

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
HOUSTON FESTIVAL CELEBRATES 'CULTURE OF PEACE'
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With cool breezes and a cloudless, sunny day to greet them, SGI-USA members of the Houston area were joined by family, friends and invited guests to celebrate the Victory Over Violence Family Youth Festival on Oct. 27 on the University of Houston campus.

“Joyfully Creating a Culture of Peace” was the selected theme of the festival, which featured 26 musical performances. Brightly colored costumes heralded a musical tribute to the multi-faceted diversity of the Houston community. Spirited traditional dances of Africa, Japan, Latin America, Thailand and India were equaled only by performances and songs ranging from American hip-hop, rap and golden oldies of the 1960s and '70s, to an Italian aria and beloved songs of American patriotism. In support of the festivity, each of Houston's 16 SGI-USA districts featured its own booth promoting peace, culture and education with interactive activities for curious guests.

Community support included the participation and co-sponsorship of more than 40 agencies and businesses, including UNICEF, the Center for Children at Risk and Texas Southern University. An entire group of guests from a local member-owned, children's development and educational center brought the crowd to its feet with their rendition of a Stomp routine.

Kaminari Taiko Drummers called the event to life with a resounding performance. Opening ceremonies began with the presentation of a city of Houston proclamation from Mayor Lee Brown awarded by the mayor's representative, Councilman Joe Montemayor.

The highlight of the opening was the arrival of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee directly from Washington, D.C. As evidence of her support of the SGI's endeavors to promote cultural exchange and humanistic education, a Congressional Certificate of Recognition for the SGI-USA was presented to Houston Vice Women's Leader Marilyn Price. In the congresswoman's address, she applauded the movement of the SGI, stating, “It is not where someone stands in times of prosperity and joy; it is where you stand in times of adversity, and I cannot think of a better coming together to build increasing harmony and understanding in Houston through the promotion of peace than this festival.”