

**SGI-USA FAMILY YOUTH FESTIVALS
PHOENIX VOV FESTIVAL SHARES STAGE WITH WORLD SERIES
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Arizona Area's Family Youth Festival, "Victory Over Violence: Inspiring a Global Community," held in Patriots Square in downtown Phoenix, attracted more than 4,000 community residents, tourists and World Series fans on the afternoon of Nov. 4. That evening, two blocks down the street at Bank One Ballpark, the Arizona Diamondbacks defeated the New York Yankees, winning the World Series.

"Some didn't want Game 7 to happen, because it would cause traffic and parking problems," Denise Stinnett, festival steering committee member, said. "I did, because to accomplish the festival's theme, 'Inspiring a Global Community,' we needed the community to show up."

And they did show up, to enjoy the exhibitions and the entertainment. Boys and Girls Group members waved American flags leading the national anthem. The culturally diverse musical program showcased the talents of both members and their friends. The schedule included African, Japanese, Latin and Hawaiian dances, the SGI Band featuring a violin solo by Jassy Nanini, a song by jazz vocalist Sherry Roberson, a modern dance accompanied by a solo by Maria Verdugo, a "Heroes of Peace" dramatization by members of the men's division, and a Cactus Chorus performance. A Caribbean steel drum group featuring children and adults in magnificent costumes was also a hit.

Joseph, a Nigeri-an and a Muslim, seemed to move with the wind giving an incredibly beautiful, poetic Tai Chi demonstration to new age music. SGI-USA member Gloria Ahmed, diagnosed with cancer a year ago, deeply touched the hearts of many who knew of her struggle as she directed singers offering a rendition of "Youth, Scale the Mountain of the 21st Century" a capella, in Japanese and then in English.

"The hip-hop dancers are the ones I am most proud of," Mrs. Stinnett said. "Twenty teens and preteens worked extremely hard, sacrificing their weekends for a month, practicing Saturday and Sunday. And they were fantastic."

The festival organizers offered many activities for boys and girls, from face painting to games and crafts, making sure that those who would eventually take over their roles in the future would enjoy the event.

"Arizona also had a youth summit this summer. So with only two months to put the festival together, we all learned a lot about communication," Denise said, "especially to be nicer to others and always express appreciation for what others do, never taking anyone for granted."