



# JLGC NEWSLETTER

Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York)

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**AT KAMINARI-MON IN TOKYO**

**ISSUE NO.75 APRIL 2013**

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## *Comments from CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program Participants*

CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program 2012 was held from January 20 to 30 in Tokyo and Kagawa. The program provided a wide range of information on Japan's local government system. Participants exchanged their opinions on the tourism industry, especially, this year. Also they experienced home-stays and traditional Japanese culture.



**Ms. Erin  
Sparks**

Senior Policy  
Analyst,

National Governors  
Association

I visited Japan for the first time as part of the CLAIR Fiscal 2012 study tour. It was an unforgettable experience. I cannot imagine a better introduction to Japan's government, culture, geography, and people. Our schedule was packed with exciting activities from meeting senior government officials to touring world class art museums, sampling wonderful cuisine, and staying with wonderfully hospitable host families for a weekend. The theme of our study tour, promoting tourism, was particularly relevant for my work, which focuses on state economic development policy. I enjoyed the chance to hear about the policies and programs that are working in Japanese prefectures and to share ideas of policies that are working in American states.

**JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER  
(CLAIR, NY)**

3 Park Avenue, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10016-5902  
212.246.5542 office • 212.246.5617 fax  
[www.jlgc.org](http://www.jlgc.org)



**Mr. Jeremy  
Lynn Williams**

Policy Analyst,  
The Council of  
State Govern-  
ments

The 2012 CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program provided a unique glimpse into the historical, political, cultural, and social nuances of Japan, with an emphasis on Tokyo and Kagawa Prefecture. The program sessions provided a wide variety of information on topics ranging from the structure and functions of state and local government, to the unique and distinctive role of tourism in the Japanese economy, demonstrating how the industry is inextricably tied to the region's diverse cuisine, religions, landscapes, and art. Visits to various museums afforded a perspective on the history of Japan, along with its 47 prefectures and numerous municipalities, as well as showcased the country's promotion of contemporary art. Visits to various Buddhist and Shinto temples and shrines, as well as the homestay portion of the program, provided a look at the daily lives of everyday Japanese, a valuable experience that most Westerners are not otherwise afforded. The program was extremely well organized. It is to the credit of the CLAIR staff, as well as the staff of the Tokyo and Kagawa governments, that a great deal of valuable information and an array of astonishing experiences were discovered during this short visit.



**Mr. David  
Thompson**

Executive Direc-  
tor,  
North Carolina  
Association of  
County Commis-  
sioners

Upon my return from CLAIR's 2012 Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar and post-trip reflection, I can enthusiastically state that CLAIR has achieved its' stated primary goal with my group of United States and Canadian participants. "The primary goals of CLAIR are to foster, develop and nurture, at the sub-national level, an international mutual understanding between Japan and other nations and the exchange of ideas that relate to government administration and management."

It is amazing to me that over a short period of time I came to understand not only the formal structure that exists between the central government, prefectures, and local governments, but also how the components functionally work together. This was achieved utilizing the seminar presentations as background material, but just as importantly, seeing the structure functioning in Kagawa Prefecture and Marugame City. The in-depth exposure to how this decentralized government was working together to develop the full economic potential of local attractions and assets, served to reinforce my understanding of how the system works to the benefit of all levels. It was interesting to note the concept of decentralization that consisted of some support by the central government, but which emphasized the importance of local autonomy in forming public policy around local needs and solutions.

These lessons learned and the appreciation of Japanese history, culture, and government innovation will continue with me throughout my public career here in the United States. The dedication of CLAIR's New York and Tokyo staff, as well as Kagawa's staff to support and enhance the experience will be remembered as well. Thank you for allowing me to participate and experience Japan through CLAIR's Seminar this year.





**Mr. Jim Brooks**

Program Director,

National League of Cities

My experience in Japan was nothing short of remarkable. We covered a large number of topics during the program as well as a significant portion of the land in Kagawa Prefecture. Moreover, our group of Fellows was introduced to a significant number of elected officials, government staff, artisans, gallery directors and ordinary citizens. I felt immersed in the uniqueness that is Japan.

My two biggest discoveries were the number and quality of modern art venues in Kagawa and the beautiful natural landscape of that region of Shikoku. I was expecting Tokyo to be the dense urban hub with more than its fair share of iconic buildings. What I did not expect was the familiarity of cities such as Takamatsu and Marugame which tend to resemble typical American municipalities.

Finally, the hospitality and courtesy of the Japanese people we met ensures that I will make a future visit to Japan.

Please see the links below.

<http://citiesspeak.org/2013/01/18/ideas-and-inspiration-from-japan/>

<http://citiesspeak.org/2013/01/23/global-outreach-by-japanese-cities/>

<http://citiesspeak.org/2013/01/28/japanese-localities-build-growth-on-arts-and-culture/>

<http://citiesspeak.org/2013/02/05/the-changing-face-of-japanese-decision-making/>



**Mr. Ted Gaebler**

City Manager,  
City of Rancho  
Cordova, California

It's hard to believe that almost a month has gone by since our wonderful visit to Japan. I have had great fun telling the stories of our whirlwind tour to Japan and the wonderful warm reception we received everywhere we went. I have had the occasion to be speaking to 10 or 12 audiences in both California and the state of Washington in the last three weeks. It has been fun to share that Japan is a thoroughly modern and industrialized country with amazing art and architecturally significant museums. The culture is different enough from western culture that several things are significant — the food and the way it is presented, the bathrooms, and the historical religious institutions.

The story I tell most has to do with the warmth and kindness of the people we met. I thoroughly enjoyed my homestay and think that is a significant magical piece of the CLAIR visit.



By the Seto Inland Sea



**Mr. Robert  
O'Neill, Jr.**

Executive Director,  
International City/  
County Manage-  
ment Association

The trip and study program prepared by CLAIR was an extraordinary experience. I can't thank the CLAIR staff enough for the detailed preparation, organization, and substantive contributors to our experience. As a group we had a memorable experience in Japan. We learned much about the history, economy culture and geography of Japan. We saw many of the attractions of Tokyo and Kagawa that will be lasting memories. The homestay was a truly wonderful experience, one in which few get a chance to enjoy. The host families were great and in two days we got a chance to see the true Japan that few tourists ever get to experience. We can only hope our suggestions and recommendations to the Kagawa officials are helpful and in some small way can repay them for their most generous hospitality and warmth. Certainly the experience with my fellow participants from the US and Canada was richly rewarding. I think we all have new friends and colleagues that we hope to see often and continue to work together.



**Mr. Mike Murray**

Chief Administrative  
Officer,  
Regional Municipality  
of Waterloo, Ont-  
ario

The CLAIR study tour provided an amazing introduction to Japan. I'll never forget the warmth and hospitality of the people we met, including the CLAIR staff, our generous and gracious hosts in Kagawa prefecture, and my wonderful homestay family. I was also impressed with Japan's combination of a long and rich cultural history, alongside ultra-modern art, design and technology. Our stay at Zentsuji Temple, including the morning prayer service and walking the Kaidan-meguri were historical / cultural highlights for me. I also took advantage of my last afternoon in Tokyo to ride the Shinkansen between Tokyo and Shizuoka - right past Mt Fuji at 200 km/hr on a crystal clear day - a great example of Japan's super modern transportation system! I came away from the trip with new friends in Japan, a greater understanding of the country and its culture, and memories that will last a lifetime!



At Kagawa Prefecture Government



At Naoshima Island





**Ms. Nancy  
Wright-Laking**

President,  
Association of  
Municipal Man-  
agers, Clerks and  
Treasurers of  
Ontario

I have just returned from a trip representing AMCTO in Japan, where I spent ten days learning about local Japanese government and tourism initiatives in Kagawa Prefecture.

This local government exchange and cooperation seminar was provided by the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). The purpose of this program is to invite foreign local government executives to Japan and provide them an opportunity to get a better understanding of Japan and its system of local government through opinion and information exchange. It also serves as a chance to promote network building between CLAIR, Japanese and foreign local governments, and international exchange organizations in areas covered by CLAIR's overseas offices – in our case the New York Office.

There were eight individuals from North America who had the privilege of making this trip with me. Our group represented various associations, such as The National Governors Association, The Council of State Governments, The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, The National League of Cities, The International City/County Management Association and the AMCTO.

There were three municipal representatives from Canada; the CAO from the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, an international affairs councillor from the City of Montreal and yours truly! I actually had the opportunity to represent both the AMCTO and the Township of Minden Hills, which is especially significant due to my Minden Hills economic development portfolio.

We had an action packed schedule.

We arrived in Japan on a Sunday afternoon and had an orientation that evening. The next day we attended the Tokyo Seminar where we met with the Chairperson of CLAIR and received a presentation of CLAIR activities. We were provided with an introduction to local government system in Japan and received a lecture from the Japan Tourism Agency on tourism administration. On day three we were given a tour of government facilities in Tokyo, including the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Building Observatories, The Museum of Contemporary Art - Tokyo, Edo Tokyo Museum and Sensoji Nakamise (a shopping street outside the Buddhist Sensoji Temple in the Asakusa District).

Then we flew to Kagawa Prefecture where we had a whirlwind of engagements, including meeting with officials from Kagawa. They outlined their prefecture; the Shitoku 88 Temple Circuit and Pilgrimage, Setouchi Triennale (art festival) and the promotion of local products.

In order to get a better understanding of the tourism and branding opportunities we visited various arts, cultural and heritage attractions. We took part in a tea ceremony and made Japanese sweets at Ritsurin Garden. We crafted traditional paper fans at the Uchiwa Museum. Other highlights included visits to the Higashiyama Kali Setouchi Art Museum, Sanuki Kagari Temari Preservation Association, Konpira Shrine, Kanamaruza Kabuki Theater and the Kinryo no Sato Sake Museum.

We also met with the Governor, Vice-Governor and Director General of the Governor's Secretariat, as well as the Mayor of Marugame City.

We were fortunate to participate in a variety of cultural experiences, giving us a taste of daily life in Japan. We slept on futons at the Zentsuji Temple Lodging in a Shukuba (a post town with lodging for travellers), and at Kotosankaku, a Japanese traditional inn. Here we had the opportunity to experience Japanese baths and were exposed to Buddhist prayers and sermons, among other daily routines in a Japanese temple.

We stayed with host families in and around Takamatsu City for two nights. These people were



**Ms. Nancy  
Wright-Laking**

President,  
Association of  
Municipal Managers,  
Clerks and  
Treasurers of Ontario

amazing! They went overboard to provide us with an authentic Japanese experience through art, culture and food.

We had memorable experiences sampling traditional Japanese foods and being guests of honour at many lunches and receptions hosted by CLAIR, The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, and Kagawa Prefecture.

My experiences offered an enriching view of the Japanese culture, heritage and economy. I learned about life in Japan from both officials and citizens. I learned that although our cultures differ, we all share parallel struggles related to economic development and ways to find a significant and distinctive brand to encourage tourism. I met many people with whom we can network. My fellow travellers and I are now ambassadors for Japan and what it has to offer. And we have made new friends throughout North America and Japan.

Personally, I have garnered new skills crafting paper fans and making Udon noodles, a process that involved dancing on the dough. I have new Japanese friends, have the ability to remove my shoes about 50 times a day and am an expert at navigating the Tokyo subway system. I now know that I can climb a mountain - getting to Uchiwa Castle was no small feat!

I did not improve my ability to speak Japanese but it did not prevent me from thoroughly enjoying the heated toilet seats. The sake wasn't bad either!

My experiences were many. What I liked most was the people we met; the staff and the host families who were so accommodating and gracious to us. They bent over backwards to ensure that we had a good experience, and that we experienced as much as we could. They were there from start to finish, waving us on our way at each destination.



**Ms. Lucie Lavoie**

Counsellor,  
International Affairs,  
City of Montreal, Quebec

As an old friend of Japan, where I have lived more than seven years mostly as a graduate student at Jochi Daigaku (Sophia University), and a country where I have been travelling back and forth from Canada for more than 30 years, it was an immense pleasure for me to go back to Japan after an absence of 6 years.

As the cities of Montreal and Hiroshima have a twin sister-city agreement since June 1998, I began my travels to Japan by visiting Hiroshima, where a small snow-storm welcomed me, to my great surprise. As we will be celebrating our 15th anniversary in 2013, I was there to prepare for the visit of Mayor Kazumi Matsui to Montreal this coming August.

I then travelled on to Tokyo where I met the CLAIR staff and our group. What a group we were! Everyone was different, yet we got along very well! Everyone was interesting, fun and quite punctual!

It was pure pleasure to be back in Japan. CLAIR welcomed us with such generosity, and had us tour Tokyo and Kagawa, the noodle-ken! As I have lived many years in Tokyo, being back was great. Tokyo has changed quite a bit since my last visit, yet the spirit of the city which I love so much is, I am happy to say, still very much alive.

Kagawa was altogether quite a different experience. As it was my first time to Shikoku, I was expecting beautiful sites, the sea, mountains, and this is what we got. And plenty more. The Kagawa people were very welcoming, the food was succulent, and the onsen were very welcome at the end of long and cold days. Snow was certainly not what I was expecting! But snowed it did!

I would like to thank everyone who was involved in taking such good care of us in Japan. I will not forget this trip! And last but not least, my host family had a lot to do with my stay in Kagawa: the Fujitas were exceptional! I fell in love with them!

Domo arigato gozaimashita! Mina-sama, fuyu no sue made, ki to tsukete kudasai ne!



## *JET Program cited in Proclamation by Governor Hickenlooper of Colorado*

On the occasion of the annual National Day Reception, hosted by the Consulate General of Japan in Denver, the State of Colorado presented Consul-General Ono with a Proclamation signed by Governor Hickenlooper announcing 2013 as "THE YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ENHANCED RELATIONS, FRIENDSHIP, AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN JAPAN AND THE STATE OF COLORADO". The Proclamation cites this as being the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's gift of cherry trees to the United States, the inauguration of non-stop flights between Colorado and Japan, and the ongoing success of the JET Program, with strong participation by Coloradans, as contributing to ever-richer relations between the two peoples.

While the state presents a Proclamation each year in honor of the National Day Reception and the Emperor's Birthday, this year is remarkable in the recognition given to the JET Program, and by extension to the efforts of the Rocky Mountain JETAA chapter, whose members contribute so much to the JET Program and Colorado – Japan relations through their participation in the recruiting and selection process for JET and their cultural activities and sister city / sister state support efforts. Executive officers and board members of the RMJETAA were in attendance at the reception, along with members of the Japanese community, business leaders, and Mayor Hancock of Denver.

WHEREAS, this occasion celebrates the National Day and Birthday of the Emperor of Japan; and

WHEREAS, this year marked the 100th anniversary of the gift in friendship of cherry trees from Japan to the United States, and there were ceremonial plantings of new cherry trees from Japan at several locations in Colorado; and

WHEREAS, this year marked another success in the ongoing history of the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, which has seen hundreds of participants from Colorado since 1987; and

WHEREAS, this year, the first non-stop flight from Colorado to Japan was announced, an opportunity which has brought about renewed energy and cooperation among community stakeholders and an increase in cultural and economic exchanges between Japan and Colorado;

Therefore, I, John W. Hickenlooper, Governor of the State of Colorado, do hereby proclaim the year of 2013,

THE YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ENHANCED RELATIONS, FRIENDSHIP, AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN  
JAPAN AND THE STATE OF COLORADO



GIVEN under my hand and the Executive Seal of the State of Colorado, this third day of December, 2012 in the State of Colorado.



John W. Hickenlooper  
Governor

*A JET Alumni member has been helping the rebuilding in Tohoku  
by providing useful information!*

Rebuilding Tohoku is a website that is dedicated to providing information about the changes that are taking place in Japan in an effort to rebuild the Tohoku area. This website is trying to create a medium that consolidates information for all subjects related to the rebuilding efforts including but not limited to energy, politics, economics, tourism and philanthropy.

The website address: [www.rebuildingtohoku.com](http://www.rebuildingtohoku.com)



The site allows for visitors in Japan to join as members and submit articles (in both Japanese and English), pictures, videos, or documents on various projects related to rebuilding Tohoku.

The site also reaches out to volunteers around the world to support the translation of documents from Japanese to English in order to provide information usually not available outside of Japan. The overall goal of the website is to promote projects related to rebuilding Tohoku through providing information in the effort to attract foreign direct investment into Japan from overseas investors.

The website was created and operated by New York-based Owen Rosa, a former JET from Iwate Prefecture, who believes there is great potential for investment in the future of Tohoku and Japan.



**Owen Rosa**

JETAA New York

Iwate, 1999-2002

**JAPAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CENTER (CLAIR, NY)**

Please visit our website at [www.jlgc.org](http://www.jlgc.org) for more information



*A new CLAIR Report, “Learning from successful financial reform in St. Lucie County, Florida”, has been released!*

The global recession has severely affected not only the business community, but also local governments in the U.S. from the latter half of 2008. Despite the fact that a large number of local governments faced serious financial difficulties, some of them could avert or overcome financial crisis. St. Lucie County, Florida, is one successful example, due to their rapid response to the unfolding crisis.



Award ceremony for “County Leader of the Year” at the 2011 National Association of Counties Annual Conference



St. Lucie County Commissioners, Ms. Outlaw, Chairman of the Citizens Budget Committee, and Naomi Maki

Because of the global recession, St. Lucie County, Florida, encountered a serious financial crisis, facing a \$57 million operating deficit, double-digit unemployment, and one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country. But, after just two years, the County has made great strides to resolve its financial problems, such as reducing its deficit by \$26 million, and bringing unemployment down to 13.0 percent in 2011, from 14.1 percent in 2010. One of the most important players is Ms. Faye Outlaw, MPA, St. Lucie’s County Administrator. She was selected as American City & County magazine’s County Leader of the Year for 2011, and received the 2011 Career Excellence Award from the Florida City and County Management Association. Her efforts have also attracted admiration from the state’s legislators.

Since 2007, the County has taken various steps to reduce expenses related to personnel including a hiring freeze, early retirement, voluntary layoffs, and involuntary layoffs. Also, some public services have been reduced in the effort to achieve a balanced budget. However, while cutting back budgets the County has not only maintained several core programs and services but also has increased some service levels by creating and enhancing public-private partnership. For example, the County has kept the Regional History Center open by utilizing volunteer staff, and has increased the frequency of controlled burns on nature preserves by arranging for students enrolled in Indian River State College’s Public Safety

*A new CLAIR Report, “Learning from successful financial reform in St. Lucie County, Florida”, has been released!*

Training Complex to help conduct them as part of their training. In addition, the County established the Solar Energy Loan Fund and the Green Collar Task Force with local community leaders as a holistic approach to promoting both environmental sustainability and job creation. Not only do both programs help create and supply a market for Green Economy jobs, but they also provide renewable energy.

The key to success is summed up in the following comment by former St. Lucie County Commissioner Chris Craft, “We started taking action toward fiscal sustainability six years ago. We built up a sizable savings account, and as a result of that it has made it easier to implement many of the programs and be successful with the leadership we have in place.”

The key factors were thorough program development based on foresight and great leadership to carry it out. Behind these results, there are good relationships of trust not only between the Board of County Commissioners (the Board) and County Administrator, but also the County government and local community. Success could not afford to lose anyone. As the saying, “Rome wasn't built in a day” implies, success comes from adequate preparation and steady efforts.

The County is still in the process of financial reform and Ms. Outlaw still faces the challenge of continuing to achieve fiscal sustainability despite many difficulties. This report describes, through interviews with Ms. Outlaw and other stakeholders, how the County has overcome its financial difficulties so far. I am proud to share St. Lucie County's successful financial reforms with Japanese municipal governments and hope the County can be like an adviser or friend to them as they work to overcome similar problems.

CLAIR Report No. 376, “Learning from successful financial reform in St. Lucie County, Florida”

[Summary in English](#)

[Full Version in Japanese](#)

With sincere gratitude to St. Lucie County for my report,

Naomi Maki, Assistant Director, Representative of the City of Hiroshima