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News from the Consulate

47th Annual Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival

The 47th Annual Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival was held April 12-13 and April 19-20, 2014 in San Francisco's Japantown. During the second weekend, Consul General Masato Watanabe attended the Friendship Reception, the Senior Appreciation Brunch, and participated in Festival's Finale: the Grand Parade.

For more information about Consul General Watanabe's participation during the first weekend of festivities as well as additional photos, please see our website and Facebook page.



Consul General Watanabe (bottom right) watching the Grand Parade

News from the Sister Cities

Past Events



Mayor Brent Ives (center) and Tracy student ambassadors greeting the Memuro delegation

Anniversary Dinner Welcoming Memuro

By Carol Minner, Sister City Association of Tracy (Edited for length)

Sister City Association of Tracy board members, 2014 student ambassadors, and their families welcomed 14 Memuro visitors to Tracy on Friday, March 7th. The Memuro delegation traveled to Tracy to celebrate 25 years of friendship and cultural exchange. Upon arrival to Tracy, the Memuro visitors explored City Hall and toured the Tracy Transfer Station, Fire Station, and other local sites via Tracy Transit.

The Sister City Board and City of Tracy hosted the anniversary dinner and program at the community center on Saturday evening. Memuro guests included Mayor Yoshinori Miyanishi and his wife Mieko, Mr. Takanori Takeda, superintendent of the Memuro Board of Education, and his wife Michiko, and Mr. Shigeo Hirose, chairperson of town council, & his wife Hiroko.

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Past Events



Mayors of both cities together with Memuro delegates

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Memuro Sister City founder, Ken Yasui spoke in both English and Japanese, stressing that the success of the program in Tracy was based on the active involvement of the association's board of directors and the cooperation of Memuro city officials.

The Tracy High School Jazz Ensemble and Bukkyo Taiko Drum group of Stockton provided entertainment for guests.

The Sister City Association, a non-profit organization, has organized youth exchange programs to Japan and the Azores, student art exchange programs, and adult exchange programs. The dinner raised funds to support these events and future endeavors.

Memuro Students Visit Tracy

By Carol Minner, Sister City Association of Tracy

The ten Student Ambassadors from Memuro, Japan visited Tracy the week of March 26 – April 2, 2014. The students visited our local landmarks such as San Francisco, the Golden Gate Bridge, Alcatraz, Bubba Gumps, and the San Jose Japantown Museum. Our host families provided a full weekend of additional activities including bowling, attending sporting events, and even visiting Disneyland!

Their trip concluded with the community hosted "Sayonara Party" on March 31st, where both Memuro and Tracy student ambassadors provided lively entertainment. It was a very short trip, and we were all sad to see them leave. Our Tracy student ambassadors are all eagerly waiting to see them again in June!



Memuro students listen to welcoming remarks from the Mayor of Tracy

Updates from OFSCA

By Rachel Peters, Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association

OFSCA members, Liane and Eric Scott, volunteered at the JET Alumni fundraiser on Monday, March 10, 2014. The JETAANC community in partnership with Global Giving (a matching sponsor) organized a fundraiser to support Tohoku students. The event was launched in honor of Taylor Anderson, a JET Program participant who perished in the earthquake/tsunami on March 11, 2011. The Taylor Anderson Memorial Fund supports programs for students from the communities in the Tohoku region who are continuing to recover from the March 11th devastation.

On Friday, March 14, 2014, Gary Tominaga, Liane and Eric Scott attended the Berkeley Sakai Sister City annual dinner. The Oakland group was treated to a wonderful potluck dinner and able to meet Berkeley members and learn about the programs they are involved in.

For the fifth consecutive year, the Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association volunteered to set up and administer a Water Stop at the 5th annual Oakland Running Festival on Sunday, March 23rd. The volunteers included an exchange student from Fukuoka and her home stay family. Oakland Running Festival staff complimented the Oakland-Fukuoka Sister City Association for their exemplary work and exceptional procedures from start to finish.

OFSCA also received a grant from the Berkeley JACL to help with our annual student exchange. OFSCA strives to contribute to improved global communication through cross-cultural appreciation and understanding by giving this opportunity to Japanese and American students as well as their American host families. This bi-annual exchange has created a strong sense of support for everyone involved with the program and established lifelong friendships. OFSCA is grateful to the Berkeley JACL for their generous grant to help with our annual student exchange.

Past Events



Sunnyvale students weigh in on their upcoming visit to Japan

Sunnyvale Students are Travel Ready

By Jack Ewbank, Sunnyvale Sister City Association

On April 9th, the Sunnyvale Sister City Association and Sunnyvale Middle School held an orientation session for this June's Sunnyvale to Iizuka exchange program.

Participants, their representatives, and school administrators listened to SSCA President Mark Kato's preliminary itinerary for the program, as well as early details for this fall's Iizuka to Sunnyvale exchange. Kato advised the students on trip preparations, recommending how to prepare for air travel and jet lag, suggesting appropriate omiyage for the home stay families, and ways to deal with the Japanese rainy season. Also in attendance were Sunnyvale School District Superintendent Dr. Benjamin Picard and Japanese Consul Kei Hagiwara from the San Francisco Consulate.

My Hosting Experience

By Amira, Neighbors Abroad (Palo Alto)

On March 15, 2014 the sky was blue and the sun shone brightly onto the parking lot where I stood. Surrounded by my friends, we jumped up and down, excited for a bus of sixteen exchange students from Japan to arrive. I knew it was going to be amazing, but I had no idea of all the new experiences and memories I would gain.

Sayaka Iida is the name of the girl who would be staying at my house for one week. When I first met her, neither of us knew what to say, then we smiled and laughed. Over the next week, we became very close friends, almost sisters. Together we went to many places, including Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, a tour of Silicon Valley, and ice skating at Winter Lodge. She also went with me to school for two days, ate meals with me, and played games with my family. Every night we would talk using the limited language we had, and she would tell me about the differences between America and Japan, and showed me photos of her friends and classmates. We had many inside jokes, such as she thought the word for "smile" was "CHEESE!!" She turned out to be a very enthusiastic, caring, funny, and energetic person. We laughed together and cried together. I wish she didn't have to leave. I hope this connection will last forever.

This experience gave me a better understanding of Japanese culture, and opened me up to the world we are in. I am inspired to continue to learn and expand my international awareness. This summer, many other host students are travelling to Tsuchiura, Japan. I am looking forward to reuniting with Sayaka and experiencing her culture. Thank you so much to Sensei Nakajima, Neighbors Abroad, and everyone else that made this come true.

Santa Clara Welcomes Izumo Student Delegation

By Kathy Watanabe, President, Santa Clara Sister Cities



Izumo students at Central Park Library in Santa Clara

Santa Clara Sister Cities has had a busy Spring 2014. The group hosted a delegation of 12 students and 3 chaperones from Izumo, Japan from March 25-31, 2014. The students visited the Bay Area including Stanford University, San Francisco, and Monterey. They also spent time in Santa Clara visiting the fire department, police department, Santa Clara University, and the Central Park Library where they got to put together a collage which will be framed and displayed in the Teen Section of the library. There were two highlights to the trip. One was spent visiting Great America Amusement Park with all kinds of rides and games.

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Past Events

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The second highlight was going bowling with the host students. There were 20 Japanese and American students bowling and everyone had a great time. The visit culminated in the annual Japanese potluck at the Santa Clara Senior Center. Everyone was treated to the piano playing of a Japanese pianist, Benjamin Belew Akeala. The Japanese exchange students serenaded attendees with their version of John Denver's song, "Country Roads" in Japanese. It was very beautiful.

Before the students left the stage, they were presented with books in English by Santa Clara Sister Cities Vice President, Raj Chahal, to read and also take back to their libraries in Izumo. Mr. Chahal had visited Izumo last summer with his son, AJ, and wanted to give back something that would help students learn English in Japan. He also has 700 books that he will donate to the libraries in Izumo.

Santa Clara Sister Cities will be sending one high school student, Katie Knowles, and her chaperone, Erin Ulrich, who is a Children's Librarian at the Central Park Library, to Izumo in June. They are starting to prepare for their trip, which will no doubt get them more excited about their visit to Japan.

Future Events

Donations for Student Exchange

By Murv Little, Mizuho Students Exchange (Morgan Hill) (Edited for length)

The 2014 Mizuho Morgan Hill Student Exchange program, under the umbrella of the Morgan Hill Community Foundation, will organize this year's visit to Mizuho-machi, Tokyo, Japan from July 9-19. Students and chaperones will stay with home-stay host families in Mizuho and follow their host family's student to class and other activities. Estimated cost for each student is approximately \$1,500 airfare, \$500 gifts, insurance, incidental and personal expenses.

Fund raising activities are in progress, and any additional contributions would be greatly appreciated. For more information, please contact Judy H. Little at judy@murv.com or (408) 779-8170, or Murv Little at murv@murv.com or (408) 896-2465.

Car Wash Fundraiser

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

In cooperation with the City of Watsonville's Parks and Recreation Department, Kawakami-mura bound students and their families held a car wash fundraiser on Saturday, March 29 at Ramsey Park. The students sold "early bird" discount tickets for \$5. The students kept the money to off-set the cost of the trip. People who drove up without the discount tickets paid \$8 that went to the sister city association's general fund that is used for hosting visitors from Kawakami in the fall.



After washing the last car at the fundraiser

The fifteen students attend five Japanese after-school classes during the month of April. Next on tap will be a Japanese practice meal prepared by the Kawakami Watsonville Sister City Association board members. Students are introduced to foods, told about the ingredients, and shown how to eat each item.

Event Calendar

May

5/4 Fresno Sister Cities: 5th Nicholas Henebury Memorial Golf and Crab Feed (see: www.NicholasHeneburyGolf.com)

5/10 Sausalito Full Moon Blossom Festival

June

6/4 SFOSCA Annual General Meeting



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.

The deadline is **June 16th**. Please direct all submissions to: laura.jacob@sr.mofa.go.jp