



News this Issue...

- ❖ 10th Annual World Tree of Hope Ceremony at San Francisco City Hall
- ❖ OFSCA Update
- ❖ Fairfield Sister City Program
- ❖ Millbrae Japanese Culture Festival
- ❖ San Mateo Baseball Exchange
- ❖ Cupertino Delegation Visits Toyokawa
- ❖ South SF Welcomes Kishiwada High School Students
- ❖ Bakersfield Visits Wakayama
- ❖ Sunnyvale-Iizuka Student Friendship Blossoms through Cultural Exchange Program
- ❖ Santa Clara High School Students Visit Izumo
- ❖ Kawakami-Watsonville Sister City News
- ❖ Wakayama-Bakersfield Student Summer Program Celebrates 25 Years
- ❖ LYSCO Update

Sister City Information from the Consulate

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

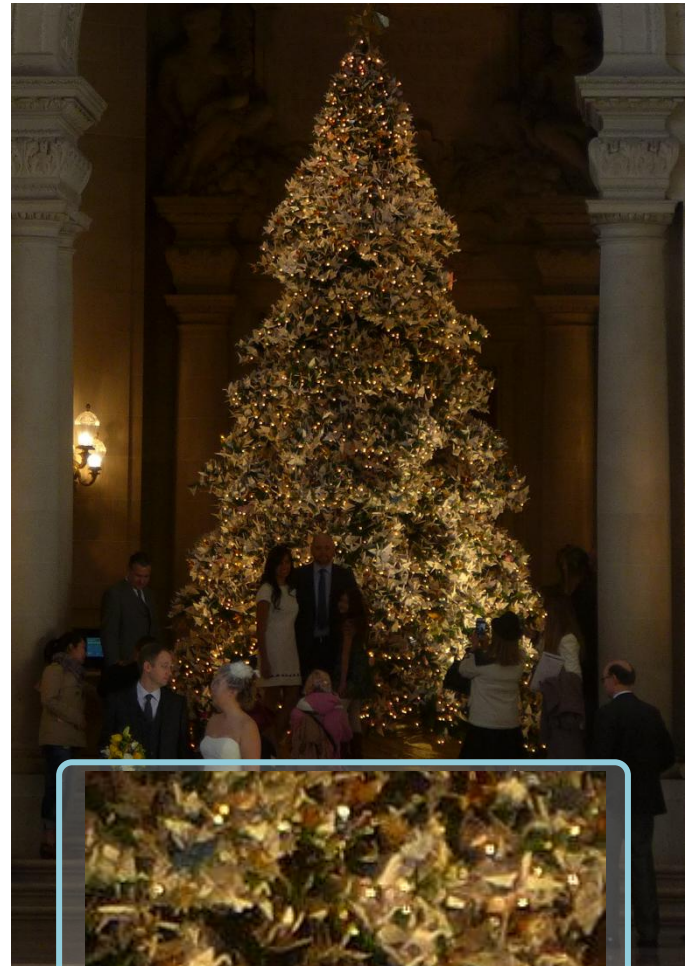
News from the Consulate

10th Annual World Tree of Hope Ceremony at San Francisco City Hall

Deputy Consul General Nobuhiro Watanabe attended the 10th Annual Rainbow World Fund World Tree of Hope ceremony at San Francisco City Hall on Dec. 2. The World Tree of Hope is the largest origami decorated holiday tree in the world, standing over 22 feet tall and decorated with over 15,000 origami cranes and stars, each hand folded and inscribed with wishes for the future of the world. The Consulate has participated in this event for the past several years in part due to its message of world peace stemming from the traditional Japanese art of origami. But what connection does origami have with world peace? Here is an excerpt from Deputy Consul General Watanabe’s speech at the ceremony:

“In 1955, the folded crane became known as a symbol of peace when the world learned the story of Sadako Sasaki, who endeavored to fold 1,000 origami cranes before succumbing to leukemia brought on by the effects of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The crane is now a symbol of both the hope of recovery from illness or disease and the hope of world peace. These hopes are the embodiment of all countries and communities throughout the world that have experienced pain and devastation.”

Sadako’s story is a product of World War II. In the same way, World War II was largely the reason for the establishment of sister cities—the desire to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings between peoples of the world through peaceful, personal connections. Whether peace is spread through a tree full of origami wishes, or by maintaining harmonious relationships between cities around the world, the mission and the message are the same, and it is always a good time to remember that.



News from the Sister Cities

Past Events

OFSCA Update

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

This past July, the Oakland-Fukuoka Sister City Association sent two delegations of junior ambassadors to Fukuoka from Oakland.



Students with their host families

Both the high school students and fifth grade students participating in the Asian Pacific Children's Convention enjoyed a variety of cultural exchange activities, stayed with local host families and promoted the mission of OFSCA by building bridges of cultural understanding.

OFSCA is currently recruiting for a chaperone and students for the 2016 APCC program – for those that are interested, please contact ofsc1962@gmail.com.

Event Calendar

September

9/9 Kawakami-mura students visit Watsonville
9/26 Vallejo Sister City Association International Dinner

October

10/4 Millbrae Japanese Culture Festival
10/7 Fresno-Kochi 50th Sister City Anniversary Dinner
10/15-19 Kariwa-mura adult delegation visits Half Moon Bay
10/25 Oakland-Fukuoka Otsukimi Festival
10/25-29 Funabashi City Mayor visits Hayward

Fairfield Sister City Program

By Kelley Cortright, Fairfield-Nirasaki Sister City Committee (Edited for length)

For the 28th year, the City of Fairfield's Sister City Program sent a group of high school students to our sister city, Nirasaki, Japan. The three girls and three boys, along with their adult chaperone/advisor, stayed with host families in Nirasaki, Yamanashi Prefecture, for a three-week visit from July 6 to July 27. The exchange group enjoyed a day trip to Tokyo, visited public schools in Nirasaki, and sampled the delicious peaches, grapes, and other fruit for which Yamanashi is renowned. One of the highlights of their stay was a three-night excursion via bullet train to Kyoto and Hiroshima. Preparations have already begun for this year's December exchange, when six Nirasaki students will visit Fairfield during the holiday season.



Fairfield students trying a little Japanese culture in Nirasaki

To create funds to support this year's December exchange visit, the Fairfield-Nirasaki Sister City Program also hosted their 3rd Annual Japan Fest fundraiser on August 15. We had a great turnout for the event, as over 300 people from around the Bay Area came to do Japanese crafts, eat Japanese food, and watch Japanese performances. We would like to thank the fellow sister city group representatives from Sebastopol and Yuba City who came to support us, as well as Vice Consul Higo for stopping by our event. Thanks to everyone's support, we raised enough money to cover this year's winter visit. We hope to see you again at next year's event!

Past Events

Millbrae Japanese Culture Festival

By Kathleen Kimura, Millbrae Sister Cities Commission (Edited for length)

The Millbrae Japanese Culture Festival celebrated its 10th anniversary on Sunday, October 4, and welcomed a delegation of seven from Millbrae's friendship city, Hanyu, including Mayor Komei Kawata.



It was the best attended festival yet, with a delicious choice of food and beverages, including wine, beer and sake. Consul General Yamada attended the festival and gave welcome remarks. Welcome remarks were also made by Millbrae's Mayor Robert Gottschalk, Hanyu's Mayor Komei Kawata, and Congresswoman Jackie Speier. Retired ABC News Reporter Ken Kashiwahara was the MC.



A beautiful day for a Japanese culture festival

Attendees were entertained by a wonderful selection of live performances on stage and there were many hands-on activities for all. Next year's festival will be on Sunday, October 2, and we hope to see you there!

San Mateo Baseball Exchange

By Gavin Owen, President, San Mateo Toyonaka Sister City Association
(Edited for length)

Continuing a tradition that began in 1979, San Mateo sent another all-star baseball team, ages 11 & 12, to our sister city of Toyonaka from August 10-20. After stopping briefly along the way for some sights in Tokyo, Kamakura, and Hakone, the 19 players and 8 chaperones met with their hosts in Toyonaka where the kids were paired up and began a week long homestay program with their new Toyonaka family. Interspersed between learning new customs and acclimating to the heat and a new environment, we played five spirited games in Toyonaka's beautiful Rose Stadium, finishing with a 3-1-1 record. But as has been the case since the program began, shortly after the games were over, players forgot the scores as they were busy being greeted formally by Mayor Keichiro Asari at City Hall, visiting nearby Kyoto for a day, spending time with their host families, and finally celebrating their new friendships at the Sayonara party, where the team sang "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" for all in attendance. In 2017, it will be San Mateo's turn to host another team from Toyonaka.



Above: San Mateo and Toyonaka teams after a game; Below: San Mateo team at City Hall



Past Events

Cupertino Delegation Visits Toyokawa

By Bonnie Libby and Pat Leader, 2015 Cupertino Delegation (Edited for length)

The Cupertino-Toyokawa Sister Cities Student Delegation of 14 middle schoolers and two chaperones had a fabulous experience in Japan from June 24 – July 3, 2015. We were greeted warmly by our host families. We came as strangers and left as life-long friends. We were totally immersed in Japanese culture. We visited many shrines, temples, and festivals. We ate wonderful food and became experts with chopsticks! Our Toyokawa hosts gave us awesome *happi* coats as a parting gift. We also explored Nagoya, Nara, and Kyoto.



Cupertino delegation posing in front of Nagoya Castle

It was an adventure of a lifetime! Thank you Toyokawa and the Cupertino-Toyokawa Sister Cities Committee for making our experiences very memorable. We look forward to the end of September when our Toyokawa friends will visit Cupertino!



Cupertino students trying on happi from Toyokawa

South San Francisco Welcomes Kishiwada High School Students

By Frank McAuley, South San Francisco Sister City Committee (Edited for length)

The South San Francisco Sister City Committee welcomed 15 high school students from Kishiwada to town for a week homestay in August. During their time here they got to visit with the Mayor at City Hall and watched our Fire Department practice earthquake rescue operations.

They also got to visit the Genentech Campus and ride the ferry to downtown San Francisco where they visited the Exploratorium and Pier 39. They performed a play for us at the reception dinner and also sang a song in English.



Delegation from Kishiwada

Event Calendar

November

11/7

Sebastopol World Friends' Annual Friendship Dinner

December

12/6

Santa Clara Sister Cities Holiday Potluck

12/10

Sausalito End of Year Celebration

Past Events

Bakersfield Visits Wakayama

By Susan Stone, Bakersfield Sister City Project Corporation (Edited for length)

This past May, a group of 17 adults representing Bakersfield Sister City Project Corporation and the Korean American Association of Bakersfield journeyed as an official delegation to two of Bakersfield's sister cities. This was the first time that a Bakersfield delegation has visited two sister cities on the same trip. The two cities visited were Bucheon, South Korea, and Wakayama, Japan. Wakayama Committee Co-Chair Mrs. Susan Stone served as the group leader for the Wakayama visit. Mrs. Dianne Hoover, Director of Recreation and Parks, served as the official representative for the City of Bakersfield.

After first visiting Korea, the group traveled to Wakayama, Japan, where they were welcomed by Wakayama Sister City President Dr. Nobutada Iwahashi and Mayor Masahiro Obana. This was the first time a Bakersfield delegation had met with Mayor Obana, and we were very pleased by his warm welcome and enthusiastic support for the sister city program. At the Welcome Dinner, Mayor Obana stated that he hopes to visit Bakersfield in 2016, when the two cities will celebrate their 55th sister city anniversary.



The Bakersfield delegation meets with Mayor Obana at Wakayama City Hall

In addition to meeting with Mayor Obana, the delegation also visited the Wakayama Prefecture Museum of Modern Art, the home and surgery of Dr. Hanaoka Seishu (the first doctor to perform breast cancer surgery using general anesthesia), a shrine for women at the base of the Mt. Koya pilgrimage trail, and, of course, Wakayama Castle. They also enjoyed a visit to the Kuroshio Fish Market, where they were enthralled by the tuna-cutting demonstration, followed by a delicious lunch. However, the highlight of the visit for everyone was the home visits, when members of Wakayama's Sister City Committee opened their homes and their hearts to delegation members. These intimate visits were filled with raucous laughter, boisterous storytelling, and warm friendship. All agreed the visit was too short and are eager to welcome Wakayama guests into their Bakersfield homes, hopefully next year.

Sunnyvale-Iizuka Student Friendship Blossoms through Cultural Exchange Program

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

Now in its second year in operation, Sunnyvale Sister City Association (SSCA) sent eight slightly nervous but excited Sunnyvale students to Iizuka on June 18. Our students were immersed in Japanese culture as they visited local historical destinations and spent time with their host families, including visiting the schools and sitting in the same classes with them. Despite the language barrier, they became quick friends and many continue to keep in touch through e-mails and Skype.



The morning of goodbyes

In August, SSCA welcomed 20 middle school students from Iizuka. The students and their chaperones spent two days touring San Francisco before meeting and joining their host families. Their itinerary included visits to Stanford University, HP Garage, and Google. Host families took their Iizuka students all over the Bay Area between August 21 and August 26. When the students met their host families in person for the first time, they were a bit quiet and shy, but in just a few short days the students connected through family activities like touring around Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. Iizuka students and their hosts discovered common interests in video games and anime movies. SSCA hosted a farewell BBQ for everyone on the evening of August 25, where representatives from Iizuka, SSCA, and Sunnyvale Middle School addressed the group. Those who spoke included Deputy Consul General of Japan Nobuhiro Watanabe, Sunnyvale Middle School Principal Nabil Shahin, Sunnyvale Middle School chaperone and teacher Sheila McKell, Iizuka Board of Education Director Mamoru Uryu, and 8th grade students from Iizuka Nisshinkan Junior High School. Two-time host mom Leslie Becker summed it up nicely: "As the bus drove away, tears flowed, demonstrating the impact this program had on all involved!" Read more from other host families, Iizuka students, Sunnyvale students, and chaperones on our website, www.sunnyvalesistercity.org.

Santa Clara High School Students Visit Izumo

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

Santa Clara Sister Cities sent two high school students and one chaperone to Izumo from June 9th through the 17th. The students spent two days with their host sisters at Izumo and Hirata High Schools, and three days touring Shimane Prefecture with city staff.

We toured Matsue Castle, made traditional Japanese paper, hiked along a gorge, visited a local pottery studio, tried on dozens of formal kimono, visited the culturally significant Izumo Taisha, and enjoyed the natural beauty of the Shimane coast.



Santa Clara students with their host families

We also had a chance to meet with the teachers who will be visiting Santa Clara in January 2016 as a part of our new exchange with Izumo High School's Super Global High School program.

We are all very thankful for the kindness and generosity we were shown, the new experiences we had, and the friendships we made during our time in Izumo. We are looking forward to seeing them again in 2016.

Kawakami-Watsonville Sister City News

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

On September 9, 18 visitors (15 students and three adults) from Kawakami-mura arrived in Watsonville. They toured the police department, public library, and fire department. At the end of the tour, Mayor Nancy Bilicich and other Councilmembers met them in the City Council chambers. Mr. Itaru Nitao served as the interpreter for the afternoon. When the students arrived at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple, they were greeted by the Watsonville students who visited Japan last May. The welcome dinner was a traditional American Thanksgiving dinner catered by the Turkey Boat Restaurant of Pajaro, complete with turkey, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes, gravy, and stuffing. As in most Nikkei dinners, rice was added to the menu. After a few brief speeches and songs by Bob Gomez, the students left for home with their host families.

The next day, the Kawakami students and their host students visited the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row, and Thursday was a school day at the various host middle schools (six this year). Robb Mayeda took the Kawakami chaperones to the host schools to observe classrooms and check-in with the students. After school, Dorothy Mayeda guided the chaperones on a walk through the redwoods at Henry Cowell State Park.

On Friday, the students visited the Ag History Museum at the Santa Cruz County Fair Grounds. This generated so much interest that 42 people attended! Mr. and Mrs. Akira Nagamine treated everyone that night to a nine-course dinner at Happy Garden Restaurant. Saturday was the time for the beach party at Seacliff State Beach. One should recall that Kawakami-mura is located in a mountainous area at the center of Honshu, making it the farthest community in Japan from the ocean! This year the students were treated to an up-close view of dolphins and thousands of diving birds just 50 feet from shore. On Sunday, the group gathered at the Buddhist Temple for final photos before departing for the airport.



Visitors and hosts at the Watsonville Buddhist Temple

Past Events

Wakayama-Bakersfield Student Summer Program Celebrates 25 Years

By Susan Stone, Bakersfield Sister City Project Corporation (Edited for length)

On August 6, a group of 23 weary teens from Wakayama, Japan, and their two adult chaperones finally arrived in Bakersfield after an especially long trip over the Ridge Route from Los Angeles. On the way, they had learned first-hand how the extreme drought conditions have resulted in multiple wild fires throughout California: their tour bus was caught in a traffic jam caused by a minor fire along Interstate 5. However, this unexpected delay was soon forgotten in the excitement of meeting their Bakersfield host families, who welcomed them with smiles and hugs that needed no translations. After brief welcome speeches, each of the Wakayama youths went home with their new families for a five-night stay.

Similar scenes to this have been occurring in Bakersfield each August for more than 25 years. In 1988, Dr. Nobutada Iwahashi, the President of the Wakayama Sister City Affiliation Committee, launched the Wakayama Youth Summer Cultural Study Program, which became an annual event in 1995. Over the years, more than 900 Wakayama junior high and senior high school students have visited Bakersfield, forming lasting friendships and enduring memories. This year's group of students was escorted by two veterans of the program: Mr. Hideaki "Henry" Hayashi, who first visited Bakersfield as a college student in 1969, was a chaperone for the first student visit in 1988, and Mr. Hiroyoshi Akedo, whose first of 15 visits was in 1989 as a chaperone for the Summer Study Program. Both men stayed with Sister City board members: Mr. Hayashi with Evelyn and Carl Swenson, and Mr. Akedo with Dr. Gene Clark.



Guests lining up for the dinner line at Murray Family Farms

As this year's visit was the 25th, Bakersfield Sister City hosted a Boot-Stompin', Rip-Roar'n' Old Fashioned Hoe-Down and Barbecue at Murray Family Farms (MFF) to celebrate. The Wakayama students, their host families, and members and friends of Bakersfield Sister City were invited to come early to enjoy the many activities

available at the farm: a hayride tour, the Animal Garden and petting zoo, the Sun Flower Maze, and the Giant Bounce Pillow. A delicious dinner of hamburgers, BBQ beans, potato salad, juicy watermelon, and fresh fruit pies was prepared and served by the MFF staff, under the supervision of Vickie and Steve Murray—enthusiastic and generous supporters of the Sister City program. After a brief welcome by Bakersfield Mayor Harvey L. Hall, the attendees were entertained by a local magician and a variety of performances by the talented Wakayama students. Tuesday morning and the time to say goodbye came far too soon. There were many hugs and tears, but also smiles and promises to keep in touch with their new friends.

LYSCO Update

By Keith Jess, Livermore-Yotsukaido Sister City Organization



Just after arriving in Japan!

The Livermore-Yotsukaido Sister City Organization sent their annual group of Student Ambassadors to Yotsukaido for a 1-week student exchange in October. 20 Livermore students, two teachers, and three parent chaperones spent a week sightseeing in Tokyo and living in a traditional Japanese family home. The students also attended school for three days. All had an awesome time and made friends that will last a lifetime.

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 **February 5**. Please direct all submissions to: kevin.odonnell@sr.mofa.go.jp