



JLGC NEWSLETTER

Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York)

Issue No. 96 / June 2019

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What is JLGC?

Japan Local Government Center, New York, works on behalf of prefecture and local governments in Japan to provide them with research and liaison services to support their efforts to adopt best practices in local public administration and to help them achieve their goals in fostering better international relations.

1. Introduction of New JLGC Staff



Takahiro Ando

Counsellor / Deputy Executive Director / Representative of Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

Hello, everyone. I am Takahiro Ando, the new Deputy Executive Director of Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York). I feel genuinely honored to be here in the United States as the successor to the former Deputy Executive Director, Fukutomi-san. To be honest, this is my first visit to this country and I am positive that there will be wonderful encounters from which I can learn different ways of seeing the world.

My Career

Since I joined the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication (MIC) in 2004, which is responsible for local governance in Japan, I have mainly been in charge of local policies. Specifically, it was memorable for me to write a draft for revising the Local Tax Law to install a new income tax scheme. Also, decentralization reforms were taking place in the first decade of the 21st century, and it was my responsibility to revise various public administrative laws so local governments can implement their own policies without control from the central government.

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As a staff member of the central government, I worked in other fields as well at the Cabinet Secretariat, the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, etc. Just before I came to New York City, my duty in the Cabinet Office was to help Okinawa through programs such as developing its infrastructure and taking countermeasures against poverty among children.

On the other hand, besides those experiences in central government, I had opportunities to work at local governments such as the Fukushima prefectural government and Tochigi prefectural government. Both of those prefectures provided me with great understanding about how local governments are connected with the people of their jurisdictions.



Now, I am engaged in this position, and I am happy there are various opportunities to get in touch with all of you. Actually, I have already had the opportunity to join the Japan Day event on May 12th, which is introduced in the following part of this newsletter, and I shared such a nice experience with JETAANY members. I am quite sure that there are a lot of new things to learn.

Our Mission

In my understanding, our mission can be summarized into the following three points:

- 1) To strengthen grassroots relationships among sub-national level governments in North America and Japan;
- 2) To support Japanese local governments' activities in the US and Canada, including promotion of their local goods, conducting research into best practices, etc.;
- 3) To support the JET Program and JETAA.

Concerning the first point, there are various methods to strengthen grassroots relationships such as sister city affiliations, and the significance of this kind of cooperative connection seems to have been increasing recently. JLGC can contribute to boost these relationships by making use of our network.

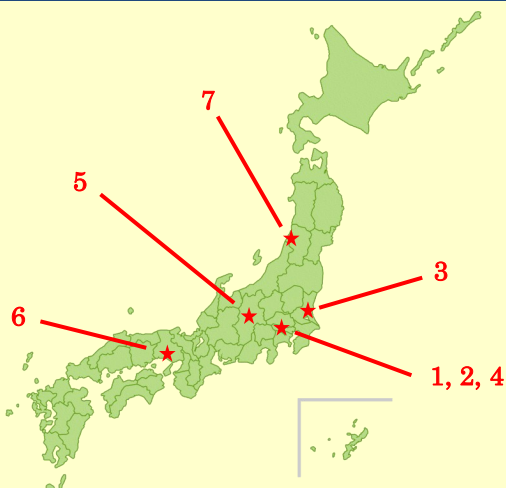
In relation to the second point, local governments' efforts to advertise their local goods overseas are getting more vigorous nowadays. I believe that there are many excellent goods that remain 'unfound' in the local communities. Therefore, we should keep on introducing those products to a wider audience.

Finally, the JET Program and JETAA are playing important roles not only in improving English teaching quality in Japan, but enhancing the internationalization of regions there. Concerning JETAA, it is often heard that there are some difficult challenges such as recruitment of new members, revitalization of small chapters and career support for chapter members. There may not be an easy way to find solutions for these. However, we would like to make our best effort to achieve progress in addressing them!

In concluding my remarks, I would like to emphasize again that I have a strong conviction that I can broaden my view of the world by being exposed to various different perspectives during my time in North America.

Last April, 7 new staff members started working at Japan Local Government Center. They are dispatched from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, or Japanese prefectures and local governments. In future issues, they will introduce their hometowns.

	Name	Title	Dispatched from
1	Takahiro Ando	Counsellor / Deputy Executive Director	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
2	Yoshimi Yanai	Assistant Director	Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department
3	Miho Tachi	Assistant Director	Ibaraki Prefecture
4	Mami Ohashi	Assistant Director	Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
5	Tomoko Fujiwara	Assistant Director	Nagano Prefecture
6	Kokoro Arima	Assistant Director	Kobe City
7	Aki Sugawara	Assistant Director	Tsuruoka City



2. William Paterson University Presentation

On March 19th and April 16th, 2019, we proudly gave presentations called “Japan Presentation Spring 2019” at William Patterson University in New Jersey. Our office staff have given several lectures like this in response to requests by the Japanese language teacher at the university over the years. This year, two staff members got opportunities to talk about local attractions in Japan, one on each day.

In Part 1, on March 19th, Satoshi Kuroki from Hiroshima City Hall gave a presentation titled “The Lifestyle Developed in Hiroshima After the War”. Hiroshima is famous for two World Heritage sites, Itsukushima Shrine and the Atomic Bomb Dome, that make Hiroshima a popular destination worldwide. He also introduced Hiroshima's unique post-war development, like streetcars that expanded to become the biggest network in Japan and a local specialty called *okonomiyaki* that became widespread in the postwar food shortages.



In Part 2, on April 16th, Shinori Nagasawa from Miyagi Prefecture introduced Miyagi Prefecture from some different points of view. This presentation was titled “Miyagi Through the Lens of Sports and Festivals”. He gave information on the Sendai Tanabata Festival, which is held in Miyagi, and the three major festivals in the Tohoku region, in the northeastern part of Japan. Additionally, topics included baseball and winter sports, which are popular in Miyagi Prefecture.

Each day, 30-40 students who attend Japanese language and culture classes at the university came to our presentation. There were a lot of questions from them about Hiroshima and Miyagi, or Japan in general. After each presentation, we also had time to talk with them freely at a café. We asked each other more casual questions, like where we have visited or impressions of each other's countries.

We were really glad that many students came to our presentations. We could say Japan is one of the most favorite destinations in the world, but many tourists mainly focus on big cities like Tokyo or Kyoto. Each local areas in Japan has its own unique attractions. Promoting those local area is one of our missions while we are working in the US. We hope they keep learning about Japanese language and culture, and get more and more interested in local Japan.



For your information (tourism website):

Explore Hiroshima

<https://www.hiroshima-navi.or.jp/en/>

Miyagi Touring Navigation!!

<http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/kankou/en/>



3. Japan Day @ Central Park

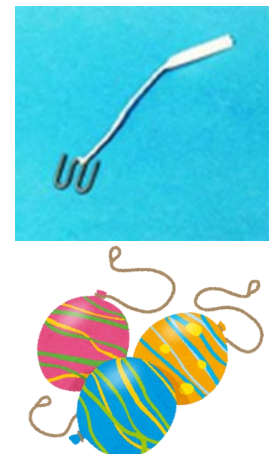
The 13th annual Japan Day was held at Central Park on May 12th. This is an event designed by the Japanese community of New York to promote a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and to say “Thank you, New York!”

Very unfortunately (and following what happened last year), we had heavy rain the whole day. Despite that, many visitors lined up at the activity tents and food tents that are hosted by Japanese companies or organizations. In this event, you can experience various parts of Japanese culture like trying on *yukata*, making *origami* paper crafts or *kabuki* face painting as well as enjoy Japanese food samples such as *okonomiyaki* or *onigiri* rice balls. Visitors can also enjoy stage performances like *taiko* or *karate* demonstrations. All activities are free.



Poster by Japan Day @ Central Park
<https://www.japandaynyc.org/>

We, Japan Local Government Center, volunteer at the Yo-Yo Fishing tent every year, hosted by JETAANY and Japan Society. Twelve staff members from our office joined this year and helped them with making Yo-Yo balloons and instructing visitors how to fish for Yo-Yos. Each Yo-Yo balloon contains a little bit of water to add some weight and float on the water properly. Visitors have to use the “fishing line” that is made of a small metal hook and tissue paper to fish a Yo-Yo from the pool. Each Yo-Yo has a rubber string with a loop to be hooked. Visitors need to be very careful not to let the paper get wet in order to lift up the Yo-Yo. If the metal hook tears off, it’s game over. Virtually, every Japanese has played this game in their childhood at a local summer festival. We think this is a good way to experience typical Japanese culture.



At the Yo-Yo tent, not only children but also adults really enjoyed this game. We were very glad that many visitors came to this event to get to know Japan or experience Japanese culture. We hope more and more New Yorkers get interested in Japan! (Also, we really hope that next year’s Japan Day will be a sunny day!)

