

MARCH 2017

# JLGC NEWS LETTER



Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR, New York)  
Issue no. 88 March 2017



CLAIR FELLOWSHIP

ISSUE NO. 88  
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### 1. CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program 2016

The CLAIR Fellowship Exchange Program 2016 was held from November 27 to December 7.

This program affords senior state and local government officials an opportunity to ex-

perience Japanese government administration first hand. This year the program was held in Tokyo and Shizuoka City.

**Theme: How local government can promote healthy living for all ages in Shizuoka, Japan**

Shizuoka City has been working diligently to create an environment of exciting local communities. This idea, applying both to children and adults, is borrowed from the concept of 'Healthy Cities'. In Shizuoka, the city encourages life-long healthy living by developing and maintaining a policy directed toward good nutritional habits. Also, the city promotes 'place-making' and an inclusive urban design for healthy longevity that meets the needs of young families and seniors alike.

Participants exchanged their opinions with officials from Japan, especially on 'Healthy Cities'. Also they experienced the beauty of Shizuoka scenery (Mt. Fuji etc.) and immersed themselves in the traditional Japanese culture of the area.



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**Ms. Laura Tobler**

Director, State Policy Research  
Division, National Conference of  
State Legislatures

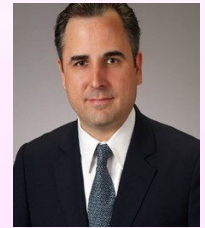


I had the distinct pleasure of participating in the annual CLAIR Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar that took place in Tokyo and Shizuoka. I was impressed with the breadth and depth of the information exchange experience! It was fascinating to learn about the similarities and differences in our governing systems and social programs. In Shizuoka, we learned about health systems, child care and elementary education through multiple seminars, inspections and official tours. We learned about and saw how the local, prefecture, and central governments work together to keep their citizens healthy and how child development is a priority from birth. I was particularly interested in learning about Shizuoka's efforts to help aging citizens stay active and engaged and remain in their homes. I shared this information with our health policy analysts upon my return to the NCSL offices. As much as I was impressed with the exchange of knowledge and the policy dialog, it was the culture of the Japanese people, the gracious reception we received from the Shizuoka and Tokyo government officials and the CLAIR staff and everyone's generosity in volunteering their knowledge and time to our program that impressed me most. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for this well-planned and executed program and to the government officials and CLAIR staff that made it possible. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

Thanks again,  
Laura

**Mr. Joshua Franzel**

Vice President, Research, Center  
for State and Local Government  
Excellence, Director of Policy  
Research,  
International City/County Management Association



The CLAIR Fellowship was one of the most informative and interesting professional experiences of my career. Through the briefings, site visits, and conversations I was able to learn about the challenges and innovative approaches being taken on a range of topics including volunteer firefighter recruitment, public health, child and young family services, and aging programs. I appreciated the opportunity to have a dialog on how these matters are addressed by governments both in Japan and in The United States. Site visits to an elementary school, community center, and government offices added an additional layer of understanding.

During my homestay in Shizuoka I was able to experience the wonderful resident quality of life, while also making new friends. The CLAIR staff that hosted us throughout the Fellowship did so flawlessly and provided much cultural context. I look forward to continuing to stay in touch with many of those I met during my time in Tokyo and Shizuoka.

Thank you,  
Josh





**Mr. Peter Halsall**

Executive Director, Canadian Urban Institute



Since returning from the 2016 CLAIR Local Government Fellowship Exchange Program, I have been continually talking to people about the lessons learned during the trip. We were provided access to so many knowledgeable people and such a range of issues that the learning opportunities were almost endless. It is valuable in our work at the Canadian Urban Institute in our support for municipalities in Canada and through international development.

The experience started with exposure to the governance of Tokyo, providing clearly presented lessons from the largest urban population concentration in the world. Visiting the Tokyo Museum and an interesting range of sites in the city gave us the context of history and culture to truly understand the current environment.

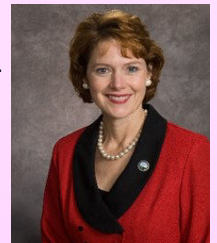
Our visit to Shizuoka exposed us to an amazing range of issues, starting with a 180km train trip that took about 1 hour including stops, and was exactly on time. As with Tokyo, we learned about how the City and Prefecture were tackling their responsibilities in an incredibly thoughtful and responsible way. Following this with visits to the primary school and the community health centre with aids for aging gave us insight into the practical applications of this decision-making, and how it fit with the culture.

Staying with the host family and at the countryside inn further helped us understand the cultural underpinnings of government policies and programs. They were incredibly memorable experiences.

Being exposed to a wide range of issues including governance, education, economy, aging and culture created a wealth of knowledge to mine. The respect, responsibility and capability demonstrated by the leadership and administration throughout the visits will provide ongoing inspiration for our work.

**Ms. Sallie Clark**

Past President, National Association of Counties and former Commissioner, El Paso County, Colorado.



“The CLAIR Fellowship Program provided the opportunity to learn about cultural differences and similarities between Japan, the United States and Canada, both from a government and economic perspective. We were able to personally engage, exchange ideas and learn about the ways in which the Japanese apply innovative approaches to serving children, families and older adults. Through conversations with elected and administrative leaders, we gained priceless information and valuable public communication tools to “take home” and better serve our citizens. The ability to tour historical and government sites provided a broad view of the Japanese economy and culture. I would highly recommend this program for those looking to expand their understanding of international relations.”



**Ms. Kelly Murphy**

Program Director, Health Division,  
National Governors Association Center  
for Best Practices



It was a true pleasure to participate in the CLAIR Fellowship Program in December 2016. I enjoyed learning about Japan's government structure and programs, especially all that the country is doing to assist people throughout their lives. As someone who focuses on Maternal and Child Health in the United States, I was particularly captivated by all of the effort that goes in to supporting mothers, children and families in Japan. I learned a great deal from our inspections in Tokyo and Shizuoka, and I appreciated the opportunity to engage with and ask questions of our presenters.

The homestay was an incredible opportunity to see how one Shizuoka family lives, and I look forward to staying in contact with them for years to come. In addition to learning about Japan and Shizuoka, I truly enjoyed the company of my fellow travelers from the US and Canada. Last, I would like to thank all of my CLAIR hosts for all of their hospitality and work to make this a trip of a lifetime

**Ms. Martha Castañeda**

Director, Policy & International Programs,  
Council of State Governments  
West (CSG West)



The 2016 CLAIR Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar was an unforgettable experience.

Having majored in International Relations in university, I had general knowledge of Japan's government structure and binational relations with the United States. However, the in-depth presentations and seminars organized by CLAIR, their knowledgeable and professional staff, and Japanese local authorities provided the opportunity to learn about the country inside out.

In Tokyo, I really enjoyed the courtesy visit to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications as we got to hear about the roles and priorities of their team which carry out important domestic government functions. It was a thrill to meet the former Consul General of Japan to San Francisco there as our paths had crossed before in Sacramento while he was in that role and we worked with many of the same offices and people at the California State Capitol.

The logistics of the program were quite impressive! Having done meeting planning in the past, the transitions from Tokyo to Shizuoka and then back to Tokyo, as well as the visits from one organization or office to another were seamless and without delays or disruptions.

Everyone in Shizuoka City who received our group was so welcoming! When I read in the program information that the city promotes "place-making" and an inclusive urban design for health longevity that meets the needs of families and older ages alike, I was very excited that this was where the cultural part of our stay would be.



Highlights for me here included the visit to Nishinaminami Elementary School to observe students' school life and joining them for lunch, the Joto Children's Support Center, the Regional Rehabilitation Center, and the Green Tea General Research Center at the University of Shizuoka. As a former pre-school and kindergarten teacher, I found the culture of the elementary school cooperative and healthy. The children have an incredible sense of community that cares not only for the individual and promotes personal responsibility but also encourages caring for their fellow students, their teachers, and learning environment.

The Joto Children's Support Center is a safe, public space for parents, grandparents, and other family members to bring their babies and toddlers to learn important socialization skills but also to maintain the necessary social interactions for adults who care for tomorrow's generation. This is not something that I've seen elsewhere.

The Regional Rehabilitation Center was heartening for me, personally, because I am currently primary caregiver to octogenarian parents. In this one place, a person can find all devices and resources to help people who are elderly or physically and/or mentally disabled live an independent and fulfilling life. Even more impressive, visitors to the center can handle the devices or installations to decide whether they would help their family member. Finally, the joint research on the benefits of Green Tea by the Nutritional Science, Pharmaceutical, and Management Information Departments at University of Shizuoka is a wonderful contribution to the information that can be made available to consumers as they make decisions about which teas to purchase.

The two program components that I believe took me the furthest out of my comfort zone were the homestay with a family and the overnight stay at Oonogi-Soh. They also happen to be my favorite cultural experiences of the exchange. The Sugiyama family: Mie, Takao, Ryousuke, and Hiyori will always have a special place in my heart and I hope to stay in touch with them for years to come. They went out of their way to make me feel welcome in their lovely home and we had continuous conversations about customs, language, food, and music. The overnight stay at the traditional inn was a perfect way to reconnect with our group of amazing participants and staff to enjoy one last night of delicious food, fun, and laughter before heading back home.

It's impossible to capture this amazing experience in words. It has opened the doors of Japan to me and, in turn, opened my mind and heart to the people and places of Japan which I am sure I will return to one day. A big THANK YOU to everyone at CLAIR New York and CLAIR Tokyo, the Shizuoka Municipal Government, and my new and forever friends: Seio, Kaori, and Christine, the staff members who led and accompanied our group throughout. Special thanks to Chigusa, our fabulous interpreter without whom we would have been lost.





### Mr. Steph Palmateer

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

City Clerk, The Corporation of the City of Timmins



I want to express my gratitude and sincere thanks to the Japan Local Government Centre and the CLAIR Fellowship Study Tour. The 2016 study tour in Tokyo and Shizuoka was fantastic! This truly was an amazing experience and one that I will never forget. Not only did we learn and share our experiences as local government officials but we got to experience and see the Japanese culture. The exchange of ideas and learning how local government works in Japan is something that I will be able to use and helped me to gain valuable insight for my every day role in local government.

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### Mr. Wayne Wrobel

City Council Member, City of Novi



I would like to thank everyone at CLAIR who made my participation in the study visit to Tokyo and Shizuoka possible. It was a once in a lifetime experience I will always remember. This experience has made a strong positive impact on my life and has provided me with new options for situations I may encounter as a leader in my local government.

Everyone I met during my visit to Japan was polite, helpful, and friendly which made the experience very enjoyable. I was very impressed with the personal accountability each member of Japanese society exhibited, whether it was the students taking responsibility for keeping their classrooms clean or the average Japanese citizen not littering their streets with trash. I have traveled around the world and I have never seen cities as clean as Tokyo and Shizuoka. This is something residents of both cities should be very proud of.

Being able to view up close how various aspects of local Japanese government operate gave me the opportunity to view services and programs that could potentially be implemented by my local government. No one country or society has all the right answers. We can all learn from each other and use what we learn to make life better for all our citizens... And I learned much on this study visit!

The tours, presentations, and discussions I took part in were well organized and always relevant. Discussion of mutual issues of interest with various levels of local Tokyo and Shizuoka government officials were fruitful and informative. Much was learned and I believe both sides benefitted from these discussions.

I would also like to thank the translators who tirelessly worked with our group. Without them and their professionalism, the study visit would not have been as successful as it was.

Once again, I would like to thank CLAIR for inviting me to participate in this study visit and for all their hospitality while I was in Japan. I hope to reciprocate it when CLAIR members visit Novi in the future.

## *2. William Paterson University Lecture*

**Kaori Ito, Assistant Director, Representative of Shiga Prefecture**

JLGC staff gave presentations about Japan at the “Travel to Japan in 2017” event, which was held at William Paterson University on February 28th and March 7th.

It was sponsored by Go Japan, which is a student club with a focus on introducing Japanese culture to those unfamiliar with it and encouraging the growth of those who already have knowledge of the culture.

The event was divided into two parts and about 25 students who are studying or interested in Japan attended each part.

In Part 1 of the presentation, I talked about “Life in Western Japan”. I introduced Western Japan focusing on such things as the dialect and general features of each prefecture in the Kansai area. And as an introduction of Shiga, I talked about some history and seasonal events, including the traditional culture of Shiga and Japan.

In Part 2, Tatsuya Matsumoto from Saitama City talked about “Life around the Tokyo Area”.

As Saitama is one of the most popular suburbs to live in around Tokyo, he introduced the life in Saitama, sightseeing spots, and the local attractions. And he showed an interesting video about commuting in Tokyo.

There were many questions about things like cultural differences between the regions or dialects in Japan from the students.

Also many students showed a great interest in the JET Program and asked a lot about it. The students were knowledgeable about Japan and enthusiastic, so they must have the potential to be good candidates for the JET Program.

I hope the students maintain their interest and learn more about many aspects of Japan.

