



*The Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco*

March/April 2015, Issue 14

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## *News from the Consulate*

### **Consul Hagiwara Returns to Japan, Succeeded by Vice Consul Higo**

Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> is a bittersweet day at the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, as we say goodbye to Consul Kei Hagiwara. During his three years in San Francisco, Consul Hagiwara played a very active role in fostering and supporting sister city exchanges throughout Northern and Central California. Before returning to Japan, Consul Hagiwara was able to aid in the establishment of the 100<sup>th</sup> sister city relationship between California and Japan (Millbrae-Hanyu) last November, a fitting way to cap off his many accomplishments while working in San Francisco.

Vice Consul Satoshi Higo will be taking over Consul Hagiwara's duties. Vice Consul Higo is enthusiastic about working with the sister city organizations and looks forward to his time here in San Francisco. As of Monday, March 23, Vice Consul Higo can be reached at (415) 780-6060, or by e-mail at [satoshi.higo@mofa.go.jp](mailto:satoshi.higo@mofa.go.jp).



## *News from the Sister Cities*

### *Past Events*

### **Watsonville Prepares for Trip to Kawakami-mura**

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



The Kawakami Watsonville Sister City Association is actively preparing students for their May trip to Kawakami-mura in Nagano-ken. In November, the seven middle school programs in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District selected their representatives. 14 students and their families are attending monthly meetings, where slideshows display expectations of the annual trip, travel, packing tips, and fundraising ideas.

The last big fundraiser took place at the Watsonville Applebee's Restaurant on Sunday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> (another breakfast will take place in April). The students and families will sell tickets to a flapjack breakfast, where the restaurant opens its doors early, and the staff cooks while students are the greeters, and parents serve and bus the tables.

## Past Events

### Fort Bragg Hosts Otsuchi Visitors

By Tony Reed, Fort Bragg Otsuchi Cultural Exchange Association  
(Edited for length)



*Otsuchi visitors and locals at the Welcome Dinner*

The Fort Bragg Otsuchi Cultural Exchange Association (FBOCEA) and friends were delighted to host visitors from their sister city Otsuchi, Iwate, just after New Year's 2015. The group of five adults and four teen girls arrived January 8<sup>th</sup> and stayed for four days. The last time an exchange group visited Fort Bragg was in 2010. Although the quake and tsunami of 2011 delayed the program, FBOCEA members were eager to continue relations with the residents of Otsuchi.

In a presentation to the Fort Bragg City Council, Otsuchi Mayor Yutaka Ikarigawa sent virtual greetings and words of appreciation to Fort Bragg for its help after the tsunami. In his video message, he said he is happy the exchange will continue. He said that while there is still much work to do, the people of Otsuchi are hopeful for the future of their beautiful town. Fort Bragg Mayor Dave Turner presented visitors with a proclamation welcoming them to Fort Bragg.

Visitors were treated to welcome parties, dinners, local tours, and free time with host families. During a visit to Otsuchi Point, a token of heartfelt connection was made between the two coastal towns. "Hirano-san called Otsuchi Mayor Ikarigawa-san and said, 'in two minutes please have everyone outside to wave at Fort Bragg. We will be waving to you,'" FBOCEA coordinator Sharon Davis recounted. "It was a magical moment." At the North Coast Brewery, all were surprised by a visit from Byron Takeuchi, owner of B-Man's Teriyaki & Burgers in Los Angeles. Takeuchi collected tens of thousands of dollars to send to Otsuchi during FBOCEA's fund drive. During a dinner and presentation, Otsuchi students Setsuko Hirano, Nozomi Kobayashi, Chiyo Yahata, and Kazusa Haga read statements about the tsunami and rebuilding efforts in Otsuchi. Their heartfelt accounts moved some in the room to tears.

With translation help from Alan Mockridge, one visitor expressed that while he was initially unsure of what to expect during the visit, he was extremely glad to have made the trip and was grateful to all who helped make it happen.

FBOCEA and friends greatly enjoyed the visit, which, as always, broadened our understanding of what our sister city friends have had, and will continue, to endure. We welcome more visits and extend wishes of peace and healing to our friends in Otsuchi-town. Davis and Mockridge traveled to Otsuchi for a week starting March 9 to commemorate the anniversary of the quake and tsunami.

### Fairfield-Nirasaki Update

By Arletta Cortright, Fairfield-Nirasaki Sister City Program (Edited for length)



*Students receiving certificates from Assemblyman Jim Frazier in the California State Assembly chamber*

The City of Fairfield's Sister City Program recently hosted six students and their chaperone from Nirasaki, Japan. The two boys and four girls, ages 14–17, stayed with host families in Fairfield for a three-week visit over the holiday season, celebrating the 26<sup>th</sup> year of the annual student exchange.

The students visited San Francisco and Monterey, and were given a private tour of the State Capitol during a day in Sacramento. Assemblyman Jim Frazier presented State Assembly certificates of recognition to the students on the floor of the Assembly chamber. The final week of their trip included visits to several public schools in Fairfield, where the students enjoyed classroom visits, club meetings, and tours of UC Berkeley and UC Davis.

## Past Events

### Saratoga is 'building bridges' in Muko, Japan

By Mike Story and Joan Gomersall, Saratoga Sister City Committee  
(Abridged version, with permission, from San Jose Mercury News Online)



*Former Saratoga Mayor Ann Walton Smith presents Muko's Mayor Kushima with a gift commemorating 30 years as sister cities*

In October 2014, a group of 34 Saratogans embarked on a trip to Muko, Japan. 100 years ago the exhibition of a Japanese Pavilion in the Pan Pacific World's Fair prompted the creation of Saratoga's Hakone Gardens. 30 years ago, a Sister City relationship was created to bond Saratoga to Muko City in Japan. Three years ago Hakone Japanese Gardens began a first-of-its-kind Sister Garden relationship with the Northern Culture Museum in Niigata.

Saratoga Sister City members organized and led this group that also included members of Hakone, local residents, and foreign guests. Two weeks of travel took the group to Muko, Niigata, and many important Japanese Gardens. Starting in Tokyo, the group visited shrines, gardens, and museums, took a cruise on the Sumida River. They traveled by Bullet Train northwest to Niigata situated on the Sea of Japan. Here, the citizens of Niigata hosted a celebration of the third year of Hakone's Sister Garden relationship with the Northern Culture Museum.

The group then traveled to the Koraku-en Park (one of the three most famous Japanese parks), and the Floating Torii of Miyajima island. The group also saw the Miho Museum and the 8<sup>th</sup> century "Great Buddha" of Todai-ji Temple, Kasuga Shrine, and the Fujiwara family shrine with its thousands of dedicated lanterns.

The travelers then went on to Muko for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, where they had lunch at an elementary school, and then attended the official reception held by the city. On their last full day, the group visited Sanzen-in Temple and finished the day with a Sayonara Party. There will be a slideshow of the trip at the general meeting of the Saratoga Sister City Committee on March 20, 7 p.m., at the Saratoga Senior Center.

### Sakaide Host Parent Reflection

By Tricia Smith, Sausalito Sakaide Sister City Student Exchange Program  
(Edited for length)

As excited as we were to be hosting a Sakaide student last July, we were also nervous! It had been years since we had a teenager in the house, let alone a teen who would be away from home for the first time, speak limited English, and arrive jet-lagged and exhausted. We could only imagine what it would be like for our own son or daughter in the same situation at that age.

We were grateful for all of the information that the Sausalito Sakaide Sister City Committee provided prior to our student's arrival, and we loved having the opportunity to meet the other families that would be hosting the 2014 students. We first met our student Rina as she stepped off the bus at Sausalito City Hall. We recognized one another immediately from the photos we exchanged by e-mail a few weeks before. Rina was smiling from ear to ear and coming down the stairs with her arms out stretched. She hurried towards us and greeted us with a huge hug. At that very moment, any worry we may have had was washed away, and we knew we were in for a life changing experience.

From the start, Rina pushed her boundaries by trying new foods, learning new words, and always asking thoughtful questions. Each night she shared the pictures she had taken of her busy days with the chaperones and other students before she tiredly stumbled to bed exhausted from all of the activities. On the fifth night of hosting Rina, she asked us to help her create a Facebook account so that we could be 'friends'. Facebook Friends? This was a request we *never* heard from our own children when they were 15 years old!

It has been six months since Rina left California and we are still in contact on a regular basis. And in only six more months, we hope to be arriving in Sakaide greeting Rina and her entire family with a big smile and hug ala Rina-style!



## Past Events

### SMTSCA Update

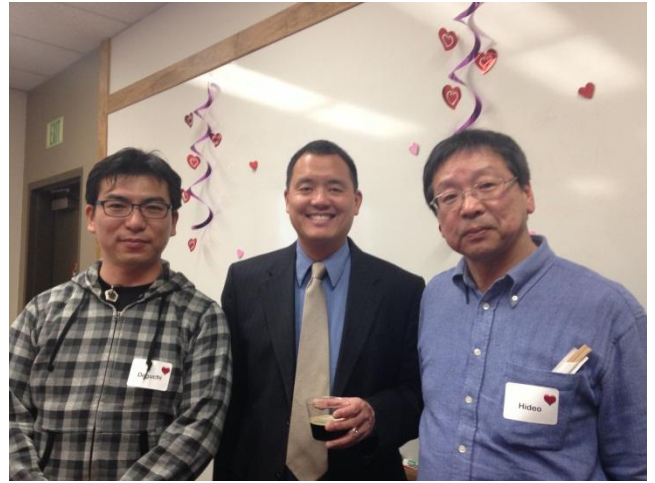
By David Lim, San Mateo Toyonaka Sister City Association



*From left to right: City Clerk Patrice Olds and Assistant City Clerk Kathy Costa with Toyonaka guests*

The City of San Mateo hosted five city employees from their Sister City of Toyonaka in early February. In addition to sharing how municipal government works in California, the Toyonaka visitors also visited Sacramento to see how state government worked.

San Mateo hosted a farewell dinner with our Toyonaka guest with a Valentine's Day themed party that was enjoyed by all!



*San Mateo City Councilmember David Lim visiting with Toyonaka City employees Deguchi and Hideo*

## Future Events

### Cherry Blossom Festival Blooms in Cupertino's Memorial Park

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

The Cupertino-Toyokawa Sister City Committee is sponsoring the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cherry Blossom Festival on Saturday and Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at Cupertino's Memorial Park. This family festival honors Cupertino's sister city relationship with Toyokawa, Japan. Hours are from 10 AM to 5 PM and admission is FREE.

Indoor cultural displays and demonstrations will be featured in the Quinlan Community Center. Outdoor entertainment is held at the Amphitheater and includes Taiko drum groups, Japanese dancers, various martial arts, and musical performances, which will take place throughout the day. Children's activities feature hands-on arts and crafts, and a petting zoo.

Also featured is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Japanese Speech Contest conducted by NSG Colleges USA. The contest will take place at 10 AM on Saturday, with the grand prize of a Japan-related travel package valued at \$500. The festival offers a wide selection of Japanese food and beverages, entertainment, cultural exhibits, and arts, crafts, and clothing for sale.

Food and drinks will include sushi, spam musubi, gyoza, Asian chicken salad, yakisoba, mochi, teriyaki chicken skewers, hot rice, shaved ice, fruit bowls, kettle corn, cotton candy, coffee, smoothies, beer, sake, plum wine, sodas, and lemonade.

Visit us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CupertinoToyokawa](http://www.facebook.com/CupertinoToyokawa). For further information about the Cherry Blossom Festival, visit [www.cupertinotoyokawa.org](http://www.cupertinotoyokawa.org). For more information on the Japanese Speech Contest, visit [www.nsgcolleges.com](http://www.nsgcolleges.com) or contact [info@nsgcolleges.com](mailto:info@nsgcolleges.com).

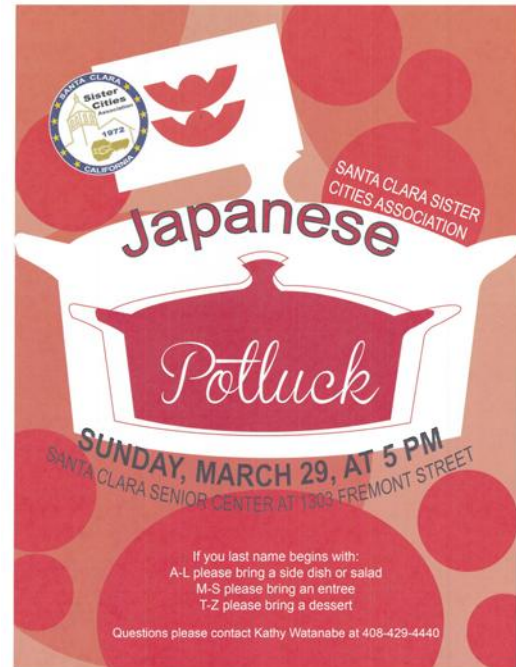


## Future Events

### Santa Clara Sister Cities Update

By Kathy Watanabe, Santa Clara Sister Cities Association (Edited for length)

Santa Clara Sister Cities is happy to be hosting their Izumo Sister City from March 27-31. There will be 14 students coming for homestays along with chaperones. This is the 29<sup>th</sup> year that Izumo and Santa Clara have engaged in student exchanges. One of the highlights of the visit is the annual Japanese potluck where members of the community come with a favorite dish to share with our visitors. There is music and an exchange of gifts between the two cities. Last year the students were presented with books in English to bring home, along with books for their local library. For questions please contact Kathy Watanabe at (408) 429-4440.



### Sausalito's Annual Full Moon Blossom Festival

By Dina Hatchuel, Sausalito-Sakaide Sister City Program (Edited for length)

Our annual fundraiser is taking place at Campbell Hall, Sausalito on the evening of May 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM. The funds raised provide financial aid for select student delegates. We are delighted that Sushi Ran will be catering the event again this year and of course there will be a rich plethora of Japanese cultural experiences – music, dance, arts, and crafts. Information about this event can be found on our website: [www.sausalitosistercities.org](http://www.sausalitosistercities.org) OR for information contact Monica Finnegan at: [mfinnegan@urbanrealestateadvisors.com](mailto:mfinnegan@urbanrealestateadvisors.com) Our student delegation will go to Sakaide from July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Student applicants from Marin County will be interviewed and the delegation will be selected in April. Then the real preparations begin!



#### 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 is **April 20<sup>th</sup>**. Please direct all submissions to: [kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.jp](mailto:kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.jp)

#### Sister City Information from the Consulate

- ❖ [Sister City List](#)
- ❖ [Sister City Photo Gallery](#)
- ❖ [Consulate Website](#)
- ❖ [Consulate Facebook](#)

#### Event Calendar

##### March

- 3/14 Livermore-Yotsukaido Student Exchange Welcome Reception
- 3/20 Slideshow of Saratoga's Muko Visit
- 3/23 100th California-Japan Sister City Relationship Reception
- 3/27 Sebastopol-Takeo 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner

##### April

- 4/25-26 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Cherry Blossom Festival in Cupertino

##### May

- 5/16 Sausalito's Annual Full Moon Blossom Festival