



The Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco

May/June 2015, Issue 15

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News from the Consulate

Consul General Masato Watanabe Says Farewell to San Francisco



After one and a half years at the Consulate, I will be leaving San Francisco this May for a new posting. It is a bittersweet departure to be sure, but I am proud of the contributions I was able to make to California-Japan relations.

I consider myself privileged to have witnessed two sister city relationships formed during my time here (Sunnyvale-Iizuka, Millbrae-Hanyu), and I am excited that more cities are showing interest in establishing relationships, as well.

I was delighted when Prime Minister Abe mentioned the touching story of Fort Bragg-Otsuchi's relationship in a speech during his visit to California last month. This clearly shows how directly grassroots exchanges can influence even the highest level of international relations. Citizen diplomacy is still one of the leading mediums of interaction between California and Japan, and we should all be proud to have a role in it.

I am confident that the mutual understanding and forming life-long bonds with sister cities in Japan will continue to contribute to the prosperity of Northern and Central California. Thank you all very much for your kindness, generosity, and friendship these past one and a half years, and I hope to see you all again.

Sincerely,

Masato Watanabe

Reception Celebrating 100 California-Japan Sister and Friendship Cities

In celebration of 100 sister and friendship city relationships between California and Japan, the Consulate held a reception at the Consul General's official residence on March 23, 2015. A number of distinguished guests attended the celebrations, including: Debi Davis, Vice Mayor of Santa Clara and Past President of the Northern California Chapter of Sister Cities International; Bill Boerum, Chair of Sister Cities International; Meg Mizutani, President of the newly established California-Japan Sister Cities Association; longtime sister cities advocate Norm Mineta, former U.S. Secretary of Transportation; and former California State Assemblywoman Mariko Yamada. It was a wonderful networking opportunity for all involved in sister cities activities, and a great way to celebrate the commitment of everyone who makes them a reality.



Secretary Norman Mineta delivers remarks at the reception celebrating 100 CA-Japan sister and friendship cities

News from the Sister Cities

Past Events

Our Busy Car Wash

By Robb Mayeda, Kawakami Watsonville Sister City Association
(Edited for length)



Watsonville students take a break from washing an RV

On March 28, our Sister City Association members, the Kawakami-bound students, and their parents held a car wash at City of Watsonville's Ramsey Park. The fathers challenged themselves to wash each car in two minutes! They pretty much met that challenge (except for the RV). Except for a five-minute lull around 11:00 A.M., they continuously washed cars from 9:00 A.M. to 1:10 P.M.! The students and mothers handled the drying and sent the cars on their way. It was a day of good clean fun and teamwork.

The students left for Japan on May 12, flying from San Jose on the ANA Boeing 787 Dreamliner.



First car of the day: 1951 Ford pickup

OFSCA Newsletter, February – April 2015

By Rachel Perrin, Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association
(Edited for length)

On February 8, the Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association held its annual New Year's dinner to welcome the student ambassadors for 2015. This year marks the 45th Annual Summer High School and 9th Annual ANA Spring High School Exchanges, as well as the 27th Annual Asian Pacific Children's Convention.

OFSCA will be sending 11 students total from Oakland to Fukuoka to participate in the exchange programs, which include living with a host family, visiting schools, exchanging American and Japanese culture, and serving as junior ambassadors for Oakland.

Fukuoka high school student Saya Kawabe visited Oakland from March 20-29. She visited Mayor Libby Schaaf's office during her visit. Saya was the winner of the All Nippon Airways (ANA), Japan English speaking contest, and was hosted by the Smith-Rainey family from Oakland during her visit.



Saya and Henry meet Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf

Henry Rainey, a student at Skyline High School and the Oakland Buddhist Church Gakuen Japanese language program, was chosen as the recipient of the OFSCA's ANA Spring High School student exchange. He visited Japan from April 4-10 and home-stayed with Saya's family during that time. Henry's trip was partially underwritten by ANA, U.S. Both students were able to sightsee and experience the culture and people of the cities of Fukuoka and Oakland.



Henry's welcome party at the airport

Past Events

2015 Cupertino Toyokawa Student Delegation & Cherry Blossom Festival

By Ashwita Nair & Alysa Sakkas, Cupertino Toyokawa Sister Cities Committee
(Edited for length)

Being a part of the Cupertino Toyokawa delegation team has been such a huge honor for me. I am very excited for the opportunity to travel to Japan and to learn about their rich culture.

Helping out at the Cherry Blossom Festival this year is just one step closer towards that experience. Spending many hours on the weekend to make the festival as special as possible was a big commitment, but it was definitely worth it. I look forward to learning more about the Japanese culture as well as sharing American culture with the Japanese delegates.

--Ashwita Nair, Cupertino Toyokawa Delegation



Cupertino students immersing in the culture early at a Japanese restaurant

Cupertino has selected 14 students and 2 chaperones for their annual student exchange to sister city Toyokawa. The students meet weekly for cultural lessons and recently spent the weekend working at the Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival. The students took turns working in the Information, Soda, and Cotton Candy booths at the annual festival.

In their cultural lessons, they learn about Japanese culture, memorize useful phrases, and practice proper etiquette, including what to expect in a Japanese restaurant. The Cupertino Toyokawa Sister Cities Committee (www.cupertinotoyokawa.org) organizes this exchange program.

Sebastopol and Takeo Celebrate 30 Years as Sister Cities

By Meg Mizutani, Sebastopol World Friends (Edited for length)

On March 27, the City of Sebastopol celebrated the 30th anniversary of its sister city relationship with Takeo, Japan. Sebastopol World Friends (SWF) commemorated this significant milestone with various events around Sebastopol, coinciding with a visiting delegation of 18 middle school students and 13 adults from Takeo.



Sebastopol and Takeo students take a photo before the Welcome Dinner

The celebration started with a dedication ceremony that unveiled a permanent sign for the newly renamed street "Takeo City Avenue" in downtown Sebastopol. The ceremonial renaming demonstrates Sebastopol's commitment to the active, grassroots diplomacy between the two cities, and represents an important gesture of reciprocity, as there is a "Sebastopol Street" in Takeo.

After the street sign dedication, SWF hosted a welcome dinner at the Enmanji Buddhist Temple Memorial Hall in Sebastopol. It was attended by more than 200 people, including the Takeo delegates, their Sebastopol host families, Sebastopol's City Council members, former exchange program participants, and other community supporters. Certificates of recognition for the 30th anniversary were presented by Deputy Consul General Nobuhiro Watanabe of the Japanese Consulate and Sister Cities International officials.

SWF Takeo Program Co-Chair Meg Mizutani says, "We are very happy to celebrate this important milestone in such a meaningful way. This program has touched the lives of thousands of people in both cities, directly and indirectly. The street sign dedication and the welcome party were a culmination of the past, present and future of our relationship and a celebration of our motto 'World Peace, One Friend At A Time.' We are very grateful to everybody in the sister city community for their unwavering support of our organization."

Future Events

Sunnyvale-lizuka Student Exchange

By Nina Wong-Dobkin, Sunnyvale Sister City Association (Edited for length)

Sunnyvale Sister City Association is relatively young, having completed one full exchange in which we brought Sunnyvale students to lizuka in June 2014, and in turn hosted students from lizuka in August. As a token of the friendship between lizuka and Sunnyvale, lizuka gifted 13 cherry trees to Sunnyvale. They were planted in six different locations throughout the city in August. We are very happy to see that these trees have blossomed this spring!



Mr. Akihiko Kajiyama, Supervisor of International Exchange for the Board of Education of lizuka City, expressed to Mr. Mark Kato, President of Sunnyvale Sister City Association that the friendship between lizuka and Sunnyvale will bloom as beautifully as these cherry blossoms. Planning is underway for our June Sunnyvale-to-lizuka trip. We look forward to bringing this wonderful cultural exchange experience to another group of Sunnyvale youngsters.



Event Calendar

May

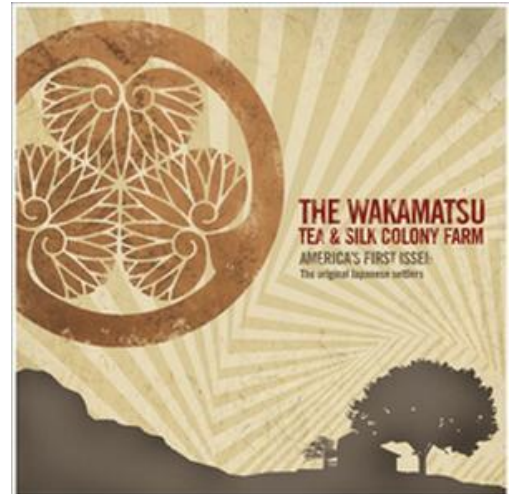
- 5/1 – 5/31 Asian-Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month
- 5/5 San Francisco Osaka SCA Annual General Meeting
- 5/12 Watsonville students leave for Kawakami
- 5/16 3rd Annual Sausalito Full Moon Blossom Festival
- 5/16 San Mateo-Toyonaka Friendship Festival

June

- Sunnyvale students leave for lizuka
- Cupertino students leave for Toyokawa

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

In June 1977, Reps. Frank Horton of New York and Norman Y. Mineta of California introduced a House resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian-Pacific Heritage Week. The following month, Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill in the Senate. Both were passed. On October 5, 1978, President Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration. Twelve years later, President George H.W. Bush signed an extension making the week-long celebration into a month-long celebration. In 1992, the official designation of May as Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month was signed into law. The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States on May 7, 1843, and to mark the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, the majority of which was laid by Chinese immigrants.



Wakamatsu Tea & Silk Colony, one of the earliest known Japanese settlements in North America, began in June 1869

Call for Submissions



Have a story, opinion, or event you'd like to share? Submit it for the next issue of the newsletter! The input from your organizations is what makes the newsletter informative and interesting. The deadline for the next issue is **June 20th**. Please direct all submissions to: kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.go.jp