



# JLGC NEWSLETTER

Japan Local Government Center ( CLAIR, New York )  
Issue no. 92/ March 2018



"FELLOWSHIP PARTICIPANTS WITH RIKUZENTAKATA MAYOR"  
CLAIR FELLOWSHIP EXCHANGE PROGRAM 2017

**ISSUE NO. 92 / MARCH 2018**



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## 1. CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program 2017 was held from November 6 to 15

This program affords senior state and local government officials an opportunity to experience Japanese government administration first hand. 2017, the program was held in Tokyo and Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture.

**Theme: How local governments can promote town planning for all residents, even after a disaster, to live a comfortable and secure life and be proud of their community**

Rikuzentakata City was one of the most affected areas by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. The city lost over 1,700 people and 3,000 buildings. Nevertheless, Rikuzentakata is eager to recover and promote itself as a "new" town in which everyone can be proud, feel safe, regain economic vitality and recapture the spirit of the "old" Rikuzentakata. The renewal efforts are designed to allow all residents, especially the elderly and the young, to share the benefits of the "new" town.

Participants exchanged their opinions with officials from Japan. Also they interacted with local people and experienced the beauty of Rikuzentakata scenery, and immersed themselves in the traditional Japanese culture of the area.

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Now we would like to introduce you to some great comments from the participants.



## Dr. Michelle Sager

Director, Center for Best Practices, Economic Opportunity Division, National Governors Association (NGA)

The words conveyed in this simple thank you message seem inadequate to convey my sincere gratitude for the incredible opportunity provided by the 2017 CLAIR Fellowship Exchange. The generous exchange opened my eyes to Japan's intergovernmental system, culture and the fascinating contrast of Tokyo and Rikuzentakata.



Discussing Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

Our hosts and the assembled dignitaries at the national and local levels of government and other organizations not only shared their time and expertise but also thoughtfully responded to our many questions. Every detail of the visit reflected careful planning, warm hospitality and a desire to contribute to cross-cultural understanding. The visit to Rikuzentakata provided an unparalleled experience as we learned about the community's journey from disaster response to recovery. The community's resilience and intentionally inclusive approach to rebuilding spoke volumes about the strength and character of Rikuzentakata's citizens. My homestay family welcomed me into their home and provided a delightful experience as I enjoyed my brief immersion in their daily life. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is one I will continue to cherish and have already shared with my colleagues at the National Governors Association.

With gratitude,  
Michelle Sager



## Mr. Ben Husch

**Senior Policy Director, Natural Resources and Infrastructure Committee, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**

My trip to Japan, and specifically Rikuzentakata, was an experience I will never forget. It was really amazing to see the town after the disaster, both for how it was rebuilding and for the different people we met with. From the volunteer fire chief, to the Jr. High students, and the oyster farmer, it really shows that you can never truly know a place until you go there. I hope to travel back to Japan in the near future with my wife and family so they can experience how amazing it was.



## Ms. Yvonne Robert

**President, Association of Municipal Manager, Clerks and Treasurers (AMCTO)**

Thank you for granting me the privilege of attending the 2017 CLAIR Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar. Since returning from the amazing trip, I have used every opportunity to speak about my experience. Visiting the City of Rikuzentakata provided me with a look into the resilience and determination that a City can display when facing the worst possible circumstances. Seeing their progress following the 2011 tsunami, speaking with people from the area and witnessing what they have accomplished to date will stay with me for a very long time and assist in guiding me when faced with challenges though none could be as devastating.

I thank all of the people involved beginning with CLAIR for their organization, attention to detail and the invitation to attend. To the representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs and Communication; my thanks for meeting with us and the open dialogue. To those in Rikuzentakata, I thoroughly enjoyed meeting with you. Thank you for your openness and willingness to share your stories.

Finally to our team who lead us through this exchange, thank you for keeping us on track and making sure we saw and did as much as possible during our time with you. Your assistance was wonderful as was your care for all of us.

## CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program



This page in clockwise order from top left:  
(1) Understanding Tokyo Metro's flood control,  
(2) Inside Tokyo Metro's Flood control system,  
(3) With Pokemon "Pikachu" in Iwate,  
(4) Talking with junior high school students,  
(5) Going fishing in Rikuzentakata,  
(6) Rikuzentakata's Miracle Pine tree

## 2. New York Times Travel Show 2018

**Kotaro Kashiwai, Assistant Director, Representative of Matsue City**

The New York Times Travel Show was held at the Jacob K. Javits Center in New York City from January 26th to 28th. There were over 560 exhibitors' booths including travel agencies, hotels, and national tourism boards representing more than 170 destinations. There were also panels providing travel tips and tricks from travel industry speakers and experts, some cultural presentations from around the world, and international food tastings. JLGC staff members also attended this event and introduced their home areas at the booths of the Japan Pavilion.

Most visitors to our booth are planning to visit Japan or are simply interested in Japanese culture. Their main interest in Japan was usually focused on famous cities like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. As Tokyo will hold the next Olympics in 2020 and it's the most famous place in Japan, many visitors took Tokyo's visitor guides and maps. However, as many of them were not first time visitors to Japan or would like to spend more time there, I had a chance to introduce my home area, Shimane Prefecture, with the theme "hidden Japan". Shimane Prefecture is situated in the northern region of Western Japan, and because the main mode of transportation to Shimane Prefecture is by airplane (there is no Japanese bullet train), it is unfamiliar for even Japanese people. However, Shimane's history is so vast and deep that mention of it first appears in Japanese mythology. There are various legends and folklore found everywhere in Shimane, and the culture and traditions related to those legends are still alive in people's daily life.



When I introduced famous things in Shimane, such as shrines, temples, a castle, hot springs, food, Japanese sweets and teas, many people became very interested in visiting.

Most of our staff members worked at the JLGC booth, but some of our members had their own booths and introduced their home areas independently. One of our staff members, Tatsuya Matsumoto, introduced his home town, Saitama City, which is famous for Bonsai, and he set up a Bonsai performance where an American Bonsai artist showed off his skills at the booth and on the stage. Another staff member, Kaori Ito, introduced her home area, Shiga Prefecture, which is famous for Japanese tea, and she served Japanese tea that was grown there. At both booths, JETAANY members helped to promote our areas, and we would like to express our gratitude for their help.

During the event, a lot of visitors dropped by our booths and not only was I so impressed that so many people are interested in visiting Japan but I also felt we need to solve some problems like the language barrier and a lack of Wi-Fi access. I hope I can utilize this experience to help solve the problems in my home area when I get back to Japan next year.

