

*Masthead: The **Sakura**, or cherry blossom, is Japan's cherished national flower. Special Hanami parties and excursions are held during blossom time each year*

SPECIAL FEATURE

## Message from JLGC's New Deputy Director

I have been appointed the new Deputy Director of the Japan Local Government Center (JLGC), New York, beginning April 1, 2005. I have the honor of taking over from Mieko Sato, who served here for two years.

JLGC was established in 1989, and during these years has established an excellent reputation in the United States and Canada through the tireless efforts of our staff.

Some of the important tasks our center performs include promoting the exchange and cooperation of activities between Japanese, American and Canadian local authorities, supporting the JET Program, introducing the Japanese local administration system to local authorities in the U.S. and Canada, conducting research concerning issues pertaining to American and Canadian local governments and supporting the overseas activities of Japanese local authorities. Since local-level internationalization is ubiquitous today, the JLGC's purpose is as important as ever.

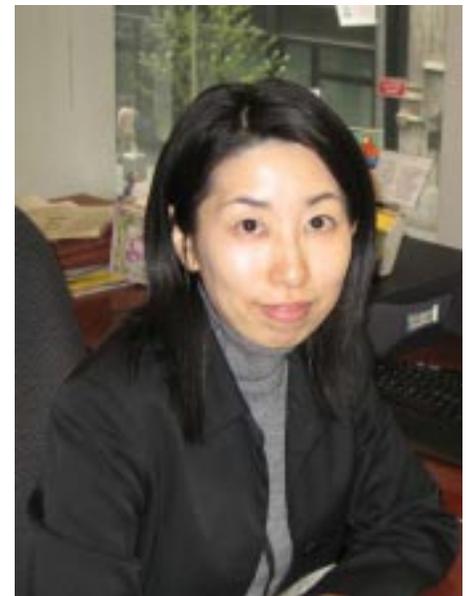
I have been employed with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in Japan for fourteen years. During this period, I

worked for different departments such as the Bureau of Taxation and the Secretariat to Personnel Commission. I was a research fellow at Tokyo Institute for Municipal Research in 2000 and authored a paper about the Arts Policy of the City of New York. I am very much pleased to have been given the opportunity to work in New York which is one of the most exciting and artistic cities in the world.

I look forward to getting to know you and working with you. Also, I look forward to visiting a variety of wonderful places in the U.S. and Canada while cultivating international exchange and mutual understanding. Even though these tasks can be challenging, I know they will be rewarding and I will do my best to accomplish our mission.

Finally, I would like to thank you for welcoming me and for the assistance I know I will be given during my stay here.

Erena Niwa



### TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	PAGE
<i>SPECIAL FEATURE</i> A Message from JLGC's New Deputy Director	1
<i>JETAA ACTIVITIES</i> Recent Issues in the JET Program	2
<i>PREFECTURE TODAY</i> Akita Prefecture	3
<i>FOCUS ON LOCAL PUBLIC FINANCE IN JAPAN</i> Three- Pronged Reform	4
<i>SPECIAL FEATURE</i> A Message from 2005 New JLGC Assistant Directors	6
<i>JAPAN TODAY</i> Road Maintenance Support Program in Saitama	8

# Recent issues in the JET Program



by Masahiro Nagumo  
Assistant Director of JLGC

This past month, I had an opportunity to speak to the officers of the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco and JET Program interviewers about recent issues concerning the JET Program and to talk about the JET Program with them. Those involved in the JET Program play different roles and often express various points of view that improve the JET Program. It is quite beneficial to share information, opinions and views from a diverse group of people. Throughout the history of the JET Program these discourses have developed, enhanced and improved opportunities for gifted young people to participate fully while enjoying and learning about Japan. I was impressed with the professionalism exhibited and the enthusiasm by which they conducted the affairs needed to prepare for the future of the Program. I would like to introduce a few issues from my briefing.

The JET program is in its 19th year and has seen significant growth. In 1987, its inaugural year, 848 participants from 4 countries embarked on a good will mission to promote international relations by means of teaching their native language and offering a peek into their unique cultures to citizens of Japan. In 2004, about 6,100 people from 41 countries were actively engaged in the JET Program. Over the years, the JET Program has matured gracefully while successfully attaining its goals and objectives. The total roster of JET participants stands at approximately 41,000 and the number of JETAA members was around 18,400.

The creation and nurturing of JETAA Chapters all over the world continues to be a high priority, with current emphasis being placed on strengthening the connections between Japanese local authorities and former JETs. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and

Communications issued a letter requesting Japanese local authorities to consider implementing measures to reach out to former JETs. Cognizant of the fact that former JETs continue to be valuable human resources, the Ministry has become increasingly aware that there may be ways to allow former JETs to contribute to the activities of their former host governments. Several examples were featured including; distributing newsletters issued by contracting organizations to former JETs; providing former JETs with the opportunity to contribute to these newsletters; providing opportunities to exchange information and opinions between former JETs and governors, mayors and other officials on overseas business trips, and asking former JETs to serve as guides or interpreters on overseas business trips.

Interest for understanding international affairs in elementary school has been growing and measures have been implemented to increase the number of elementary school Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). This "Period for Integrated Study" has been in effect

since 2002. Foreign language is not a required subject in elementary school, but elementary schools, if they wish, offer foreign language conversation classes as an element of international understanding during the period. To support these studies, fiscal measures are enacted to encourage local authorities to increase elementary school ALTs.

The goal of the fiscal measures will permit local authorities to increase the number of ALT positions to 1,000 after the 2006 fiscal year. JETs in their 4th or 5th year who passed a screening process were placed in the position of elementary school ALT, but with the movement to increase elementary school ALT positions, JETs in the 3rd year are also able to be placed in these positions beginning in the 2005 fiscal year.

Since the inception of the JET Program, the roles of JET participants and JET Alumni have expanded substantially. As always, we shall continue to work with and support all who are involved in the JET Program and JETAA to allow for their further development and improvement.



Consulate General officers and JET Program interviewers

# Akita International University



by Junya Kato, Assistant Director of JLGC

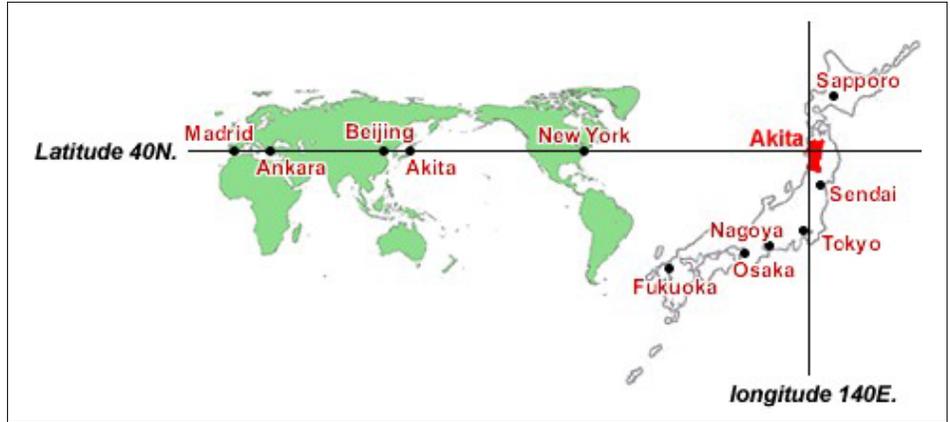
Akita Prefecture in Japan is well known for its high quality rice called “Akita Komachi.” The prefecture also produces excellent full-bodied sake that enjoys a worldwide reputation as one of the finest brewed rice wines in Japan. Crystal clear water, rich soil, superior rice and diligent hard working people are the ingredients that make Akita’s sake a rich and rewarding beverage experience. Akita Prefecture is very proud of its natural beauty, tourist attractions, hot spring resorts and its newest attraction.

On April 1st, 2004, a unique university was established in Akita Prefecture. Akita International University (AIU) is the first public university corporation in Japan and is quite distinct from other institutions of higher learning that exist in Japan. AIU’s mission is dedicated to helping students become world citizens by offering a solid educational foundation, practical skills and an awareness of global issues.

Higher education in Akita is currently provided by three universities and eight junior colleges; yet every year 80 percent of high school graduates choose to attend universities outside of Akita Prefecture. Two reasons are the dearth of classroom space at college and universities in Akita and the limited curricula, especially in the humanities field. It is significant that many of those



Akita International University



Akita Prefecture is located at approximately the same latitude as New York

who go on to universities outside of Akita enroll in schools of humanities. Therefore in order to meet the needs of college-bound students from Akita and to enhance higher education in the prefecture, AIU was launched.



President Nakajima speaking at The Entrance Ceremony on April 8th, 2005

An increased need to interact with Northeast Asian countries such as China, Korea and Russia and a desire to further nurture relationships with universities in North America led AIU to facilitate academic exchanges between the East and West. Cooperative relationships with the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and the partner universities in China were enhanced by embarking upon a program of academic exchange. It is hoped that future AIU talent will help to expand the exchange and sharing of ideas and information with

universities from all over Asia and North America.

A partnership with the Akita Prefecture Board of Education has fostered programs that will strive to improve elementary and secondary students’ English language ability. It is anticipated that AIU’s pedagogy will use these opportunities as a spring board toward the development of English education in the secondary schools of Akita. Furthermore, AIU will proactively contribute to the local community helping to meet the needs of the businesses and international exchange organizations by providing information about world affairs, supporting overseas operations and implementing continuing education for adults.

I believe that AIU will serve as a model institution of higher education that fulfills students’ needs and promotes learning that responds to the global challenges faced by all of us at the start of this new century. It is my sincere hope that AIU becomes the place where a new approach to global higher education begins. If you would like further information about Akita International University, please visit their English web site located at [www.aiu.ac.jp/en/](http://www.aiu.ac.jp/en/)

# Three-Pronged Reform

In Japan, local governments are struggling due to a lack of sufficient financial resources. The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in order to further foster decentralization has embarked on a program of structural financial reform regarding local governments. The fiscal reform effort will help local governments with their revenue stream and expenditure outlays as well as encourage them to rely less on national subsidies, the local allocation tax\* and financial transfers. The three pronged reform program is summarized right:

## Q. What is “The Local Allocation Tax”?

From the perspective of local autonomy, essentially it would be the ideal for each local government to ensure the revenue sources necessary for administrative activities through local taxes collected from their residents. However, there are regional imbalances in tax revenue, and many local governments are unable to acquire the necessary tax revenue. Therefore, the central government collects financial sources that should really be attributable to local tax revenue through national taxation and reallocates them as the local allocation tax to local governments where financial sources are insufficient.

## -Determination of total amount of local allocation tax

The total amount of the local allocation tax is determined on the basis

**Reference**  
(Compiled from the Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Structural Reform, 2003 and other materials.)

### Three-Pronged Reform

On the basis of the ideas of “from public to private” and “from the center to the regions”:

- Local governments shall decide policies with their own creativity and responsibility.
- Local governments shall increase the revenue resources that they can freely use.
- Local governments shall become self-reliant.

The following three-pronged reforms shall be promoted during the period of “reform and outlook” (until fiscal 2006):



#### Reform of national treasury subsidies

On the basis of the Policy for the Reorganization and Rationalization of National Treasury Subsidies, Etc., reforms shall be carried out to abolish or reduce subsidies to the amount of about ¥4 trillion.

- In principle, national treasury subsidies shall be abolished or reduced.
- National treasury subsidies shall be limited to fields in which the state really does have an obligation to should a burden.
- Reform of priority items (11 items)

#### Revision of tax source distribution, including the transfer of tax resources

Transfer of tax resources in the case of projects for which national treasury subsidies are abolished but which need to be continued mainly by local governments

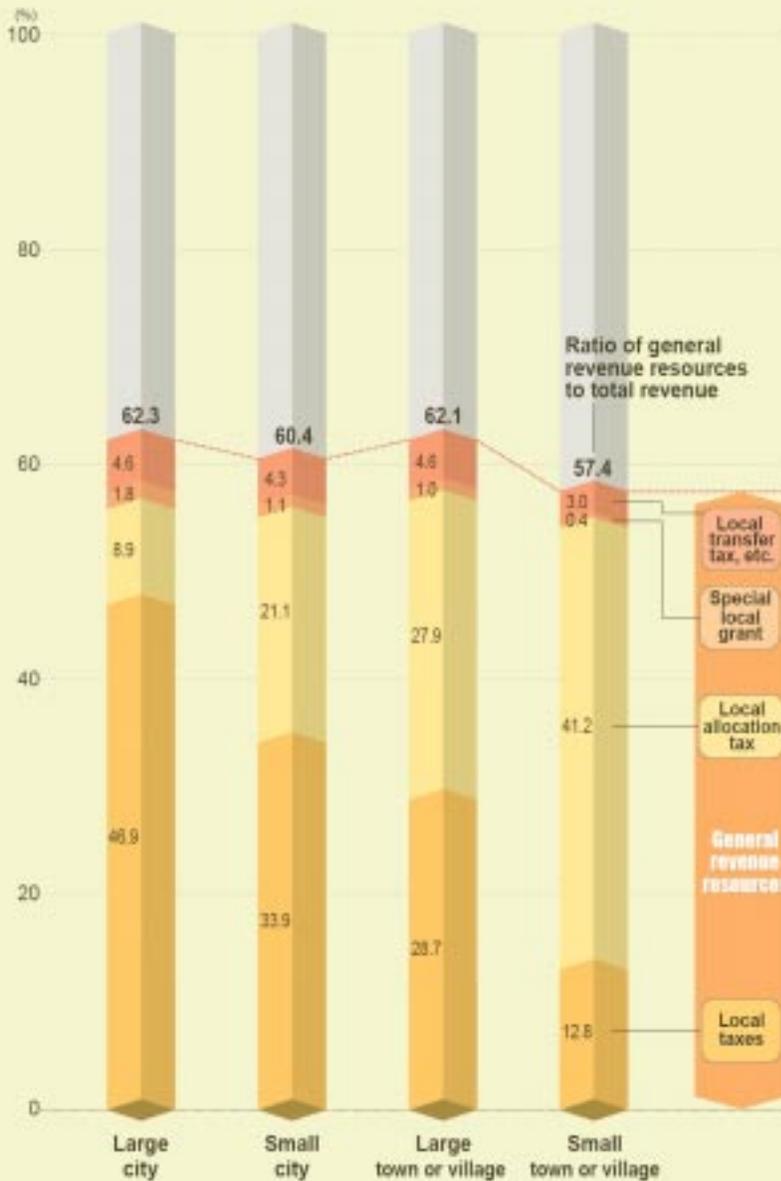
- The transfer of tax resources shall take place with particular focus on core taxes.
- The transfer shall cover the whole amount in the case of obligatory projects and around 80% in the case of other projects.

#### Allocation tax reform

Review of the whole revenue resource guarantee function of the allocation tax and reduction

- Extensive review of expenditures in local public finance plans and restraint on the total amount of allocation tax of its scale
- Review of calculation method (gradual supplement, project expense supplement, etc.)
- Considerable increase in the population ratio of local governments not receiving the allocation tax

### Ratio of General Revenue Resources to Total Revenue for Municipalities



**Notes:**

1. A "large city" refers to a city with a population of more than 100,000 persons according to the national census of 2000; a "small city" refers to a city with a population of less than 100,000.
2. A "large town or village" refers to a town or village with a population of more than 10,000; a "small town or village" refers to a town or village with a population of less than 10,000.

Sources: White Paper on Local Public Finance 2004, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

of certain ratios for national taxes (32% for income tax and liquor tax, 35.8% for corporate tax, 29.5% for consumption tax, and 25% for tobacco tax) as well as estimates of standard revenue and expenditure of local public finance as a whole.

The total amount of local allocation tax in fiscal 2002 was ¥19.5449 trillion, down 4.0% from the initial figure for the previous fiscal year.

**-Method of calculation of regular local allocation tax for each local government**

The amount of ordinary allocation is in principle the difference between an authority's basic fiscal needs and its basic fiscal revenues (revenue shortfall), as determined by a fixed formula (stipulated by law or cabinet order).

**-Function of the local allocation tax**

The function of the local allocation tax is to adjust imbalances in revenue among local governments in order to guarantee revenue so that local governments can provide standard administrative services and basic social infrastructure to their residents in whatever region.

Accordingly, as a result of the revenue adjustment mechanism through the local allocation tax, few differences have been found in the ratio of general revenue resources to total revenue because of such factors as size of population.

## A Message from 2005 New JLGC Assistant Directors



### **Toyoharu Kwarai**

My name is Toyoharu Kwarai. I am employed by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department. This is my first visit to New York City and I am excited about living and working in the Big Apple! During my stay in New York City I want to keep in touch with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) as well as other law enforcement agencies. I plan to research and study community policing and risk management.

I have only two years till I graduate from “JLGC New York” and I plan to meet many people and enjoy urban living.



### **Takahiro Hino**

Hello! I’m Takahiro Hino. I am from Miyagi Prefecture. Miyagi is in the northeastern region of Japan, and located about 160 miles northeast of Tokyo. A pleasant harmony exists between the ocean, mountains, rivers and plains in Miyagi Prefecture. Sendai City, known as “the city of trees.” is the capital.

I have never been to New York. New York was always a dream, a place in the movies or newspapers. New York City is a cornucopia with unique and

diverse architectural style, a plethora of museums, operas, musicals, and entertainment venues. I am a curious fellow, and I will enjoy my New York life to my heart’s content. We have a saying in Japan; “ichigo-ichie” which means “treasure every encounter, for it will never recur.” Indeed, I shall treasure every moment spent in America.



### **Kazuya Endo**

My name is Kazuya Endo and I’m from Hokkaido Prefecture. Hokkaido is the northernmost island of the Japanese archipelago. Hokkaido is particularly rich in natural beauty with abundant forests, mystic lakes and magnificent mountains. There are four distinct seasons; fragrant springs, warm summers, festive fall and cold snowy winters.

I have dreamed of living in a foreign country for a long time. I’m very happy to have the opportunity to live in New York City, one of the greatest cities in the world. I would like to enjoy my life here and study various cultures in the U.S.

**Norimitsu Takahashi**

Hi! My name is Norimitsu Takahashi. I work for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). The MIC is responsible for creating the fundamental national system of Japan. Today, the MIC is striving to address a host of important issues that will shape the nation for the 21st century. Efforts include the establishment of new administrative systems such as the development of new local administrative system called the trinity reform. The trinity reform refers to a three in one reform program that will implement changes in national treasury

subsidies, revise tax source distribution, including the transfer of tax resources, and fine tune the local allocation tax system.

I'm interested in local government, the practice of public administration and critical urban/rural issues affecting local jurisdictions in the U.S.A. and Canada. During my stay in New York, I hope to study the American and Canadian local government systems and meet with the people who determine policies and who work for public institutions.

**Hidenori Umebayashi**

I am from Shimane Prefecture. Located in western Japan and facing the Sea of Japan, Shimane has two beautiful lakes (Shinji-ko, Nakaumi). I am quite familiar with these lakes, because as a high school student, I belonged to a rowing club. I enjoyed rowing on these lakes while witnessing spectacular sunsets. The people of Shimane are friendly and especially attentive of visitors and guests. Shimane isn't famous, just a wonderful place to live and to raise children. I do hope that you have an opportunity to visit.

As an employee of Shimane Prefecture, I worked three years for social welfare and two years in agricultural administration. While in New York's JLGC, I'm in charge of the JLGC Newsletter. I'm very happy to work and live in USA, and I'd like to visit unique and beautiful places. If we should meet, please recommend your favorite places. I'm looking forward to seeing you. I would like to be a good bridge between your country and Japan.

**Takao Aharen**

Hello to all! I am from Okinawa Prefecture and I would like to briefly describe Okinawa to JLGC readers. Okinawa is the only semitropical area in Japan with the warmest climate surrounded by beautiful seas and skies. Okinawa's people and culture are unique, tracing their heritage from its history with neighboring Asian countries. Okinawa is one of the most famous tourist destinations in Japan spurred on by the many international conferences held such as the G8 summit in 2000, and the Inter-American

Development Bank Annual Meeting in 2005.

During my two year hiatus in New York City, I hope to have many opportunities to meet and talk with a variety of American and Canadian people, while learning about the many interesting facets of North American culture and way of life. We have a saying in Okinawa "Ichariba-chode", which means "once we meet, we are as brothers". I look forward to meeting you and sharing the Okinawa spirit.

**Masanori Sato**

Hello everyone! My name is Masanori Sato. I am a government official of Chiba City, the capital of Chiba Prefecture. Chiba City is situated approximately 40km east of Tokyo and is known as "The Flowery City" in Japan. Various seasonal events incorporating beautiful flowers are held in Chiba City. I do not believe this is a well known fact so when I meet people in the USA and Canada, I will introduce them to the wonders of Chiba City.

I hope to talk to many people from all over the United States. I firmly believe that learning about different cultures and peoples values will broaden my outlook. I'm excited about living and working in New York City. I enjoy singing and playing guitar and my dream is to sing and play guitar on the streets of New York City!

# Road Maintenance Support Program in Saitama



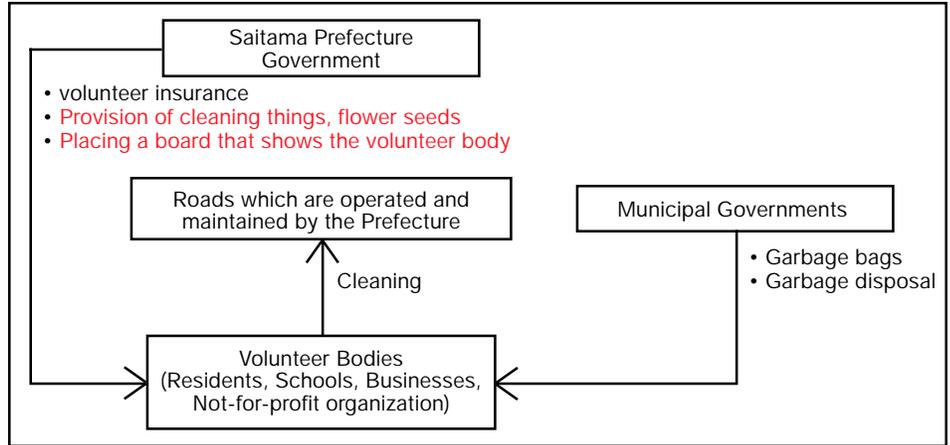
by Hideki Takahashi  
 Engineer of Kitamoto Land Development Office, Saitama prefecture government  
 (Former Assistant Director of Japan Local Government Center)

Saitama Prefecture located north of the Tokyo Metropolitan contains eighty five municipalities, cities, towns, and villages. With a growing population exceeding seven million people Saitama is the fifth largest prefecture in Japan. An effective modern road network is critical to the economic and social health of a nation.

Capital infrastructure is the lifeline of Japan and keeping all roadways clean and operating efficiently is a high priority for Japanese prefectures. In Japan, the road network includes national, prefecture and municipal roads. Prefectures are responsible for the maintenance and development of their designated roadways.

Clean roads are important to the environment and the quality of life for residents and commuters. Saitama's road network of 1,800 miles is difficult to maintain especially when the budget is tight and as such the prefecture government is promoting a public-private partnership program to keep the road network clean and aesthetically pleasing to its citizens.

“The Road Maintenance Support Program” is modeled after the “Adapt Program” of Texas, United States an intergovernmental partnership that extensively uses volunteers’ organizations.



Volunteers are equipped to clean the roads, especially sidewalks. Saitama and its municipalities support the many volunteers providing insurance, garbage bags, cleaning supplies, gloves and pick up tools. Local governments are responsible for picking up roadside garbage bags and disposal. In some cases, flower seeds are provided for planting. It can be said that volunteers have adopted their local roads.

Presently, about two hundred groups in fifty nine municipalities are recognized as volunteer bodies. Membership and size vary as some groups consist solely of residents and others are schools or businesses, non profit corporations and citizens organizations. More than 10,000 people participate in these programs cleaning sidewalks in Saitama Prefecture.

There are several benefits reaped by the local governments and their volunteer participants. One of the benefits for the prefecture is cost savings which lessens the budget demand for road maintenance. Additionally, the government obtains

important feedback from the volunteer groups on how to improve the program. These opinions/ideas help the government to plan for the future. There are a few drawbacks to the program.

In Japan, there are some legal barriers to outsourcing road maintenance to residents groups or not-for-profit organization and that limits volunteerism. However, the future of these public-private partnerships is promising because people love their neighborhoods and exhibit passion to contribute to the health, safety and welfare of their community.

