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News from the Consulate

2017: A Big Year for Anniversaries

In 2017, there are some very momentous sister city anniversaries being commemorated. Both San Jose-Okayama and San Francisco-Osaka are celebrating 60 long years together! Additionally, Oakland-Fukuoka is now 55, Berkeley-Sakai and Antioch-Chichibu are 50, and Livermore-Yotsukaido is 40!

In April, Consul General Yamada had the honor of attending events in both San Jose and Berkeley and awarded the cities with Consul General’s Commendations for their long-standing commitments to grassroots diplomacy between California and Japan.



Left: CG Yamada presents commendation to Berkeley-Sakai Sister City Association; Right: CG Yamada presents commendation to San Jose-Okayama Sister Cities

News from the Sister Cities

Watsonville-Kawakami

Watsonville Students Visit Kawakami

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

In preparation for the May 2017 trip, Takashi and Kitty Mizuno taught Japanese language lessons for the Kawakami-bound students. In order to acquaint the students with foods and etiquette, Phyllis Nagamine and I prepared an 11-item Japanese dinner for the students. When the big day came, our 16 Watsonville middle school students flew from San Jose to Los Angeles before boarding an ANA flight for Narita. After a four-hour bus trip the students arrived at Kawakami-mura, a farming community in Nagano Prefecture, on May 10. The next day, the eight pairs of students attended Kawakami Junior High School and met their host families. Our students attended classes and visited the elementary and pre-schools. On the weekend the students had a barbecue at a mountain park. After leaving Kawakami, the students bused back to Tokyo where they stayed two nights in the Akasaka District. They returned home May 17 on a direct flight back home to San Jose.



Students experiencing Japanese food at one of our preparatory meetings at Pajaro Middle School

Wakayama Children's Choir Visits Bakersfield, Performs with Local Choir

By Susan Stone, Wakayama Co-Chair, Bakersfield Sister City Project Corp.
(Edited for length)

From March 27-31, the internationally-renowned Wakayama Children's Choir visited Bakersfield for the first time since 2011, when they helped celebrate our 50th anniversary as sister cities. All of the children stayed with local host families. While in town, the choir performed twice for student audiences on March 28. In the morning they performed for approximately 400 junior high students enrolled in performing arts and magnet programs in the Bakersfield City Schools and in the afternoon, they performed for students at Thompson Junior High School.

The highlight of the visit was a very special Concert of Friendship and Peace on March 29. This free evening concert featured both the Wakayama Children's Choir and the Panama-Buena Vista Union School District Junior High Honor Choir in the Performing Arts Center of Ridgeview High School. The P-BVUSD Honor Choir opened the concert with a selection of American spirituals and folk music, and others such as Lennon & McCartney's "Blackbird". The Wakayama Children's Choir contributed with various movements from Bob Chilcott's Nidaros Jazz Mass, culminating in "Agnus Dei". Their final number, "Song of Hope", brought the audience to their feet in wild applause. The two choirs finally joined together in the Japanese folk song "Sakura" and a medley of American patriotic tunes.



Concert group photo at the performing arts

In addition to these performances, the students also had the opportunity to attend classes with their hosts and toured CSU Bakersfield, where they performed an impromptu mini-concert in one of the quads. Other activities included a visit to Murray Family Farms, where the children went on a hayride, picked strawberries, visited with the farm animals in the petting zoo, and enjoyed playing on the giant bounce pillow.

The choir was directed by Mr. Haruhiko Numamaru and was accompanied by Dr. Nobutada Iwahashi, president of the Wakayama Children's Choir and chairman of the Wakayama Sister City Affiliation Committee.



Wakayama Children's Choir members jumping on the giant bounce pillow at Murray Family Farm

Four others accompanied the choir: Miss Maho Fujioka, accompanist; Mr. Daiki Obana (son of Wakayama's mayor); and "choir moms": Mrs. Kayoko Kishi and Mrs. Natsuko Kasano. For more information and many photos from this visit by the Wakayama Children's Choir, please visit the Bakersfield Sister City Facebook page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/Bakersfield-Sister-City-Project-Corporation-168391733233922/>

*Mendocino-
Miasa-Omachi*

MSCA 2017 Student and Artist Exchange

By Mike Evans, Board Member, Mendocino Sister Cities Association
(Edited for length)

The 26th annual Mendocino Sister Cities Association Student Exchange and 10th annual Artist Exchange trips to Mendocino's sister city, Miasa-Omachi in Nagano, will leave SFO on June 19 and return on July 5. There are 17 students, four adult chaperones, two leader assistants, two co-leaders, and three local artists.

The group will visit the cities of Tokyo, Kamakura, Nikko, Kyoto, Nara, Himeji, Hiroshima, Miyajima, and Takayama before spending six nights with local homestay families in Miasa Village, during which time they will participate in several activities with Miasa School and Omachi City. The artists participating in this year's Artist Exchange trip are: Leader, Carolyn Zeitler, and local artists Steve Greenwood and Marian DeGloria. If you wish to inquire about or join the MSCA please visit our web site: www.mendosca.org for information and member application forms. Also, please like our page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Mendocino-Sister-Cities-Association-374131604638/>



2017 MSCA Student Exchange and Artist Exchange participants

A Sweet Student Exchange Reunion

By Alysa Sakkas, President, Cupertino Toyokawa Sister Cities, Inc.
(Edited for length)

When Cupertino became sister cities with Toyokawa 39 years ago, social media did not yet exist. Fast forward to now when we are living in an age where student exchange delegates are able to communicate with each other beyond writing pen-pal letters and exchanging holiday cards! At the 2017 Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival, the 2nd annual delegates' reunion was held over Facetime late in the day on Saturday, April 29 to coincide with early morning in Toyokawa. The majority of students on each of the Cupertino and Toyokawa sides of the 2016 exchange gathered for the reunion. As it was the first time Cupertino Toyokawa Sister Cities held a live digital reunion with Toyokawa, it was not without its obstacles, but it turned out really well in the end. At first they could not get the audio working in either direction. Pantomiming, drawing photos, and holding phone texts to the camera kept things going until the technical issues were finally sorted out.



Cupertino side Facetime-ing with Toyokawa (PC: Alysa Sakkas)

In preparation for the festival, 360 degree videos and photographs in Toyokawa were captured, and then 360 degree photos and video were collected during the festival in Cupertino. "We are looking forward to post-processing all we collected and hope to have some of the content on our new festival website: cupertinocherryblossomfestival.org", commented Alysa Sakkas, President of Cupertino Toyokawa Sister Cities, Inc. "We can't wait for next year and will try to take this use of technology to the next step at our 35th Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival to be held April 28-29th, 2017."



Toyokawa side Facetime-ing with Cupertino (PC: Masako Fukuta)

OFSCA Update

By Liane Scott, Treasurer, Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association
(Edited for length)

The Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Association welcomed high school student Yuki Kaseda from Fukuoka at the end of March. She is the winner of the ANA (All Nippon Airways), English-speaking contest in Fukuoka. Yuki home-stayed with the Chong family. Ryan Chong, OFSCA's Spring High School Exchange student, visited Fukuoka in April. ANA sponsored Ryan's trip. Ryan is a student at the Buddhist Church of Oakland's Japanese language class.



Yuki Kaseda, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf, and OFSCA Director & Spring High School Coordinator Gary Tominaga

On Sunday, April 2, OFSCA volunteers participated in the Oakland Running Festival. The 30 volunteers manned one of the water stops along the route. Among the volunteers were the high school student ambassadors and chaperones who will travel this summer to Fukuoka.



OFSCA volunteers ready to serve water to runners at the festival

Takko Lady Chefs Visit Gilroy

By Hugh Smith, President, Gilroy Sister Cities Association
(Edited for length)

Gilroy Sister Cities Association was happy to host a visit in March by representatives from our sister city Takko-machi, who came to assist in making our annual International Fundraiser Dinner & Auction a great success. The group included two lady chefs, Ms. Kyoko Habano and Ms. Kazue Tagawa, and their interpreter Ms. Yasuyo Ichihashi. Ms. Habano and Ms. Tagawa are representatives of the Japan Agricultural Cooperative, Women's Section, Takko-machi Branch, and Ms. Ichihashi represented both the City of Takko-machi and the Takko Garlic International Friendship Association.



Ms. Habano, Ms. Ichihashi, and Ms. Tagawa preparing Takko-machi dishes for the fundraiser

The three ladies spent a week in Gilroy and, in addition to their participation in our fundraiser, they were able to visit several places in the Gilroy area, meet with Gilroy Mayor Roland Velasco, and were given a guided tour of the Gilroy police station. This was the second occasion for Takko to send lady chefs to our assistance, and also the second such visit for Ms. Tagawa. Their participation and assistance was instrumental in making the evening a wonderful success, and we are already looking forward to seeing them all again someday.



Ms. Tagawa, Mayor Velasco, Ms. Habano, and Ms. Ichihashi

Ralph Sugimoto

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Mr. Ralph Sugimoto, former President of the Matsuyama-Sacramento Sister City Corporation. As an extremely involved community leader he touched the lives of so many people in the region and our office was very fortunate to have been able to work with him over the years. This past December our office was proud to host a reception honoring his conferment of the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation for all of his accomplishments relating to sister cities, Japan, and the Japanese American community. We wish to dedicate this issue of the newsletter to his memory and all his contributions toward people-to-people relations between California and Japan.

Call for Submissions



Have a story 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 **July 12**. Please direct all submissions to: kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.go.jp in Word document format as an attachment. Pictures can be either pasted in the Word document or attached separately.

Event Calendar

May

- 5/18 Modesto-Kurume 25th Sister City Anniversary Dinner
- 5/24-28 Sacramento-Matsuyama 35th sister city anniversary events

June

- 6/10 Japanese Cultural Fair in Santa Cruz
- 6/12 Santa Cruz students visit the Consulate
- 6/26 Farewell meeting for student delegation from Millbrae to Hanyu

July

- 7/19-30 Hercules Friendship Delegation travels to Tsushima
- 7/23 Farewell event for student delegation from Sausalito to Sakaide
- 7/28-30 Takko-machi delegation participates in Gilroy Garlic Festival

August

- 8/18-20 Tobishima-mura Mayor and delegation visit Rio Vista