



# JLGC NEWSLETTER

Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York)

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JLGC STAFF MEMBERS

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Map of Oshima, Japan

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## 1. Introduction of New JLGC Staff



**Yoshihiro Akagi**

Executive Director, Representative of  
Tokyo Metropolitan Government

It is with great happiness I am able to introduce myself to all of you. I am Yoshihiro Akagi, the new executive director of the Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York). I took over the post from my predecessor, Wataru Tozawa, on April 9, 2018.

I have been working about thirty years for Tokyo Metropolitan Government and have experienced many kinds of jobs. They have been in varied offices, such as infrastructure, housing policy, traffic safety, and youth problems. The most impressive job I was in charge of recently was as the senior director of the Oshima branch office. Tokyo Metropolitan Government administers not only its large urban area but also some small isolated islands, south of the mainland.

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Camellias in Oshima Island

Oshima Island is the biggest of them, although it only has 8,000 residents. (Among the islands the Oshima branch office administers, Toshima Island, the smallest one, has only 300 residents.) We tried to make Oshima Island known to the world as “the one and only unique ‘camellia’ island”. I am happy to say that camellias are now making Oshima a famous tourist site.

The Japan Local Government Center (JLGC) will mark its 30th anniversary next year. The

opening ceremony of our office was held on November 9th, 1989, the very day the People’s Republic of East Germany declared that East Germans would be free to pass through the Berlin Wall – the demolition of the Wall started on that same day. Indeed, it was really a symbolic day on which people all over the world were impressed by the advent of a new period of unity worldwide, instead of a world separated by divisions. (Germany was formally re-unified one year later.)

As for JLGC, we were only a small organization at that time and even now are still working as a small team. I think, however, we should be proud of such a birthday for our office, in so far as we are working also to enhance international exchange and communication at the local and grassroots level.

In these thirty years, we have always been endeavoring to build a tight and strong network, not only person to person but also government to government and their respective organizations in North America. You, now reading this newsletter, are our most important ‘treasure’. But for your great and continuous support, the various government officials in the United States of America and Canada, the JET alumni, and all that are willing to work with us, we could not have achieved our mission so successfully. We cannot emphasize enough how much we are grateful to all of you for your support and collaboration.

There is an old saying in China and Japan, “温故知新 可以為師矣”, which is loosely translated as, “those who can see the future in the study of the past should lead”. I think it is important for us to review, at this moment in time, what we have achieved and what is still to be done. Moreover, we should make it clear what we should achieve in our next thirty years. I shall do my best in this new assignment and try to contribute to a better relationship between local governments in North America and Japan. Again, I express my greatest gratitude to all who have supported us, and I beg you to keep on working with us, at the grassroots level, to realize good mutual understanding and meaningful exchange between North America and Japan.





## Kumiko Takayama

Assistant Director, Representative of  
Hanamaki City, Iwate Prefecture

Hello, my name is Kumiko Takayama. I'm from 'HANAMAKI' City, Iwate Prefecture. I just came to New York this April and will work

here for two years. This is my first time to live in the US and I am really excited to meet many people. Today, I'd like to introduce myself and my hometown to you.

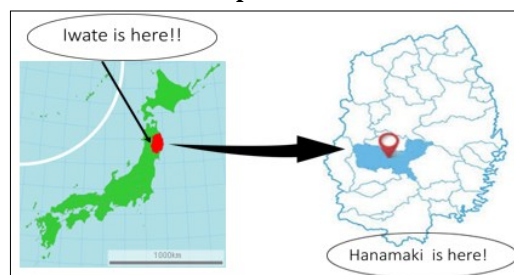
I like to play the Koto, a traditional Japanese music instrument. I have been playing the Koto since I was in junior high school and I'm also practicing it here because my teacher's daughter is actively teaching Koto in NY. I'm very happy, and if I get the chance, I'd like to perform.

Well, let's move on to talk about my hometown.

Hanamaki City is in the northern part of Japan. The climate is similar to NY, and there is snow in the winter.

## Sights and Culture

I'd like you to come to the Hanamaki Festival because it has plenty to see and has a long history of about 400 years since it was started to honor the founders of the town. The Festival is held every September and attracts large crowds. I'm sure you will find it exciting.



(Left) Deer Dance (Shishiodori): This dance is said to be a requiescat for deer.

(Middle) Resplendent festival floats

(Right) The Mikoshi parade is listed in the Guinness World Records.

## Experience

You can experience a relaxing time at a hot spring. The Hanamaki hot spring area has a lot of Ryokan. Ryokan are accommodations, and some of them are located along the river, so you hear the sound of a brook and take in a scenic overlook of snow in winter.

In addition, when you stay at a Ryokan you can enjoy a delicious meal. Currently, young farmers and owners of Ryokan are trying a new project known as the “Asa Gohan Project” (Breakfast Project). What it really means is, “Let’s eat breakfast with locally grown ingredients at a Ryokan”. Enjoy your stay!



(Left) A riverside Ryokan (Right) A delicious meal at a Ryokan

## **Local Specialties**

Surrounded by beautiful nature, we have pure water and delicious foods such rice, millet and fruits. We are the largest millet producer in Japan. We also make good sake, wine and syochu. Naturally the sake made here with the highest quality rice and water by the skills of the master brewers is popular, but so is the wine made at the local wineries with grapes grown in Hanamaki.



Sake and sushi are a good pairing.

## **Finally**

I’m looking forward to talking with you!!

## **More information!!**

< Hanamaki Tourism Official Website >

<http://www.hanamaki-tono-hiraizumi.jp/>

< About Hanamaki City > You can see more details about Hanamaki!

<http://www.hanamakicity.com/>

< About “Asa Gohan Project” > It is Japanese only, but you can see the YouTube!

<https://asagohan-hanamaki.com/>

< Hanamaki Festival >

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wPZJICSuYQ>





## Shinori Nagasawa

Assistant Director, Representative of  
Miyagi Prefecture

Hello, everyone. My name is Shinori Nagasawa. I'm from MIYAGI Prefecture, located in the northeastern part of Japan. It takes only about one and a

half hours from Tokyo by bullet train to get there, and I think it's one of the most beautiful and comfortable places in Japan.

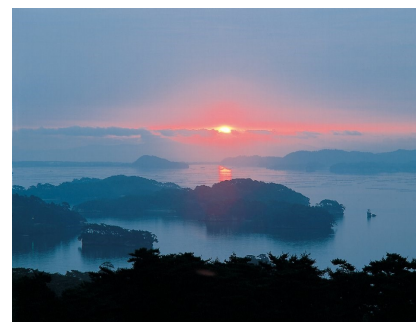
Today I'll introduce some of Miyagi's attractions – nature and food!!

### Nature

First of all, let me tell you how great Miyagi's nature is, located in the Tohoku area, facing the Pacific Ocean. We can enjoy amazing nature and scenery throughout the year.

#### **"Matsushima – the most scenic spot in Japan"**

Along the coast, Matsushima is known as a one of the three most scenic spots in Japan, where hundreds of islands of all sizes and shapes are floating in the bay. It is also beautiful when lit by the moonlight, or covered with snow. I am fond of enjoying the sunrise from a hot spring! In addition, sightseeing cruises provide passengers with the opportunity to see these islands up close.



#### **"Zao – spectacular natural amusement"**

The Zao is a mountainous region located in southwestern Miyagi. We can enjoy hiking around the beautiful circular crater lake there, and especially in winter it is a perfect place to enjoy skiing, snowboarding, bathing in a hot spring, and visiting "Snow Monsters", giant trees covered with snow that look like monsters. They are a mysterious natural phenomenon only seen on a few mountains in Japan.



Additionally these days, the Zao is getting more popular thanks to the Zao Fox Village, which is a paradise for lovers of cute foxes. Dozens of foxes roam free, and visitors can pet, feed, and walk among them!



## **“Reconstruction tourism”**

Nature can be a serious threat against people. In 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami disaster hit Miyagi. Thanks to your warm and kind-hearted support from many countries, we are now moving forward with reconstruction and the further development of the region for the future. If you travel in Miyagi, I would like you to visit new and reconstructed towns and communities there such as Ishinomaki and Onagawa.

## **Foods**

As I mentioned above, Miyagi is surrounded by rich nature, which also gives us gifts of high-quality ingredients.

### **“Seafood”**

Miyagi has many fishing ports. Off the coast there are abundant marine treasures, especially bonitos, oysters, saury and so on. Fresh fish is used as sushi, the traditional fish cake “Sasakamaboko”, and many types of cuisine. In my opinion, oysters, seared bonito and local “Matsushima beer” is the best combination!



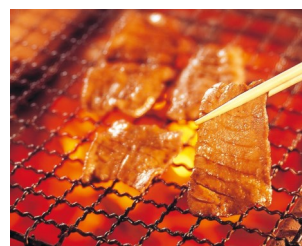
### **“Rice and Sake”**

Miyagi is one of the major rice-producing regions in Japan. It is known as the motherland of the high-quality rice varieties “Sasanishiki” and “Hitomebore”. Fine rice and fresh water combine to make supreme Japanese sake. In Miyagi there are dozens of breweries, and each of them is making original sake. We can enjoy drinking them with sushi, sashimi, and all other kinds of cuisine.



### **“And More”**

Beef Tongue, which is an original dish in the capital city Sendai, is one of my favorite foods. I also love Zunda-Mochi, which is a local sweet made with mochi (sticky rice cake) and topped with mashed and sweetened edamame beans. It has a beautiful, even green color.



Thank you for reading! I still have so many more favorite things in Miyagi I want to write about here but there's no more room. So, for farther information, please go to the link below:

Miyagi Touring Navigation!! <http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kankou/en/>

Travel to Tohoku <http://en.tohokukanko.jp/>



## 2. JET Program 30th Anniversary Events

The JET Program began in 1987 with 848 participants from 4 countries. Started with the goals of enriching foreign language education, promoting mutual understanding between Japan and foreign countries, and furthering the internationalization of Japan's local regions, the JET Program has grown to one of the largest exchange programs in the world, with 5,163 people from 44 countries participating in 2017. In total, more than 66,000 people from 67 countries have participated over the Program's 30 year history.

To celebrate the Program's 30 years, many of JETAA's American and Canadian chapters held JET Program 30th Anniversary events, and we will introduce these events, held between 2017 and 2018, in the following pages.





## JETAABC British Columbia & Yukon



### JETAABC's JET 30 Celebration

On August 26, 2017, JETAABC hosted its JET30 Celebration—an epic trifecta of activities. Alumni from PNWJETAA, including one of the JETAAUSA Country Reps, drove up in the morning to participate in the day's festivities.

To kick start the day, alumni joined the JETAABC-sponsored Jubilee Samurai Twinkie dragonboat team on the waters of False Creek for a paddling workshop. New paddlers learned quickly, as was evident in the close finishes during the friendly races. After a delicious brunch, these participants rushed to join other participants for the start of JETAABC's Racy Thirty Team Race. JET alumni and their friends really stepped up their game and challenged themselves with a healthy dose of video scavenger hunting. From meditating in a city fountain to teaching interested strangers how to write their own names in katakana, participants enthusiastically celebrated 30 years of the JET Programme through sharing their passions and what they loved most about their time in Japan with local Vancouverites and tourists.

An eventful day to celebrate JET's 30th Anniversary would not have been complete without a reception to cap it off! The JETAABC Reconnect! Reception took place at the YWCA Hotel in Vancouver. The event provided opportunities for JET alumni around BC and the Pacific Northwest, their family and friends, as well as guests from the local Japanese community, to mix and mingle. Everyone enjoyed the photo and video highlights from the afternoon's Racy Thirty Team Race. Participants left with a day filled with new experiences, various natsukashii moments and more stories to share about how JET continues to play out in their current lives.



## JETAA Toronto



### JETAA Toronto's 30th Anniversary Scavenger Hunt

*Did you know that Canada's reference library was designed by Raymond Moriyama? Or that mural outside of Sanko was done by four Japanese artists? Have you ever spotted the cherry blossom trees on the University of Toronto campus?*

*On Saturday, September 30th, 2017, JETAA Toronto celebrated the 30th Anniversary of the JET Programme with a sweet scavenger hunt around our beautiful city. Teams raced against the clock and across town, decoding clever clues to find locations to snap their shot and check off their lists. Armed only with TTC day passes and their wits, any of the teams could have triumphed! Congratulations to our winning team - Vesper and Liz - who took their prize in Japan-related stuff!*

*All participants were winners, though, as they found our lovely volunteers at selected store locations. JETAA bought the teams taiyaki, onigiri, and small trinkets to relive those halcyon days in Japan at select stores including Muji, Sanko, PAT, and Things Japan.*

*The time of reckoning came at the Duke of York where we welcomed back the teams and returning JETs, transitioning into the Returner's Pub Night. Celebrating a fun-filled day with an evening of snacks and camaraderie, it was a great time to play some Cards Against Humanity, make new friends and catch up with the awesome human beings that are former JETs.*

*While the day officially ended there, Nuit Blanche provided an exciting nijikai for all who had some energy left, with charming and thought-provoking displays erected across the city to capture hearts and minds. We look forward to the next big milestone and hope to celebrate the JET Programme for years to come.*



## JETAA Southern California



### JETAASC's 30th Anniversary Event

On December 3rd, 2017, the JET Alumni Association of Southern California and Arizona held our 30th Anniversary Celebration in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. Taking place at the Japanese Culture and Community Center, in the beautiful James Irvine Japanese Garden, the event was attended by former JETs, their families, and surrounding community members.

For activities, we held a storytelling contest in the style of "The Moth", guided Japanese flower arranging (Ikebana), and enjoyed wonderful Japanese performances by various community groups featuring Shamisen, Taiko, and traditional song and dance.

For refreshments, we enjoyed sushi, fresh-cooked yakisoba, and wagashi, provided by Marukai, JET alumni, and one of the oldest family-run shops in Little Tokyo, Fugetsudo, respectively. JET alumni also led a guided saké tasting, with saké provided by Mutual Trading Company, and home-brewed, craft beer was freely offered by alumnus, Ken Mukai. It was a great way for former JETs to come together, with the support of the community, share stories of their time in Japan, and celebrate Japanese culture and the JET Programme.

Since its founding by Nancy Kikuchi, the JET Alumni Association of Southern California and Arizona has been one of the staples of post-JET life in Los Angeles. As a certified non-profit organization, JETAASC has expanded our scope by offering not only professional and social opportunities to JET alumni, but also educational and philanthropic support to the greater Southwest region. We are responsible for organizing and assisting JETs in all of Southern California and Arizona.

The JET Alumni Association of Southern California and Arizona is glad to be a part of the fabric of the Southwest region. We will continue to find new ways of reaching out to both the JET and Japanese communities, sharing our experiences and knowledge of Japan with our communities. We are proud of our 30 year history, and looking forward to the next 30 years!



## JETAA Florida



### *The Florida JET30th Reunion & Networker*

*The Florida JET30th Reunion & Networker was held on February 24th at the Park Inn by Radisson in Kissimmee and was a complete success! The morning began with a light breakfast as alumni and guests registered and made their way to the Sawgrass Room. The event gave the 30 alumni and guests a chance to reconnect, reminisce, and network with each other. As they entered, alumni could take "kawaii" photos at the special photography station and purchase raffle tickets for a variety of prizes. Alumni were also encouraged to find their town on the map of Japan. It was an incredibly diverse mix of attendees, from those who were a part of the inaugural year of JET to some who have recently returned from Japan. The Japan Association of Orlando and representatives from Tampa Natsumatsuri were there to provide information about how Japan enthusiasts can take part in local events celebrating culture.*

*The program kicked off as JETAA-FL President Lauren Sorondo read a message from the Consul General of Japan. The first panel discussion on US-Japan Relations was presented by Laurel Lukaszewski and Matt Gillam and touched on how the US-Japan relationship has been strengthened by the JET Programme. After a networking break and light refreshments, the second panel discussion began. JET Career Development was discussed by Kyle Litow, Eboni Staton, Hilary Brown, and Michael Maloney, all former JETs who used their experience in Japan to move on to fascinating careers in a variety of fields.*

*From across the state, alumni gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the JET Programme. It was a fantastic day to reflect on the remarkable achievements of JET alumni both during their time in Japan and upon their return to Florida. JET30th encouraged alumni to celebrate this incredible experience and the lasting memories it has given everyone who took part.*



## JETAA New York



### JETAANY's 30th Anniversary GALA

On February 3, 2018, JETAANY hosted a gala celebrating 30 years of the JET Program. Held at the Dumbo Loft, a historic building near the Manhattan Bridge in Brooklyn, the event welcomed 130 guests. The group included not only members from JETAANY and all three of its subchapters (Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New Jersey), but also JET alumni from six different JETAA chapters (including at least five chapter VPs or Presidents) and two of the three JETAA USA country representatives. JETAANY was delighted to also host CLAIR NY staff, representatives from the Consulate-General of Japan in NY, and USJETAA board members at the event and as part of our program. To make it even more special, other senpai alumni and alumni who could not attend in person participated by sending messages by video.

There were many highlights of the evening, and some of them included: a live taiko performance; a traditional kagami biraki barrel-breaking ceremony; an awards ceremony honoring JETAANY's dedicated senpai and the contributions of local alumni; an introduction to Setsubun (also February 3!) with a priest from the NY Buddhist Center; speeches highlighting the JET Program's many years of successful grassroots exchange, its positive impact on U.S.-Japan relations, and the significance of our future connections; a photo booth; a fundraising prize drawing; and specialty cocktails with a delicious formal dinner, live music, and dancing with both new and old friends.

The event was a success, but it would not have been possible without the strong support of CLAIR, Sasakawa USA, USJETAA, and the network of JETAANY alumni. JETAANY would like to thank you, our volunteers, the planning board, as well as everyone that could make it—either in person or in spirit! JET means so much to all of us and we look forward to the next 30 years!



## JETAA Southern Alberta



### JETAA Southern Alberta 30th Anniversary Event

*It was hard to believe that the JET Programme was turning 30 years old. It was now an "adult" program that has grown and changed a lot since its inception. The JET Alumni Association SA decided to have our event at the Consul General's residence on March 8th, 2018. We filled the room with photos of Japan from a photo contest. The bar was stocked with sake. About 60 people attended, many of them JET alumni. Some of the JET alumni were from the beginning years of the program. It was nice to see that their time on JET was still a fond memory, just as much as the newer returnees. To start the evening the Chair of our alumni group spoke about his time on JET, which was followed by a "Kanpai" toast. Happily, the local Odori group was able to perform 2 graceful dances that brought a nostalgic moment for us, as many of us saw similar dances performed in Japanese summer festivals. Finally, everyone mingled, ate Japanese food, and talked fondly about their experiences in Japan. It was a great event that really brought many kinds of JET alumni together. It was clear to see that the JET Programme really changed the direction of many people's lives, as conversations buzzed around the room. Our hope is that the JET Programme will continue to evolve as the relationship between Japan and the English world changes. Here is to another 30 years of a strong Canada and Japan relationship.*