



JLGC

# News Letter

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JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER (CLAIR, NEW YORK)

## JAPAN NIGHT! at the ICMA Annual Conference

J L G C U P D A T E



This year, at the ICMA annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, we hosted a reception for former CLAIR international fellows and friends of the Japan Local Government Center in New York. Managers and staff of the ICMA organisation were feted with sushi and drinks to celebrate our strong and thriving relationship with these most important local government officials. Mr. Hirai, the executive director, expressed his delight at being able to say 'thank you' and 'welcome' to more than 40 people who attended. He commented on how essential the work of city managers is to their Japanese counterparts.

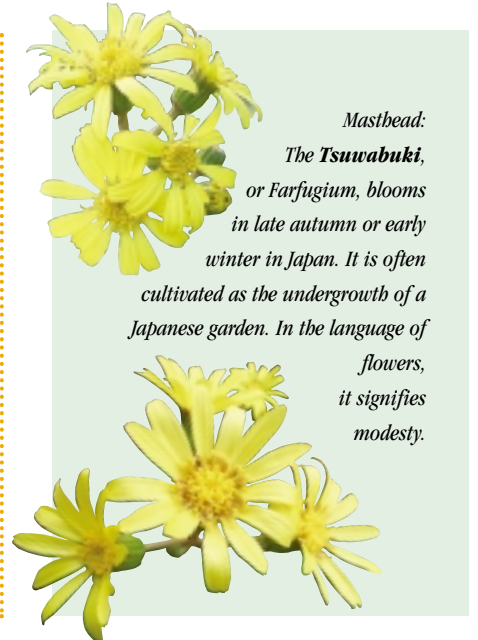
### SCI 50th Anniversary Conference

The annual conference of Sister Cities International was held in Washington, D.C. from July 13th through 15th. Mr. Shinji Hirai, Executive Director of Japan Local Government Center, and two JLGC officials attended.

This year's conference commemorated the 50th anniversary of President Eisenhower's statement that defined citizen diplomacy as the basis for sister cities relationships. Many people involved in the sister cities movement, including two city mayors and volunteers from Japanese municipalities, came together and celebrated the past 50 years and pledged the next 50 years for world peace at this historical event. Mary Jean Eisenhower, President and CEO of People to People International, and the granddaughter of President Eisenhower, gave the celebratory speech.



Mary Jean Eisenhower giving the celebratory speech



*Masthead: The Tsuwabuki, or Farfugium, blooms in late autumn or early winter in Japan. It is often cultivated as the undergrowth of a Japanese garden. In the language of flowers, it signifies modesty.*

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## ▶ Japanese downtown now

Sprawl is not a discriminating phenomenon. Perhaps best exemplified by the suburban sprawl experienced by American cities, random and uncontrolled growth has had a debilitating effect on urbanism worldwide. The economic and social decline of cities, especially their downtown areas has generated a resurgence of policies to stem outward growth and have spawned movements to engender “smart growth” and “compact cities”. Japanese cities are no exception.

In Japan, Machidukuri {community development} Three Laws were passed in 2000 to remedy haphazard development and to economically and socially redevelop depressed downtown areas. The Town Center Revitalization Law, the Large-Scale Retail Stores Location Law and the revised Town Planning and Zoning Act were enacted to provide new methods for economic and social development through comprehensive planning and zoning.



*A typical shopping mall in Japan: many vacant shops, few people walking during daytime hours*

Despite such laws, downtown shopping districts were becoming “ghost towns,” and after five years, these laws needed to be revised to retard the building frenzy of large scale retail stores in suburban areas. The new laws regulated new development of large scale retail stores in excess of 10,000



*“Vehicle-Free Street,” six week experiment in Tenjin, Fukuoka*

square meters and initiated policies to assist local governments in their efforts to revitalize depressed downtown business districts. The revised laws intend to bring attention to the concept of “town centers” by introducing the “Town Center Activation Meeting”. These meetings will focus on models that will enable the revitalization of the town centers. Participants will be the commercial landlords, tenants, area residents and private sector companies. One model being considered is the “Business Improvement Districts” (BIDs) common in the United States. These BIDs serve designated geographic areas and provide a variety of services, such as planning, sanitation, security and beautification. Businesses in the BIDs are assessed a fee for these services.

In Japan, however, there are no provisions for special purpose governments that have taxing authority enabling the implementation of special projects. Downtown areas in Japan are consistently challenged to raise money

to put into action ideas and programs that would better serve the community and its residents. Presently, there is a growing movement among some advanced town centers to secure the necessary financial resources to meet the challenge of revitalizing their core business centers. The following scenarios are now being introduced.

- **Japanese BIDs**
  - **Voluntary assessment**

There are a few successful examples of Japanese type BIDs in large cities where property owners meet to plan and carry out various activities such as beautification to enhance property values within the area. Such areas include the district called “Daimaruyu,” near Tokyo station; “Shiodome”, a newly developed district where several large companies have established their headquarters; and in other cities like “Tenjin” in Fukuoka and “Midosuji” in Osaka where similar activities have been undertaken. Common among these areas is the



*My student researchers observing a local shopping area*

more discretion in using public space. Income can be derived from business advertising and sales revenues from street cafes, bistros and small retail shops. Recently, deregulation has fostered an increase in business enterprises using open space to conduct their activities.

strong networks with neighboring universities, non profit organizations and volunteers in an effort to improve management organizations located within the town center.

### ► Strategic fundraising

The critical ingredient in a successful town center activation meeting is the ability to creatively and strategically raise funds early in the redevelopment process. Extensive and deliberate planning should be conducted to evaluate the needs of the community. The needs assessment should identify the problems, concerns and remedies and establish the appropriate relationship between cost and profit. Strategic thinking and planning are important in taking into consideration all possible scenarios that could impact upon the goals and objectives of the community.

In Japan, it is vitally important that property owners, residents, merchants and companies share their ideas and strategies when discussing the future of the area. A BID like system should be encouraged and introduced throughout communities in Japan to bring about a renewed energy that will invigorate and sustain economic and social growth in areas that are sliding into decline.

collection of a voluntary assessment from property owners in the districts. In the Tenjin area, for example, the planning and implementing organization is called “We Love Tenjin Meeting”. Their assessment fee is called a self-governance cost paid by business managers and property owners. There are other sources of revenue that help support the businesses in the district, but the existence of the self-governance cost is a good indicator that the betterment of the area is widely supported by all whom live and work there.

#### • Citizen Donations and Financial Support

Recent trends in community development in Japan are focusing on community organizations and their ability to fundraise through citizen donation and financial support. The SaseboYokabi Merchant Association for example introduced a “cheering party” accepting minimum donations of 1,000 yen and incorporating citizen involvement in their activities.

#### • Income Generation through Public Space Use

One possibility of raising funds to stimulate redevelopment of town centers is to allow the private sector

#### • Community Business

Businesses that use community resources are actively finding solutions for local community problems. These “community businesses” are presently flourishing in Japan. In town centers, community businesses occupy vacant shops transforming these spaces into purposeful services such as lunch box delivery stations for senior citizens and school lunch cooking centers for the public schools in the neighborhood. In Nagahama-shi, Shiga Prefecture, for example, senior citizens converted vacant shop spaces into thrift stores and other types of businesses and in addition to the normal tourist trade pulling in customers from the neighborhood and surrounding area. Income from these businesses can be a source of revenue for particular town center activation projects that support a broader plan to revitalize the town center.

#### • Other inducements

Resources for revitalizing town centers should include inducements other than money. Advanced town centers have established



*“Platinum Plaza,” a community business operated by senior citizens located on a main street in Nagahama*



# 2006 JETAA USA Conference Focuses on "Community"

Matthew Gillam / JLGC Senior Researcher

## JETAA ACTIVITIES

The US chapters of the JET Alumni Association held their 5th annual conference on Friday and Saturday, August 11th and 12th, in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles. This year's conference focused on "community" - namely, communities of JET Program participants and alumni, and their relationships with communities in the larger society around them.



At the reception by the Consul General of Japan

The conference began early Friday morning with brief welcoming remarks by Mr. Shinji Hirai, Executive Director of Japan Local Government Center in New York, and Mr. Yasuhiko Kamada, JET Program Director at the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles. After this, Brian Noguchi, a former chapter officer for Southern California and a former Country Representative, gave a brief overview of JETAA's past and present, to give some context and background to the conference participants before they got down to work on current issues.

After each chapter reported on their status and activities, Nancy Kikuchi, a founding member of the Southern California chapter and long-time booster of Little Tokyo, spoke first about that community's history and the future that its supporters hope to create for it. She recounted the difficulties faced by Japanese-Americans through decades of discrimination and economic

hardship, and the difficulties now faced by Little Tokyo itself as a coherent community as Japanese-Americans move out into the suburbs and around the world to chase new opportunities. Nancy then talked about her experiences in helping found the chapter after she returned from teaching in Japan in 1989. Because there was no funding or support from the Japanese government in those days - other than a list of names and phone numbers of returning JETs - it took a lot of perseverance and dedication to get people together and get the chapter on its feet. Overall, the talk highlighted how much progress has been made, both in overcoming racial prejudice and discrimination against Japanese and others, and in building a network of people who serve as a bridge between Japan and the rest of the world, contributing to this effort.

One interesting event in the afternoon was a team and awareness building exercise, where the participants created a giant collage map of their chapters within the US, using words and images to express each chapter's character.

The Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles, Mr. Kazuo Kodama, and his wife hosted a delightful reception for the participants on Friday evening at their residence, followed by a nijikai in the Koreatown community.

Saturday was given over to presentations by the Japan National Tourist Organization, CLAIR, and MOFA, and then to discussion and voting on proposals for activities and



Each chapter expresses its distinctive personality

initiatives to be undertaken by chapters individually or on a national level, and on policy and strategy proposals. One development that appears likely to move forward is the creation of a national newsletter to be put out as a collaborative effort among several newsletter editors from chapters around the country. Committees were then formed to study how to increase the profile and status of JETAA, to determine the best strategy to pursue should the chapters wish to try to attain NPO status individually or as a national entity, and to create a detailed job description for the US Country Representatives. Finally, Shannan Spisak of New York and Shannon Quinn of Seattle were elected as the Country Reps for 2006-2007.

The evening was then given over to a dinner in the Hispanic community on Olvera Street, hosted by CLAIR, followed by a nijikai in Chinatown. For those who were able to spend some time on Sunday, the conference was timed to coincide with the annual Tofu Festival and the Nisei Week Parade in the neighborhood surrounding the hotel, providing a good dose of Japanese culture, music, and food.



# JETAA Canada National Conference 2006

CLAIR

Ms. Seiko Kubo / Assistant Director of JLGC

## JETAA ACTIVITIES

This year, the JET Alumni Association (JETAA) Canada National Conference took place in Vancouver, Canada from June 23 to June 25. Blessed with mild weather during the conference, every participant could share ideas to pursue their goals and make efforts to develop their chapters, as well as being able to enjoy the city itself. JETAA Canada has seven chapters, based in Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver, and Edmonton. This national conference is held annually, hosted by a different chapter each year.

A total of 20 representatives from every chapter got together at the conference. In addition, representatives from Japan Local Government Center (JLGC), including Mr. Shinji Hirai, the Executive Director, and Mr. Naofumi Hida, the former Director, took part. The Consulate General of Japan at Vancouver sent Mr. Toshiyuki Taga, the Consul General, and other delegates. The conference was organized and moderated by members of the Vancouver chapter, acting as the conference host.

Before the opening of the conference, Consul General Taga held a cocktail reception on June 23, where people could get to know each other.



Participants at the residence of the Consul General of Japan in Vancouver

This contributed to the frank opinion exchange and smooth running of the conference later on.

On June 24, the opening session started with speeches from Mr. Fujita, followed by Mr. Hirai. The first session was conducted by Mr. Chevalier and Ms. Nagao of the Vancouver consulate, speaking about their involvement in recruiting and hiring, and about the JET Program itself. The next session was devoted to CLAIR's funding for chapters. The morning finished with a keynote address by Mr. Kevin Thien, the coach, and Jane Leung, one of the founders, of the JETAA BC dragon boat team. They spoke about the BC chapter's experiences participating in dragon boat races in Vancouver and how this has contributed to strengthening ties among chapter members and friends of JET, etc. After lunch, the representatives from each chapter introduced themselves and reported on successful events from their chapters.

Then, four topics were discussed during the brainstorming and national action plan session. The first was the Visit Japan Campaign, sponsored by JNTO. Many ideas were suggested, such as having pamphlets, maps and information available to distribute to JET parents at pre-departure sessions. The second topic was e-communications, what a new Wiki site was set up and is running at: <http://jetaabc.ca/JETAACanadaForum/JETAACanadaForum/>. The third topic concerned talking to prospective JETs. The final topic was discussion of a national newsletter. A lot of

topics were covered and the day ended with a reception hosted by JLGC.



Keynote Speech by Mr. Thien and Ms. Leung at the conference

On June 25, the first session concerned chapter activities for new and returning JETs. The next session discussed the role of the Country Representative. It was agreed that an effort should be made to look for any job descriptions or other records concerning the position. Then Mr. Donovan gave an update on the Contact Management System (CMS) project that he is working on with the CMS team. The last session was a discussion of issues relating to the Country Rep and the national guidelines/bylaws governing these. Finally, the venue for next year's conference was discussed. Edmonton and Calgary were mentioned as possibilities, and after the conference it was reported that SAJETAA in Calgary will host the national conference next year. Mr. Hida then closed the conference with his farewell speech to the conference participants. This was his final goodbye before returning to Japan to take up his new duties. With this, the conference was finally brought to a close.

The conference was successful, with all the chapter representatives exchanging opinions throughout all the sessions, and outside of the sessions as well, which made their relationships much stronger. The Vancouver chapter did a very good job of organizing and managing the conference.



# The Governors Meet in Charleston, South Carolina

Seth B. Benjamin / JLGC Senior Researcher

## JLGC UPDATE

Every year, in the Summer, the Governors of the fifty states in the United States (together with Guam, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana and U.S. Virgin Islands) meet informally for a three- or four-day period to discuss a topic that has been the focus of the National Governors' Association (NGA) for the previous year. This year, because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, Governor Mark Sanford graciously accepted the challenge, at short notice, to host the governors in historic Charleston, South Carolina, from 4th August to 7th August 2006.



Mr. Hirai and Governor Huckabee

For his year as chairman of the association, the theme that Governor Huckabee (R-AR) chose to ask the governors to focus on was 'Healthy America'. At the meeting, Governor Huckabee, having set the example by his own behaviour, presented for the governors a plan for them to take the lead in their states - at home, at work and in the schools. As he called it, *Wellness Where We Live*, the work done by NGA over the year offered the governors five strategies for 'Creating Healthy States': (1) Educating the public about existing community resources so that it can take advantage of services and opportunities for health programmes; (2) Work with community organisations to communicate to the public health information encouraging healthy lifestyles; (3) Promote civic and personal responsibility for better health; (4) Improve access to healthy options for those living in disadvantaged communities; and (5) Lead by example by sharing publicly how the governor and his family gets and stays healthy.

The governors opened their meeting

with a session given by the former governor of Wisconsin and United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tommy Thompson. Piggy-backing on Governor Huckabee's initiative, Tommy Thompson called for the governors to begin a complete reform of the way Americans think about health care. He said we should focus on 'health' not 'health care'. If the governors took prospective action to encourage wellness then they could save a considerable amount of their Medicaid costs. He pointed out that only 5 per cent of their health care costs go toward illness prevention. In a light-hearted moment, he mentioned how the Japanese, Mexicans, Italians and Germans, despite their ethnic diets, suffered fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. "So", he said, "eat and drink whatever you like - speaking English is apparently what kills you!" Seriously though, since long-term care is going to be a major cost burden of the future, he suggested a way to make the American federal system work well. How about, he argued, the federal government taking on the costs of the over-65 population, whilst leaving to the states (with all the flexibility and creativity they can muster) the health care concerns of the 64-and-under population. This was the thrust of Tommy Thompson's appeal to the governors.

Health was not the only subject under discussion. The governors tackled

energy, telecommunications and education issues. The governors acknowledged that in each of these areas solutions to the complex problems they present will take a lot of hard work and consensus-building. Then, at the closing plenary session, Sir Ken Robinson encouraged the governors to think differently about how to prepare students for the workplace of the 21st Century. Using his recent book, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*, he showed how organisations can become creative, and thereby competitive, by thinking about intelligence anew.

Governor Napolitano (D-AZ), the incoming chairman of NGA, announced her initiative for the upcoming year. She called it Innovation America. As she said, "to be competitive as a nation, we must prepare our young people to meet the real demands of the job market. The goal of my initiative is to educate our students to be innovators, and for them to carry that spirit of innovation through their university experience and into the workforce".

Of course, we had an opportunity to savour the rich history and heritage of the South, especially that of the Charleston area. A visit to an old plantation, a privileged look at some of the ante-bellum houses that grace the peninsula shoreline of the city and a visit to the new Liberty Park were occasions for us to enjoy casual evenings with the governors, their top staff and other participants.



Mr. Hirai, Governor Sanford and myself



# “Strong States, Strong Nation” - The 2006 National Conference of State Legislatures

Stephen Fasano / JLGC Senior Researcher

## J L G C U P D A T E

The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) held its 2006 Annual Meeting and Exhibition in Nashville, Tennessee. Founded in 1975, the National Conference of State Legislatures is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staffs of the nation’s fifty states, its commonwealths and territories. NCSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues. NCSL is an effective and respected advocate for the interests of state governments before Congress and federal agencies.

This year the host city was Nashville, Music City USA. More than 6,000 attendees were treated to an array of lectures and panel discussions on important and timely state issues.

Building upon the event theme “Strong States, Strong Nation” this year’s conference focused on the prominence and power of states in the federal system.

The general plenary sessions addressed the many important and controversial issues that confront the states and the United States. Globalization and macroeconomic models and principles were aired by a distinguished panel that included Frederick W. Smith, chairman and chief executive officer of the Federal Express Corporation; Jim Sasser, former United States Senator from Tennessee and Ambassador to China during the



JLGC Executive Director Shinji Hirai with State Senator and Mrs. Dan Kelly



Homeland Security Director Michael Chertoff addresses NCSL audience.

Clinton presidency and Congressman John Tanner from Tennessee.

United States Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff spoke about the effort being made to thwart terrorism, just days after British authorities foiled a terrorist plot to destroy jet liners over the Atlantic Ocean, and weeks before the fifth anniversary of the September 11 attacks. Chertoff listed security improvements that have been implemented over the last five years and gave support to the traditional model that puts state and local governments first when responding to natural disasters. He went on to briefly discuss the REAL ID (Identification), which would standardize state drivers’ licenses. This is a major state concern because of the mandated timeline and cost to the individual states.

Perhaps the best attended and certainly the most enjoyable session featured Doris Kearns Goodwin, a world renowned historian and author who has been reporting on politics and base ball for the last two decades. Her recent book, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* details how Lincoln prevailed over three

rivals for the presidential nomination in 1860 then appointed those rivals to his cabinet and worked with them.

The audience was captivated by her story telling which included revealing insight and humorous anecdotes involving her work with President Lyndon Johnson and other leaders. Her work on Lincoln highlighted his key leadership strengths such as: confidence, empathy and a willingness to share credit and failure. He learned from his mistakes and thoroughly understood himself. Above all he never forgot his roots and had a great sense of timing.

On a lighter note, after the close of each business day, attendees were treated to special events, including a visit to the Country Music Hall of Fame, a local country fair and the infamous Wild Horse saloon.

Year after year, the NCSL conference provides an opportunity to meet state government officials and to learn about their jobs and experiences in public service. These dedicated and committed leaders are proud of their work to make their states strong, and strong states are the bedrock of a strong nation.



The prefecture of Miyagi is located in northern Japan, less than 2 hours from Tokyo by the Tohoku Shinkansen (bullet train). Miyagi has been prosperous since ancient times. Miyagi's development began in the 1600's when feudal Lord *Date Masamune*, one of the most famous and popular warriors of Japanese history, first took possession of the surrounding territory. The "heart of Miyagi" is the spirit of the strong character and native intelligence of our predecessors and is emblematic of the warmth and wisdom that continues to nourish the prefecture. Today, Miyagi is flourishing and enjoys its success in many different ways.

### ► Sendai - An Attractive City of Trees

With a population of approximately one million, Sendai, the capital city of Miyagi, is the political and economic center of the Tohoku region. Despite its small size, the city features an abundance of natural beauty that changes with the seasons. Sendai's nickname "Mori No Miyako", literally translated as the city of trees illustrates this perfectly. *Jozenjidori* Avenue, lined with beautiful "keyaki" (zelkova) trees, is a popular spot for strollers in downtown Sendai. In December, the trees are lit at night with hundreds of thousands of lights during the "Pageant of Starlight."



Pageant of Starlight

### ► Matsushima - A Place of Beauty and Spirituality

The green pines stand in stark contrast to the cliffs of the 260-plus islands of Matsushima that have been eroded by the sea over the ages. Considered one of the three most beautiful landscapes in Japan, Matsushima has been written about in *waka* and *haiku* poetry since ancient times.



Matsushima in Winter

### ► Enjoy the Delights of First-rate Hot Springs

Visiting a hot spring to enjoy its waters is one of the great pleasures of traveling in Miyagi. There are many hot springs in Miyagi, including those in *Naruko*, *Akiu*, *Sakunami* and *Togatta*. According to a local legend, the waters of the *Akiu Hot Springs* cured a seriously ill emperor 1500 years ago. There are so many different types to choose from, you will never be disappointed.

The healing properties of the hot springs differ according to the composition of the waters. Miyagi has numerous hot springs which are effective for treating injuries and curing neuralgia. The baths are diverse as some are built from huge rocks while others are built outdoors. Often, large hotels have a variety of baths so guests can leisurely make the rounds.

### ► Taste the Harmony of Nature

There is a harmony that resonates among the ocean, mountains, rivers and plains in Miyagi. There is an abundance and variety of delicious food. You can enjoy astonishingly fresh seafood including tuna, oyster and scallops from *Sanriku*. Furthermore, Miyagi is

one of the leading producers of rice. Miyagi's rich and fertile soil is ideal for rice cultivation. Miyagi's rice has a sweet flavor and is often used in other food products. Miyagi's sake, made from quality rice is highly prized for its smooth, mellow flavor. The rice gives the sake a sweetness that neutralizes the strong taste of alcohol. The sake goes very well with sushi.

The people of Miyagi are proud of their heritage and their land and they work tirelessly to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Miyagi-ken is a beautiful and exciting place to visit where you too can experience the "heart of Miyagi".

For more information  
Miyagi Prefecture Government  
<http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/english/index.htm>

