

Tuesday, 11 July 2017, was another beautiful day in Hacienda Heights, now add the architecture and tradition provided by the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple in the background, add to that the excitement caused by several hundred young adults from across the world and you have the 2017 International Buddhist Light Young Adult Executive Conference taking place this entire week. The youth were representing twenty-six countries including many chapters from around the United States.

It has been 20 years since this annual conference has been held at the Fu Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple; the first International Buddhist Youth Conference was held here in Hacienda Heights in 1997. In those 20 years the number of subdivisions has increased from the original twenty-three to today's 250.

Lucy Pedregon, HHIA Secretary, and Scott Martin, HHIA Chair of Community Relations and Parks and Recreation, were honored to be Distinguished Guests along with others to include Lauren Pong, representing Congressman Ed Royce, and Lauren Yokomizo, representing Supervisor Janice Hahn. Gena Ooi, Hsi Lai Temple Liaison to HHIA, served as Lucy's and my attentive host helping guide us through the events and made us feel like VIPs.

The opening ceremony for this weeklong conference was held in the Main Temple. We were treated to music played by the Hsi Lai Youth Orchestra including the opening song, The Star Spangled Banner. Opening remarks were provided by the Venerable Hui Chuan, from the BLIA World Headquarters located in Taiwan, the Venerable Hui Dong, Abbot of the Fu Guang Shan Hsi Lai Temple in Hacienda Heights, County and Federal Government Representatives, and both Lucy Pedregon and Scott Martin. Lucy was very much at home as she addressed the large crowd and welcomed everyone to Hacienda Heights, California.

The Venerable Hui Chuan and Hui Dong repeated the theme of Humanistic Buddhism and reminded the youth of their significance in "being the future of the world and the future of Buddhism." The enthusiasm and excitement contained in the room and collection of youth was contagious. After the opening ceremony for the weeklong conference everyone gathered on the steps up to the Main Temple and a group picture was taken.

I was humbled and honored to represent the Hacienda Heights Improvement Association, and the unincorporated area of Hacienda Heights among the most impressive collection of energy, intelligence, and hope I have been witness to in a long time. Taking from one of many inspirational quotes from the BLIA YAD 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Special Report: "Kind words-like cloth, Make people warm their hearts; Good words-like fine jade, Make people enjoy using them."

Scott Martin, Chair  
Community Relations/Parks & Recreation