even before her June surgery, Deborah pledged that she would dance for the August World Peace Prayer Meeting "even if all I can do is wave a scarf around the stage." Just seven short weeks after surgery, Deborah indeed danced on the stage to a finale piece she had also choreographed. "I was fortunate to have really strong, disciplined training right at the beginning of my Buddhist practice," she said. "Failure was not an option."

"I felt this activity brought us together as a family," said James Bates, one of Mockingbird District's leaders. "It made me feel like now I can achieve anything."