

HAWAII YOUTH JOIN COMMUNITY FESTIVAL BY BRITANY EDWARDS AND GARY NAKAMURA HAWAII CORRESPONDENTS

The Westside Youth Festival, in its third year, was held on Oct. 27 at the Wai'anae Mall Shopping Center in Wai'anae, Hawaii. Joining in were friends and families from all over the island of Oahu celebrating the event's theme, "Victory Over Violence, Youth for Peace." This annual event brings together many organizations and schools of the Leeward community to sponsor and help plan with members of the SGI-USA in Hawaii.

The Department of Education has been involved in bringing the message of peace and nonviolence to its students in the 10 schools located in the Leeward Coast, under the administration of Hazel Sumile, Leeward School superintendent. Guest artists Phil Yeh and Jon Murakami from Cartoonists Across America assisted in taking the VOV message and creative arts to three schools in the area and, together with students, created a mural at the festival to be donated to a local school.

This year, festival-goers participated in the day's activities of live entertainment, food and games, a late-night disco by local DJs Kutmaster Spaz and Crystal Rose, the Eurobungy Trampoline and Climbing Wall, and even a haunted house.

The youth from Oahu's west side showcased their talents and took a stand for world peace through art, entrepreneurship and onstage performances of song and dance. They also participated by being a part of the festival's many committees.

This year's event left many positive impressions on community businesses and supporters that participated. "This was my first year representing the library. I had a lot of fun meeting people from the community and really enjoyed the children," said Monica Delgado, library technician of the Wai'anae Public Library, where many of the planning meetings were held. "It was really nice to see the students from the schools and other community groups getting involved and working together."

"It was great!" said Pua Kea from the Wai'anae Head-Start Program. She went on to say that it was "such a positive event for the community" and would like to participate once again next year.

Judy Sobin, executive director of Volunteer Legal Services Hawaii, felt that "there was excellent participation from the community. Everyone was in good spirits."

Performers and community members were also enthusiastic: Audrey Bartholomew, an SGI-USA young women's group leader who volunteered for the event, performed a hip-hop dance number with a fellow member. "I was nervous because for the first time I was dancing in front of an audience outside of the SGI," she said. "But I chanted silently to myself and determined to put on a great show." She added that "this festival is a very good thing to remind everyone to put an end to violence during this time of war and bring everyone together."

Dr. Alean Cook-Palmer, a family practitioner of the Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center, joined the festivities and said that it was "exciting and encouraging to see budding young talent in youthful faces. It was also beautiful to see the organizations and churches coming together all for the sake of future generations."

Congratulatory messages came from all levels of government. Community sponsors, along with the SGI-USA and the Youth Peace Committee, included Nani O' Wai'anae, the United Nations Association-USA Hawaii Division, Wai'anae Coast Rotary International Club, Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and Legal Hotline, Wai'anae Girl Scouts, Center

for Global Nonviolence and Volunteer Legal Services. The festival co-chairs, Bernard Kuehu and Alison Ibara-Kawabe, were joined by youth representatives John Miranda and Naleisha Pelekai to help plan this year's event.

In light of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, the festival exemplified the spirit to never give up in the struggle for peace. This event proved that the unity of SGI-USA members and the community, now more than ever, can help move society toward peace.