



JLGC NEWSLETTER

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CLAIR FELLOWSHIP 2013

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The 2013 CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program was held from October 27 to November 5

For many years, this program has been affording senior state and local government officials an opportunity to experience Japanese government administration first hand. This year the program was held in Tokyo and Tokushima Prefecture.

Recently, many more tourists have visited Tokushima Prefecture from North America than from any other country, and they have become one of the most important audiences for the Tokushima Prefectural Government's tourism promotion efforts. Now, promoting tourism has become an important issue for local governments in Tokushima, improving not only the local economy but also reenergizing the local communities.

Participants held discussions, especially on the tourism industry, and they experienced home-stays and traditional Japanese culture.

We are very happy to be able to present reflections on this year's exchange by each participant. We have included the first four in this issue and will bring you the remaining four in the next issue.



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Mr. David FRASHER, City Manager, City of Oregon

I had the pleasure of visiting Japan for the first time as a participant in the 2013 CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program. This experience has forever changed and enlightened my view of Japan, its people, and its relationship to the rest of the world.

CLAIR and Tokushima government staff did an amazing job planning and coordinating a diverse array of events and activities for us in both Tokyo and Tokushima Prefecture. We learned about Japan's governmental structure and about tourism efforts in Tokushima. The natural and cultural wonders of Japan, and its rich history, impressed all of the members of our delegation. The knowledge exchange events were a terrific opportunity to listen, to learn and to share.

Among the highlights of the trip were the homestay with a Tokushima family, visiting the temples, the Awa dance, and the Japanese cuisine, prepared and served more like a form of art than a mere meal, especially when compared to what we are accustomed to in western cultures. That said, the single most impressive part of my experience were my interactions with the Japanese people. Throughout our trip, they demonstrated kindness, hospitality, creativity, customer service, work ethic and respect at a level that I did not know existed anywhere in the world. In these ways, Japan overwhelmed us and made it appear effortless.

Now, more than ever, I am eager to send others from my community to visit Japan and to exchange hosting opportunities with our long-standing Sister City, Tateshina. I am eager to recommend the CLAIR Fellowship exchange to my fellow City Managers in the future.

**Ms. Heather MORTON, Program Principal, Fiscal Affairs Program, National Conference of State Legislatures**

As a participant in the recent 2014 CLAIR Exchange and Cooperation Seminar in Tokyo and Tokushima Prefecture, I learned that state and local governments in Japan and the United States face remarkably similar economic development challenges, despite the thousands of miles between them.

The purpose of the event, to raise awareness of local governments in Japan, brought together professionals from government and related organizations. It turned out to be an incredible opportunity and a huge success!

Tokushima Prefecture combines urban development with its rich agricultural resources. During our time in the prefecture, we were able to enjoy many of the unique fish, fruits and vegetables grown there, including my personal favorite, the citrus fruit sudachi. As part of our seminar, we toured the

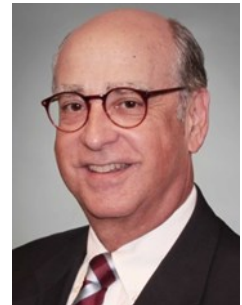


first two Buddhist temples on the Shikoku Pilgrimage, several museums, businesses and other local landmarks.

Everyone we met on the trip was gracious, welcoming, and went above and beyond to demonstrate and explain their culture. I am profoundly grateful to have participated in the 2014 seminar.

Mr. Ken STROBECK, Executive Director, League of Arizona Cities and Towns

My trip to Japan for the CLAIR program and tour was a wonderful once in a lifetime experience. Since returning to the US, I have had many opportunities to share my impressions and firsthand observations about our time in Tokyo and Tokushima Prefecture. I have had people tell me that Japan is one of their highest-priority destinations, and after hearing about my visit, they are even more enthusiastic about traveling there.



The staff of CLAIR and the officials from Tokushima Prefecture did an excellent job of making efficient use of our time and packing it full of interesting sights, sounds and tastes. We traveled hundreds of miles and were privileged to not only do sightseeing, but actually participate in activities such as papermaking, indigo dyeing, doing the Awa Odori dance and crossing the vine bridge.

I have a far greater appreciation for the culture and people of Japan as a result of my CLAIR trip and I am truly grateful for the opportunity.

Mr. Jonathan STEINER, Executive Director, Kentucky League of Cities

I have spent my entire career focused on cities and city issues. For me, a chance to visit Japan was a chance to see how one of the most dense urban countries in the world is able to function. While I was impressed with the friendliness of the People, I was equally impressed with the urban planning. Whether in Tokyo or Tokushima each city is able to serve its citizens and visitors efficiently. For example, in front of our Tokyo hotel, street repairs took place during the evening hours so as not to impede the busy daytime traffic. Each evening at 9 pm, the crew would appear and go about their work—digging, hauling, and repairing. In the morning, the crew would be gone, the street repaved and restriped as if nothing had happened. This is not the norm in U.S. cities. Subways were efficient and neighborhoods had an excellent mixed use of retail, residential and office space. My memories of Japan will always be the people, the food and the culture...but seeing the cities gave me a new perspective on how different ideas for solving common challenges can be a benefit of exchanges such as the CLAIR program.



The 2013 JETAA USA National Conference in Minnesota

JETAAMN, or the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme Alumni Association of Minnesota, is the 18th out of the 19 U.S. JETAA chapters. Minnesota has traditionally been a good contributor in regards to the number of participants we send each year on the JET Programme (in relation to our size), which is why our local Alumni Association, JETAAMN, is a bit more on the active side!

JETAAMN has over 350 members on their roster, and the chapter hosts several events throughout the year for these members, such as: a JET Programme Q&A for accepted participants, a Send-Off BBQ, a Welcome Back Dinner, a Japanese Cooking Class, a Japan Career Day, networking events, and many other fun and cultural events. We heartily encourage all members to come to our events as we are a social, cultural, and career networking support system for returnees, and it doesn't hurt that all of us can relate to the funny story of "That one time in Japan...."

This year, Minnesota stepped up to the plate and decided to host the 2013 JETAA National Conference. Every year held in a different city and hosted by one of the 19 U.S. chapters, it's an excellent time for JETAA Chapter Board Members to come together to share ideas, learn, network, plan, and feed off the energy of each other. As a wonderfully inspiring four-day conference, it revs up the engines of local chapters, motivating them to work even harder to implement new ideas learned at the conference and improve their chapters back home.

It was a yearlong process of planning and hard work, and then finally, on September 26th, the conference arrived. Two delegates from each of the 19 chapters, traditionally the president and treasurer, come to the conference, along with the Consul General of the nearest Japan Consulate, a representative from the Ambassador's Office from the Japanese Embassy in Washington D.C., and several other special representatives.

The conference started off with a bang with a keynote address at the opening reception on the evening of the 26th by former Vice President & Ambassador Walter F. Mondale. He gave an inspiring, rousing, and friendly keynote that was praised by all. It set the tone for the ensuing four days. The remaining time of workshops, think tanks, panels, and receptions went incredibly well and exceeded expectations of JETAAMN's board. And then all of a sudden, it was noon on Sunday the 29th, and all the delegates were going home. Where did the time go?

We invite you to learn more about the JET Programme and JETAAMN at the jetprogramme.org and jetaamn.org or the JETAAMN Facebook and Twitter pages.



Liz Brailsford

JETAAMN President, Niigata Prefecture, 2004-2007

Introduction of New JLGC Staff

Hello, everyone. I am Atsushi Inumaru, the new Deputy Executive Director of Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York). I have the distinct pleasure and honor of succeeding former Deputy Executive Director Hotaka Kawasaki, who is now working as the Counselor at the Cabinet Legislation Bureau, Government of Japan.

I have worked for the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC) for the past 16 years where I specialized in local government administration. Most recently, I served as the Deputy Director of the Local Public Service Personnel Department at MIC, where I was engaged in restructuring the public pension system for local government employees. Here in the United States, many local governments, including the City of Detroit, are facing severe fiscal problems caused by public pensions. As a pension expert, I am really interested in how those local governments will tackle the problem of pension reform.

In addition to my work at MIC in Tokyo, I have worked for two prefectures: Shizuoka and Hokkaido. As I was born and raised in Tokyo, these experiences have given me a better understanding of Japan as a whole. After all, Japan is not only Tokyo, just as the US is not only New York. At the Shizuoka prefectural government, as Director of the Finance Division, I had experience with preparing its annual budget of nearly 10 billion dollars, which covered all the policy areas in which Shizuoka Prefecture is involved, such as regional development, economic promotion, environmental protection, education, social security and public security. This experience gave me a chance to deepen my understanding of actual local government administration practices and issues.

Actually, this is my second visit to the United States. I attended graduate school at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy from 2004 to 2005, and then I was at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government from 2005 to 2006. My college days both in Ann Arbor, MI, and Cambridge, MA, were so memorable for me and my family. My two little daughters, both preschoolers at the time we left the US, have continued to study English for the last seven years, always believing that they would come back to the US eventually. And now we are back.

As the Deputy Executive Director of JLGC, I've already had opportunities to attend the CSG annual conference held in Kansas City and the JETAA USA National Conference held in Minneapolis, where I met some of you. During my tenure, I am going to attend many other conferences and events, so I hope to see many of you somewhere in the US or Canada sometime soon.



Atsushi Inumaru

Deputy Executive Director

*2013 JETAANY Career Forum & Welcome Reception
in New York*

On November 23rd, the JETAANY Career Forum and Welcome Reception were held at the Nippon Club, in New York. The main guests were the former JET Programme participants who had just come back to the US last summer.

In the Career Forum, they heard a talk on career development given by some senior JET alumni and met many job recruiters. We hope this was all very helpful for them. This was followed by the Welcome Reception.



The JETAANY Career Forum and Welcome Reception was an incredible event. I truly felt welcomed and supported by the JET alumni community.

The Career Forum was a great way to learn about different job search techniques and opportunities available. I was truly impressed by the breadth of fields that the alumni community represents. I definitely applied skills I learned to my job search.

After the Career Forum it was nice to relax a little with the greater Japanese community in New York City. We felt very welcomed and honored that so many people came to meet us. The Japanese food was delicious, and I met many interesting people. My first experience with the JETAANY community made me very excited for future events!

Ellen Abramowitz, Shiga-ken 2012-2013



When I attended the JET Career Forum I had already been back in America for about two months and was yet still looking for my next job. I had become a little disheartened about the job search, but over the course of the presentations in the morning and reception in the evening my spirits rose much higher. I was only then beginning to learn how, in New York, not only the JET community, but also the Japanese community is very large and very strong. I found myself surrounded by many sympathetic ears and formed many new friendships and connections that I did not imagine possible previously. Of course I understood there would be a reception after the Forum, but I was surprised by how many people, and how many non-JETs attended it. There were not only people from Japanese communities in New York, but also people from the Japanese government, and even groups of Japanese teachers of English visiting America for their studies. All of them were so happy to meet us and welcome us to New York. I was so happy I had a chance to meet a few teachers from Kyoto, where I taught for JET, one of whom I had met previously at a seminar. By the end of the reception, I was thrilled that I felt such strong connections to so many new people simply through my experience on the JET Program and I was excited for the next chapter of my life exploring many opportunities.

Julio Perez Jr., Kyoto City 2011-2013



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