



Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program

FINAL REPORT

For

TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program

July 20 – July 30, 2013

Funded by TOMODACHI's Fund for Exchanges
through generous contributions from

Toyota Motor Corporation

Mitsubishi Corporation

Hitachi, Ltd.



JAPAN AMERICA SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

In partnership with



Living Dreams
Japan



Los Angeles-Nagoya
Sister City Affiliation

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Dodger Stadium.

Thanks to the TOMODACHI Fund for Exchanges, made possible by generous contributions from **Toyota Motor Corporation**, **Mitsubishi Corporation**, and **Hitachi, Ltd.**, eight children from Fukushima Aikuen children's home ("orphanage") served as "pioneers" as the first residents to travel abroad in the home's 120-year history.

The eight children, along with their chaperone, visited Los Angeles from July 20 to July 30, 2013. The experience was life-changing for the Japanese children, as well as for the American host families and volunteers.

We thank the US-Japan Council and the National Association of Japan-America Societies for collaborating on the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program and its support for the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program.

We also thank our partners, Living Dreams in Japan and the Los Angeles-Nagoya Sister City Affiliation, for their support. Our many additional supporters will be recognized on the following pages.

PLEASE NOTE — At the ardent request from the director, staff and even the children of Fukushima Aikuen, we ask no photos --where a child's face can be recognized-- from this report be posted on the internet. This is for the safety and future well-being of the children. Thank you for your understanding.

Special Appreciation and Acknowledgment

Airline Sponsor

Delta Air Lines

Welcome Reception Sponsors

Pepi Kelman and **Pepi Fine Jewelry**

Diane Estella Vicari and **DOCClubLA** (Documentary Club of Los Angeles)

Supporter

Tammie Kanda

Pro Bono Representation provided by

Seyfarth Shaw LLP

Fox 11 News segment

Susan Hirasuna, Anchor/Reporter

Host Families

Mieko & Douglas Erber, and **Ryan** (6) and **Katie** (5)

Host Family of Ai Iino and Yuki Shirai

Yumi & Douglas Montgomery, and **Alec** (5)

Host Family of Musashi Kawada and Takashi Sakuma

Debra Morrison & John Staudinger, and **Julia** (21)

Host Family of Mina Ogura and Ayumi Horikawa

Ellyn Iwata & Steve Yamashita, and **Warren** (22), **Derek** (20) and **Jason** (15)

Host Family of Shoma Harada and Katsuaki Takahashi

Carmen & George Erber, and granddaughter, **Kayleigh** (20)

Host Family of Yoshikuni "Yoshi" Endo, Chaperone

Special Activities' Sponsors (Listed in chronological order)

Welcome Reception and Screening of "SUGIHARA Conspiracy of Kindness"

Pepi Kelman, Welcome Reception Sponsor and Host

Pepi Fine Jewelry

Diane Estella Vicari, Producer, "SUGIHARA Conspiracy of Kindness" and Welcome Reception Host

DOCClubLA

Henry Ota, Co-Vice Chairman, US–Japan Council

Kay Amano, "FYCEP Angel"

June Aochi Berk, "FYCEP Angel"

Tammie Kanda, "FYCEP Angel"

Katherine Fukami Glascock

Brian Kito, Owner/Operator, Fugetsu-Do

Rev. Mark Nakagawa, Senior Pastor, Centenary United Methodist Church

Nikkei Women Legacy Association

Reiko Nimura

Lucy Nimura

Veronique Vicari from Jewelry by Veronique

Lauren Kinkade Wong and **Madison Nelson** for vocal selections

Visit to Disneyland

June Aochi Berk, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Kayleigh Erber, Disneyland Resort

Sandie Hubert, Disneyland Resort

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor

Pepi Kelman

University of Southern California – Guided Tour and Lunch

Grace A. Shiba, Senior Director of Alumni Relations

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor

Tour of Endeavour Space Shuttle at California Science Center and IMAX Hubble 3D Movie

Patrick Love, California Science Center

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor

Poolside BBQ Reception

The Honorable Jun Niimi, Consul General of Japan

Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles

Little Tokyo Walking Tour

Hal Kiemi, Docent, Japanese American National Museum

June Aochi Berk, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Go For Broke Monument – Tour and Discussion

Hitoshi Sameshima, MIS Veteran and Docent, JANM

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Sakura Trees Dedication at the MTA Little Tokyo/Arts District Station

Thomas O. Kelly – “Save the Sakura Trees Project”

June Aochi Berk, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Ann Kerman, Interim Director, Constituent Programs at LA Metro

Tanner Blackman, Planning Director, Office of LA Councilmember Jose Huizar

Gwen Muranaka, English Editor, *The Rafu Shimpō*

Shige Higashi, Editor, *Cultural News*

Little Tokyo Community Council – Beautification Committee

Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California

Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple

Japanese American National Museum - Tour and Docent & Volunteer Sashimi Luncheon

Greg Kimura, President and CEO, JANM

June Aochi Berk, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

Azumako Tremayne, Special Coordinating Volunteer and Docent, JANM

JANM Docents, especially **June Aoki**, **Yae Aihara** and **May Fujino**

JANM Volunteers

LA Sheriff Crime Lab Tour and SWAT Team Demonstration

Sheriff Lee Baca

Sergeant William Moulder

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

LA Sheriff Regional Crime Laboratory

LA Sheriff S.W.A.T. (Special Weapons and Training) Team

Meeting with Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca

Sheriff Lee Baca

Sergeant William Moulder

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Sushi Dinner at Toranoko Restaurant, Little Tokyo

LASD Lieutenant Brian Moriguchi (Unit 612), President

Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Association (Dinner Sponsor)

Sergeant William Moulder, LA County Sheriff's Department

Michael Cardenas, Founder and Partner, Innovative Dining Group

Seiji Nakano, Master Sushi Chef, Toranoko

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee

Los Angeles Fire Department, Station Tour, Fireboat Excursion and Lunch

Deputy Chief David Yamahata, Emergency Operations Commander

Paige Matsumoto, Firefighter / Paramedic (and excellent cook!)

Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Committee

Aquarium of the Pacific - Behind the Scenes Tour

Jerry Schubel, President

Perry Hampton, Vice President of Husbandry

Veronica Anderson, Volunteer Diver

MJ Suzuki, Volunteer Diver

Los Angeles Dodgers Game and Stadium Tour
Acey Kohrogi, Senior Director, International Partnerships

Search-and-Rescue Dog – Demonstration and Discussion
Eric Gray (Trainer), Firefighter, Santa Barbara County Fire Department
Riley, Search-and-Rescue Dog (Worked in Fukushima immediately after 3/11)
Frances and Mickey Matsumoto, Brandon Matsumoto and Susan Yamashiro

Harbour Surfboards – Tour of the one of the world’s oldest surfboard manufacturing shops
Robert Howson, General Manager and COO

Duffy Boat Tour of Huntington Harbor and Lunch
The Staudinger Family

Hollywood Studio Tour
The Arsenio Hall Show
Robin DiMaggio, Musical Director
Cass Gundry, Associate Production Manager
Sergeant William Moulder, LA County Sheriff’s Department

Farewell Reception
Tammie Kanda, FYCEP Volunteer & Sponsor
La Terazza Club House
Cherrystones Restaurant & Catering Company
Kings Hawaiian Bakery

Volunteer Drivers

Kay Amano
June Aochi Berk
Douglas Erber
Tammie Kanda

Janet Lee
Aki Tsurukame
Derek Yamashita
Warren Yamashita

Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program – Planning Committee

June Aochi Berk
Harumi Hata
Ernest Hida
Shige Higashi
Tammie Kanda
Thomas O. Kelly
Atsuko Lee
Janet Lee
Howard Nishimura

Reiko Sakata
Aki Tsurukame
Vivien Usui
Teruko Weinberg

JASSC Staff
Douglas Erber, President
Kay Amano, Programs Director
Gifford Saneto, Office Manager
Janet Lee, Special Projects Coordinator

Background about the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program

There are 585 children's homes ("orphanages") in Japan. Nineteen of these children's homes are located in Tohoku, the region most severely affected by the March 11, 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

The Japan America Society of Southern California (JASSC) has developed a personal relationship with the children and staff of the largest of these Tohoku children's homes — **Fukushima Aiikuen (FA)**, located outside the evacuation zone of the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. In September 2011, JASSC made a tranche from its 2011 Japan Relief Fund to "adopt" FA, which is home to 92 children, ages 2 to 18, all of whom are affected daily by the nuclear radiation crisis.

Funds provided by JASSC were used to purchase music instruments, tea ceremony sets, tumbling mats, building blocks, telescopes and other items that allow the children to remain active indoors; two portable generators were also acquired so FA can prepare meals in the event of electricity blackouts. Two additional tranches from the 2011 Japan Relief Fund were made to support educational field trips for FA children. A fourth tranche was made to replace an aging vehicle used to transport kindergarten aged children to school, as well as take children to doctor's appointments (Like other children's homes in Japan, approximately 30% of FA children have a developmental disability). All funds are delivered through *Smiles & Dreams: Tohoku Kids Support Project* which is managed by Living Dreams, a recognized Japanese NPO that supports children's homes in Japan.

FA provides a safe, caring and clean environment for its children, but like all children's homes in Japan, it falls short in addressing finer issues. Most of the children still lack the guidance, skills and tools needed to encourage them to pursue a better life. They are trapped in a life that will be mediocre, at best. Furthermore, the FA children have the added burden of worrying about the serious health issues that could arise from radiation exposure.

An additional challenge is FA's extremely limited budget. The first priority is to feed and clothe the children. The next priority is to maintain the homes' facilities. There are no funds available for extra supplies, such as the items FA purchased with funds from JASSC 2011 Japan Relief Fund, nor are there funds for extracurricular activities.

To help FA children overcome some of these challenges, JASSC proposed an unprecedented U.S.-Japan grassroots exchange opportunity, the "**Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program.**" The exchange program was managed by JASSC, in partnership with Living Dreams in Japan and with the Los Angeles-Nagoya Sister City Affiliation (LANSCA) in Los Angeles.

With a grant from the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program, made possible by generous donations by **Toyota Motor Corporation, Mitsubishi Corporation, and Hitachi, Ltd.**, eight children, aged 14 to 18 and accompanied by an FA staff member serving as chaperone, visited Los Angeles in from July 20 to July 30, 2013.

Thank You to TOMODACHI-NAJAS for Granting our Request

The Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program is unique in that it provides a life-changing cultural experience for children that would otherwise not have the financial means – from FA or family – to participate in an international exchange. For this reason, we thank the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program for granting our special request.

Specifically, since roundtrip airfare from Japan to Los Angeles is less than the generous amount provided by the grant, we allocated a portion of the unused airfare to cover the expenses for the FA children to travel roundtrip from FA children's home to Narita Airport.

We also allocated a portion of the unused airfare to cover the expenses for the FA delegation's passport fees, travel insurance, suitcases and other items required of any Japanese making a first-time visit to the United States.

Goals and Objectives

The Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program met its goals and objectives of providing a life-changing experience for FA children, who otherwise have no financial means to participate and benefit from international cultural exchange activities. It positively affected the lives of FA children by planting the seeds of international understanding, particularly concerning the U.S.-Japan relationship. It was also made available without tapping into FA's extremely limited budget.

The children enjoyed the experience of living in the U.S. with an American family. We placed two FA children per Host Family as a "buddy system" to facilitate communication and provide a level of comfort in surroundings that are completely new and unfamiliar.

Additionally, we worked to ensure the FA children have extensive contact with Americans through social and sightseeing activities, along with exposure to American culture and values. They interacted and shared experiences with American children and were presented opportunities to learn about the history and contributions of Japanese Americans.

Through these activities, we provided a mental and physical break from their lives in Japan. They returned home refreshed and filled with lessons that will inspire them to become successful and contributing members of their communities. The program also established solid personal connections between the youth of Fukushima and Los Angeles.

During the exchange, we raised more than \$18,000 from individuals who saw the value of this exchange. \$3,000 of these funds were used for expenses not covered by the grant. The remainder will be deferred to help support and sustain the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program into the future.

Finally, the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program will serve as a prototype for other potential U.S.-Japan exchange programs benefiting orphans in Tohoku children's homes.

FYCEP Schedule

Saturday, July 20	7:30pm	Arrival at LAX – Delta Air Lines FLT# 636
Sunday, July 21	Free time with Host Families 5:00-7:30pm	Welcome Reception at DOCClubLA
Monday, July 22	9:00 – Disneyland	
Tuesday, July 23	9:00am 12:00pm 1:00pm 6:00pm	U.S. Open of Surfing, Hunt. Beach Pier (South) Picnic lunch Enjoy beach and surf lessons Fire pit fun with hotdogs and s'mores
Wednesday, July 24	11:00am-12:00pm 12:00pm-12:45pm 1:15pm -2:15pm 2:30pm-3:15pm 3:30pm-4:30pm 5:30pm	USC Campus Tour Lunch at USC Food Court Guided Tour of Endeavour Space Shuttle, CSC IMAX Hubble 3D CSC Gift shop Poolside BBQ Reception at CG Residence
Thursday, July 25	9:15am 10:30am 11:00am -1:15pm 2:00pm 3:30pm 4:30pm 5:30pm	Little Tokyo walking tour including stop at GFB Sakura Tree Naming / Dedication JANM tour and lunch LA Sheriff Crime Lab tour LA Sheriff SWAT Team demonstration Meeting with Sheriff Lee Baca Dinner at Toranoko Sushi, Little Tokyo
Friday, July 26	10:00am 12:00pm 1:30pm 6:00pm	LAFD San Pedro station tour and boat ride Tonkatsu lunch with firefighters Aquarium of the Pacific Los Angeles Dodgers Game
Saturday, July 27	Shopping in Seal Beach Optional Tour of Harbour Surfboards - Introduction to how surfboards are made Optional Duffy Boat ride in Huntington Beach Harbor Free Time with Host Families	
Sunday, July 28	Free time with Host Families 5:00pm	Farewell Reception / Dinner
Monday, July 29	12:30pm 2:00pm	TCL Chinese Theatre Visit/tour KTLA Studio – Arsenio Hall Show
Tuesday, July 30	1:10pm flight home	Delta Air Lines FLT# 283



Just prior to departure from Los Angeles International Airport

Immediate Benefits of the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program

In July, we learned the exchange program already had a positive impact at FA, even for the children who did not participate. Based on age, there were 30 children eligible to participate. From this pool, 20 raised their hands when asked if they wanted to visit the U.S. To help select the final eight participants, FA staff reviewed report cards for those with the top scores in English. The 12 children not selected are now studying English harder!

On a follow-up visit to FA in early October, JASSC President Douglas Erber and Host Family member, Derek Yamashita, who is now studying in Tokyo, met with the children, chaperone and other FA staff. The staff all reported the children from the delegation have a new poise, maturity and confidence they lacked prior to the exchange.

Furthermore, on August 30, the eight children and chaperone gave a two-hour presentation and Q&A session with the younger children at FA. The result is all the children now hope to visit the US someday, with the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program, or by other means.

Lessons Learned for 2014

A week after the FA Delegation returned to Japan, the FYCEP Committee, Host Families, Volunteers and JASSC staff met for a “wrap up” meeting. Changes planned for next year include:

- Additional opportunities to meet with American youth.
- Possible program with USJC Emerging Leaders in Los Angeles.
- Less planned activities and more time with Host Families, especially at dinnertime.

The most asked question among all involved is, **“How can we continue to support and engage the children after they return to the children’s home, and do so in a sustainable and affordable way?”** The FYCEP Committee and JASSC staff look forward to working with USJC to address this important issue.

Meantime, we simply cannot thank TOMODACHI enough for making this exchange possible!