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News from the Consulate

Season's Greetings from Consul General Jun Yamada

Happy New Year! I hope all of you are enjoying 2016 and keeping up with your New Year's resolutions!

2015 was full of new experiences for me here, and I have thoroughly enjoyed myself. I had the opportunity and pleasure of visiting many cities with Japanese sister cities, and witnessed their amazing, enduring friendships that are demonstrated regularly at the grassroots level.

2016 is the year of the monkey, which symbolizes charm, confidence, and dynamism. There is no doubt that the monkey has a sharp mind and can be very clever. For those men and women (and boys and girls) who were born in the year of the monkey, I hope that you use those strengths and characteristics to their maximum potential.

California and Japan currently have 102 sister city relationships, which showcases the true depth of our connection. 2015 was also the 70th anniversary of the end of hostilities between our two countries, making it all the more interesting and relevant to work with sister city organizations as the core of our friendly bilateral relations.

I hope that we can continue to help each other grow and enhance these relationships to promote mutual understanding through the exchange of our peoples, our languages, and our cultures. I commend all of you for your hard work in keeping these communities alive and I am looking forward to collaborating with you further in the coming year!



Sincerely,

Jun Yamada

News from the Sister Cities

Past Events

Highlights from My Visit to Sakaide

By Jonathan Altman, Student Delegate, Sausalito Sakaide Sister City Program
(Edited for length)

There were many parts of this fantastic student exchange program, but I will only cover the highlights. One thing that was amazing was that every day offered an opportunity to try new and fun activities. Japan has kept a lot of its ancient cultural traditions, which I found to be very interesting because America's traditions do not stretch nearly as far back. During the *taiko* float festival early on in our program, we got an impressive glimpse of Japanese culture as hundreds of men put on *happi* coats and lifted up large, heavy floats. However, what impressed me the most was the teamwork and the strong bonds of community displayed during this festival and throughout Japan. This strong sense of community is one of the biggest differences between the United States and Japan, and one of the most interesting to observe.

Another tradition which I really enjoyed learning about was the Japanese tea ceremony. During this ceremony, we sat quietly and respectfully while awaiting the instructions from the tea masters. We learned the process of making a cup of matcha tea, which I hope to make again at home. In addition, the "surface of water" jellies, as well as the tea sweets, were so delicious and many members of our delegation wanted seconds. Overall, the ceremony was conducted in a manner that calmed me and allowed me to reflect on how lucky I was to be in Japan enjoying a wonderful tradition.



2015 delegation following a tea ceremony in Sakaide

Another highlight was the day trip to Hiroshima, including the Itsukushima Shrine on Miyajima Island. On the ferry to the island, one of the Japanese boys in our group began a conversation with me and we talked the whole ride. Then when we got off the ferry, I was very surprised to see all the deer walking around and interacting with people. *(continued on next column)*

After watching people pray at the shrine, I decided to try it myself. I threw in some yen, clapped, bowed, and prayed. When we reached Hiroshima, I was a bit nervous about going to the peace museum. However, reading the information and later watching the interviews from people, I will never forget visiting that place. It held emotions that were so strong they were tangible. The museum trip, in combination with the ground zero visit, made for an afternoon I will never forget.

The last highlight was staying with my host family. I was so nervous before the trip that I would not be able to communicate with my host family. By the end we could understand each other despite the language barrier because of the strong ties that we had developed over my 10-day stay with them. I hope to stay in contact with them and I hope that their son, Takumi, comes to Sausalito.

The Sausalito Delegation to Sakaide for 2015 included 13 student delegates, three chaperones and Mayor Tom and Tricia Theodore. We had a blast! Now we are looking forward to hosting teens in Sausalito.

Future Events

Kawakami Watsonville Sister City Update – February-March 2016

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

The Kawakami Watsonville Sister City Association and the middle school programs in Pajaro Valley Unified School District have selected 16 students for the annual trip to Kawakami-mura in Nagano-ken. The trip is planned for May 10-18. The students come from five different schools in the district, as well as from Kokoro no Gakko, a Japanese American cultural summer program in Watsonville. Since November, the students and their families have participated in three orientation meetings and one fundraiser.



Watsonville students in this year's group traveling to Kawakami

Future Events

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The next fundraisers are set for February 9 and 21. The first is “Kawakami Night,” sponsored by Miyuki Restaurant in Watsonville. The owners will donate a portion of that night’s receipts to the Association. Then, the local Applebee’s Restaurant will sponsor a “Flapjack Breakfast” on Feb. 21. Students sell tickets to the breakfast and keep half the time price. Applebee’s will open two hours early (8-10 AM) and cook the breakfast, to be served by the sister city parents.



Members of the local JACL chapter at the Fall Flapjack Breakfast

Sunnyvale-Iizuka Adult Exchange Program

By Sunnyvale Sister City Association (Edited for length)



SUNNYVALE-IIZUKA
ADULT
EXCHANGE
PROGRAM
(AEP)

The Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA) is proud to announce our new Adult Exchange Program (AEP)! With the AEP, one can now easily connect with a like-minded adult in Iizuka, Japan to swap short homestays, enrich your life, and tie communities together in the process.
(continued on next column)

Working with The Iizuka Friendship Network, a local volunteer community organization, SSCA will find an exchange partner with similar livelihood interests who is willing to both host you and travel to your home in this unique program.

To begin your adventure with new food, foreign lifestyle, and new take on your livelihood, you need only your willingness and ability to travel internationally and to complete our online application form. If a match is identified, we will facilitate an online exchange with your prospective partner so you can determine the quality of the match. You need to cover your travel costs but will swap free accommodation.

With the strong dollar and historically low fuel costs enabling lower airfares, there will never be a better opportunity for such a life-enriching event, so apply now! If you need more information or have any questions about the program, please send a message to: aep@sunnyvalesistercity.org.

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 **March 21**. Please direct all submissions to: kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.go.jp

Event Calendar

January

- 1/28 Sister Cities International 60th Anniversary Regional Reception in San Jose
- 1/29-30 Sister Cities International Northern California and Southern California Joint Meeting in San Miguel

February

- 2/9 KWSCA Kawakami Night at Miyuki Restaurant
- 2/21 KWSCA Flapjack Breakfast at Applebee’s