

Beautiful weather and 70-degree temperatures today welcomed a trio of Colorado dignitaries to accept NSA's gift of 100 cherry trees as a part of the opening ceremonies of the Denver Culture Center and Ikeda Auditorium.

Denver City and County Mayor Federico Pena, State Sen. Dennis Gallagher, and Denver Parks and Recreations Department Manager Carolyn Etter were welcomed by the NSA members for the special ceremonies in which three of the Japanese Somei Yoshino-cherry trees presented by NSA to the city of Denver were planted.

After a ribbon-cutting ceremony by Mayor Pena, the dignitaries were given a short tour of the building followed by a brief, informal talk with the general director, during which he told them of how a large portion of the remodeling of the three-story structure was accomplished by members who volunteered their time.

Sen. Gallagher opened the tree planting and donation ceremony following a rendition of "Higher than the Sky" by the YMD Brass Band and the YWD Fife and Drum Corps. He said what a joy it was to have the NSA members here in Denver and he also commented that the building itself will be an inspiration to all who come by to see it.

He remarked that he has had several wonderful experiences by meeting SGI President

Daisaku Ikeda. He complimented NSA's efforts based on peace, harmony and happiness for the whole world. "By planting these cherry trees along Cherry Creek in Denver," he said "NSA is returning Denver to its cultural roots," a reference to the fact that in the early days of Denver, choke cherry trees lined the banks of the river that flows in front of the new culture center.

Denver Territory Chief Dale Mowrer then presented a plaque to Denver Parks and Recreation Manager Carolyn Etter to symbolize NSA's donation of 100 cherry trees.

The plaque reads, "This gift of 100 Somei Yoshino cherry trees is made by the 500,000 NSA members as a expression of their continuing efforts to promote the development and flowering of peace, culture and education." In her thanks Ms. Etter commented on the beauty of the day: "A week ago it was snowing and cold; two days ago it was extremely windy, and we could not have stood here to have this ceremony. How did you pick such a beautiful day?"

She also said that spring is a new beginning and a sign of hope. Denverites, she continued, will understand this message of hope every spring when these cherry trees bloom.

Mayor Pena congratulated and formally welcomed NSA's regional headquarters, saying that the city was "honored by the commitment and the decision " of NSA to locate such

a facility here. He mentioned that the donation of the trees in this historic center of Denver's early development will aid in the beautification of the city as a whole. He said that the trees represent hope and the future of the world.

NSA's message of hope harmony and peace, he elaborated is a message that the people of the world need to hear more often. People in general, he said, need to learn from NSA's example of commitment and energy that NSA members bring not only to Denver but to the world. He closed his remarks by saying "We are absolutely honored and proud that now Denver is part of the international system of NSA."

The general director then extended his heartfelt appreciation to the dignitaries and others who made time in their schedules to attend. He promised that NSA would continue further donations of 100 trees every year for 10 years until a thousand cherry trees beautified Denver. He said the cherry trees are like, "your children" in year after year they will bring fortune and happiness to Denver."

Then all the dignitaries ceremoniously planted three of the trees in a garden on NSA property.

by Paul Martin/Denver