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*"MATSUE- NEW ORLEANS"
EXCHANGE PROGRAM*

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TOMODACHI "Matsue- New Orleans" Exchange Program

From August 2-11, 2014, a delegation group from Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture of Japan, visited their sister-city, New Orleans, Louisiana.

In New Orleans, they experienced a great variety of activities from an official courtesy call to the New Orleans Mayor's Office to hanging out on Frenchman Street, the jazz music center of New Orleans.

They also could have an opportunity to visit several places related to a writer Lafcadio Hearn, who lived in Matsue and New Orleans and who is the key as to why both cities became sister cities in 1994.

Of course, they didn't forget to try the taste of New Orleans, such as Gumbo, Oysters, BBQ Shrimps and even a café au lait and beignets at historical Café Du Monde.

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

3 Park Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10016-5902
212.246.5542 office • 212.246.5617 fax
www.jlgc.org

The delegation consisted of 8 participants to the TOMODACHI Exchange Program and also 2 city officials who accompanied them. These 8 various participants, who were selected by Matsue City, are young adults who live or work in Matsue and are going to be involved in sister city activities between Matsue and New Orleans after the exchange program finishes.

The word “TOMODACHI” means a friendship in Japanese. It was named “TOMODACHI Exchange”, since this exchange program was supported by the “TOMODACHI Initiative” which is a public – private partnership, born out of support for Japan’s recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake. It invests in the next generation of Japanese and American leaders through educational and cultural exchanges.



The delegation group presented a bottle of Japanese Sake with some message to Mr. Mike Turner, President of the Japan Society of New Orleans.



A picture which was taken at New Orleans Mayor’s office

Planning for this exchange program dates back to a year ago, in October 2013, when Matsue City held a ceremony to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its sister city affiliation with New Orleans. Matsue invited several guests from New Orleans for this celebration.

One of the guests was Ms. Donna Fraiche, The Honorary Consul General of Japan in New Orleans. Through the visit to Matsue, she learnt a great deal about significance of the sister city relationship between both cities and, as a result, she strongly supported bringing about this TOMODACHI exchange program.

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Her strong support helped people from both cities connect together. People in New Orleans who have a relationship with Japan set up a voluntary organization to invite the City of Matsue and its residents to New Orleans. It is proudly named “Matsue - New Orleans TOMODACHI Exchange”. (The Chair is Mr. Mike Turner, President of the Japan Society of New Orleans; the Co-Chair is Ms. Flora Williams, Secretary of JET Program Alumni Association, New Orleans Chapter.) Many individuals and organizations, such as the Japan Club of New Orleans, the Japanese Garden Foundation of New Orleans and the New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, also joined the “Matsue - New Orleans TOMODACHI Exchange” and are working together.

This ten-day exchange program was so successful. At the farewell reception held at Mr. Mike Turner’s residence, both members of Matsue City delegation and “Matsue - New Orleans TOMODACHI Exchange” couldn’t hold back their tears and made a strong promise to see each other again in the future.

These days communication technology has improved and new methods such as texting, e-mailing and social media have been rapidly replacing face-to-face communication. But, meeting and talking with people directly are still very important and essential to foster a relationship of mutual trust. We, the Japan Local Government Center in New York, hope to help strengthen Matsue and New Orleans’s wonderful and active relationship.



A group photo which was taken at closing reception

“Rising Tohoku Food Fair” at Mitsuwa Marketplace stores



Mitsuwa Marketplace store in California

Six cities in the Tohoku region in Japan jointly staged food fairs in four U.S. cities in October, featuring local foods and products from a region hard hit by the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami in 2011. The event, named “Rising Tohoku Food Fair,” was held for eight days from October 16th to October 19th and October 23rd to October 26th at Mitsuwa Marketplace stores in two cities in California, and in New Jersey and Illinois.

Iwate beef, apple juice, sliced radish pickles and other local specialties from Aomori, Morioka, Sendai, Akita, Yamagata and Fukushima were demonstrated and sold.

A highlight of this event was held in the Torrance Mitsuwa Marketplace store. There people could see examples of some of Tohoku’s representative festivals, including the Sendai Tanabata Festival, the Morioka Sansa Dance, the Yamagata Hanagasa Dance. What a surprise it was for the big crowd of shoppers.



Mitsuwa Marketplace store in California

The Rising Tohoku Food Fair was held at Mitsuwa Marketplace in New Jersey from October 23rd to 26th. I went to this event with some Miyagi prefectural officers to tell about the recovery situation from the big 2011 earthquake and tsunami, to distribute Miyagi brochures to the customers, and to watch how this event was going and what products were most popular. In this event a lot of Tohoku foods were sold, such as Haginotsuki from Miyagi Prefecture, and Babahera ice cream from Akita Prefecture. Many customers at Mitsuwa were Japanese, so they knew the Tohoku region and Miyagi Prefecture, and of course, Tohoku foods. Some Japanese customers said these foods were rare and difficult to get in the US. Many non-Japanese customers also came to Mitsuwa, and it seemed that they preferred the foods which are easy to eat, such as Manjuu (stuffed buns) more than the frozen foods, which aren't familiar to them.

Unfortunately, I couldn't be at Mitsuwa during the entire event, but I heard it was a great success. I think this kind of event gives energy to Tohoku, so I hope the food fair will be held next year, too.



Rising Tohoku Food Fair



Distributing Miyagi brochures

The 2014 JETAA National Conference in Seattle

The annual JETAA National Conference was held in Seattle from September 19th to 21st. The delegates from nineteen JETAA chapters in the US, JETAABC in Vancouver, and country representatives from the US and Canada gathered for this conference and discussed many topics. Moreover, Ms. Paige Cottingham-Streater and Laurel Lukaszewski from US-Japan Bridging Foundation, Mr. Yukio Tada from Keizai Doyukai, and Wesley Julian and Daniel Martin, who created “Tohoku Tomo”, attended this conference as speakers.

Ms. Cottingham-Streater and Ms. Lukaszewski talked about their efforts to create a national non-profit organization for the alumni. They suggested registering JETAA USA as a 501(c)3 organization, in order to be exempted from taxes and to encourage donations. It is important that Board members have knowledge and experience about law, accounting, and other issues, and to keep JETAA USA as an independent association. And they proposed that all members of JETAA USA pay a membership fee from \$25 to \$50. It was clearly stated that this association will not interfere in each chapter's activities. Attendees seemed to like almost all their suggestions, so it is thought they will keep discussing the details, such as Board members, membership fees, and how to share JETAA members' information.



Ms. Paige Cottingham-Streater

Mr. Tada spoke about the business possibilities between Japanese companies and JET participants. According to a Keizai Doyukai report released this January, only around 20% of Japanese companies know about the JET Program. However, over 90% of them are interested in and would like to know more about JET participants. Furthermore, he said that most consulates and foreign companies that have branches in Japan hire JET alumni. He also said JET participants have the potential to work for Japanese companies as well. One possible problem is matching JET participants with Japanese companies, so I hope they will find an appropriate way to work with each other on this.



Mr. Yukio Tada



Mr. Wesley Julian (left) and Daniel Martin (right)

Mr. Julian and Mr. Martin made a presentation about their film "Tohoku Tomo". "Tohoku Tomo" stands for the people who love the Tohoku region in Japan. There is no restriction on becoming a "Tohoku Tomo", such as the place you were born or any involvement in the region. In this presentation, they introduced us to the Tohoku Tomo documentary film, in which they recorded some volunteers who did activities for the Tohoku region in Japan to help recover from the big earthquake and tsunami in 2011. You can see their activity on the website below, please check it and become a "Tohoku Tomo"!

<http://tohokutomo.com/>

JETAANY Career Forum and JET Welcome Back Reception

The JETAANY Career Forum was held at the Nippon Club on September 27th. This event is usually held on the same day as the returning JET reception, but JETAANY held it earlier this year in order to be more effective for returning JET job applicants. In this event, JETAANY members explained how to write a resume, how to interview with prospective employers, and so on. For example, they pointed out that job applicants should keep their social media sites and online reputations appropriate for the general public, because they said recruiters can see them and find out whether the applicants are fit for their company or not. And they said it is also important to answer with a few key examples when interviewers ask certain questions.



Career Forum

Then, returning JETs had a panel discussion with JETAANY members to talk about their experiences, when they came back to the US. Some JETAANY members told returning JETs about the Peace Boat, as one job possibility. They also mentioned the strength of knowing Japanese culture, because it is required to communicate effectively with Japanese people when they work for a Japanese company. Volunteering is also important, because it is a chance to expand their exposure to possible recruiters. One of the panelists met their current boss during volunteering. After the panel discussion, they talked with the Japanese recruiters who are interested in hiring JETs, and there seemed to be very active communication between the returning JETs and Japanese recruiters.

The JET Welcome Back Reception was then held at the Ambassador's residence on October 21, almost one month after the JETAANY Career Forum. There were 106 attendees, including 16 returning JETs, 8 JUSTEs, who are Japanese teachers of English in Japan who are interning at universities in the US, and 17 Japanese recruiters. Ambassador Kusaka gave a welcome speech for returning JETs and a brief introduction about JETAA. Then, Mr. Tatsuta, who is Executive Director of CLAIR New York, gave his great thanks for their efforts to improve the relationship between the US and Japan. Ms. Monica Yuki, who is the president of JETAANY, also welcomed the returning JETs and invited them to join JETAA in order to stay in touch with Japan and to support their great careers. At this reception, returning JETs had a good opportunity to get in touch with Japan-related entities, such as the consulate, Japanese companies, and the kenjin-kai (prefecture associations).



Ambassador Kusaka



Ms. Monica Yuki