

# TOMO DACHI



## ***Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program***

### **FINAL REPORT**

TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program  
July 20-30, 2014

*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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Thanks to generous contributions to the TOMODACHI Fund for Exchanges by **Toyota Motor Corporation**, **Mitsubishi Corporation**, and **Hitachi, Ltd.**, eight children from Fukushima Aikuen children’s home (orphanage) were “pioneers” as only the second delegation of residents to travel abroad in the home’s 121-year history.

The eight children, along with their chaperone, visited Los Angeles from July 20 to July 30, 2014. 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 to make possible the TOMODACHI–NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program and its support for the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program (FYCEP). Special thanks is also extended to **Delta Air Lines** for serving as the official airline for the exchange.

We also thank our partners, Living Dreams in Japan and the Los Angeles–Nagoya Sister City Affiliation, for their support.

*PLEASE NOTE — At the request from the director, staff and even the children of Fukushima Aikuen, we ask no photos --where a child’s face can be clearly 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.*

## Quotes from Supporters of Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program

*Thank you for the lovely Welcome Reception for the Fukushima children! It was so beautiful in Palos Verdes and the friendly atmosphere added so much to making the afternoon a very special day to welcome the children! ~ You have so many volunteers, and we are all so happy to have this opportunity to be a part of this wonderful program. I feel very humbled and blessed to meet these children. They are an inspiration to me with their strength and hopefulness.*

— **June Aochi Berk**, FYCEP Committee and Volunteer

*It was a pleasure having your group at the farm. I hope that they had a memorable time. If you think it is worthwhile, would be more than happy to host again. Best of luck to the children of Fukushima Aikuen.*

— **Glenn Tanaka**, Tanaka Farms

*It was really our pleasure to host the delegation. It is what the Science Center is here for, creating experiences and giving back. Especially for your group from Fukushima Aikuen who have additional life challenges one can only imagine.*

— **Patrick Love**, California Science Center

*I was deeply impressed with all you are doing for the children from Fukushima Aikuen. We will push our editor to make space in our magazine to share the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program.*

— **Noriko Ozzie**, Staff Writer, Little Tokyo Guide (J-Town Guide)

*Thank you for everything you have done and continue to do for Fukushima Aikuen. It was very touching and emotional to see how important this is for both the host families and for the students themselves. I know it's a tremendous amount of work to prepare for these 10 days, but it's amazing to see what a lifelong impact this has and will continue to have on each and every one of the students.*

— **Veronica Anderson**, Volunteer Diver, Aquarium of the Pacific

*Working on and implementing this exchange program has been the most meaningful and fulfilling experience in my twenty-one years at JASSC.*

— **Douglas Erber**, President, JASSC

## 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 close relationship with the children and staff of the largest of these Tohoku children's homes — **Fukushima Aikuen** (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 with a mission to support 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, 2014.

## 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 two special requests.

First, because Fukushima Aikuen does not have the space or resources to host a delegation of American children, we made a special request this exchange not be reciprocal. Instead, we would bring a delegation from Fukushima Aikuen in summer 2013 and 2014.

Second, 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. Additionally, we 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

Based on feedback from last year’s successful Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program, some changes we made to improve this year’s exchange included –

1. Additional opportunities to meet with American youth.
2. Less planned activities and more time with Host Families, especially at dinnertime

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.

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.

**Overall, this year’s exchange was a resounding success. The consensus of the JASSC Board of Directors, Staff and FYCEP Volunteers and Supporters is to do everything possible to ensure the continuation of this important, life-changing exchange program.**

## 2014 FYCEP Itinerary

**Sunday, July 20**

3:45pm  
9:50am  
4:00pm  
5:00-7:30pm

Depart Narita – Delta Air Lines #284  
Arrival at LAX, go to Host Families' homes  
TOMODACHI Orientation by USJC Hiroyo Nonoyama  
Welcome Reception - *Generously hosted by Ninoska and William French and featuring Ramen Burger®*



Welcome to Los Angeles!



TOMODACHI Orientation presentation by USJC's Hiroyo Nonoyama



After the TOMODACHI Orientation, each student gave English self-introductions at the Welcome Reception. They were joined by USJC Co-Chairman Henry Ota, JASSC President Doug Erber, and JASSC Chairman-Elect, Joseph Portillo.

Monday, July 21

10:00am  
12:00pm  
2:00pm-4:30pm

LAFD San Pedro station tour and fire boat ride  
Tonkatsu lunch with firefighters  
"Backstage Tour" of Aquarium of the Pacific  
Dinner with Host Families



LAFD San Pedro station tour and fire boat ride



Aquarium of the Pacific "Backstage Tour"

**Tuesday, July 22**

10:00am-3:00pm

Beach Day in Huntington Beach – *surfing lessons, volley ball, Frisbee, cooking hotdogs and s'mores* – Local high school students invited to join  
Dinner with Host Families



**Wednesday, July 23**

10:00am

11:30am-2:00pm

2:30pm-4:30pm

5:30pm

Little Tokyo walking tour, *including visits to Go For Broke Monument and Sakura Trees dedicated in 2013 to FA*  
JANM tour and sashimi lunch with volunteers  
Visit to Hollywood  
Poolside Reception at CG Residence  
Inspirational Talk with Actor Shin Koyamada



Walking Tour of Little Tokyo



Visit to Sakura Trees dedicated to Fukushima Aikuen in 2013



Dr. Greg Kimura, CEO of JANM, welcomes the delegation



Sashimi and Potluck Lunch with JANM Volunteers!





Poolside Party at the Consul General's Official Residence



Acting Consul General Suga greets the TOMODACHI Children



The Consulate General of Japan generously provided plenty of delicious food!



TV and film actor, **Shin Koyamada** (*Last Samurai*), led an inspirational discussion with the TOMODACHI children. Koyamada has made several US State Dept. tours of Japan to inspire Japanese students to study in the United States. The chaperone from Fukushima Aikuen was extremely pleased with the positive and strong lessons Koyamada share based on his own life.

**Thursday, July 24**

11:00am-12:00pm  
12:00pm-1:00pm  
1:30pm -3:00pm

USC Campus Tour  
Lunch at USC Food Court  
Guided Tour of Endeavour Space Shuttle, CSC  
Dinner with Host Families



Tour of University of Southern California



Space Shuttle Endeavor at California Science Center

**Friday, July 25**

Free Day with Host Families

**Saturday, July 26**

9:00am-12:30pm  
  
2:00pm  
  
6:00pm

“Cookout Tour” and lunch with TOMODACHI-MUFG at Tanaka Farms, famous Japanese American authentic working farm.  
Tour of Harbour Surfboards, world’s oldest surfboard production store - intro to how surfboards are made  
Angels vs. Tigers baseball game at Angel Stadium



“Cookout Tour” of the famous Tanaka Farms. We were pleased to join the delegation of TOMODACHI-MUFG students, as well as high school age members of the Orange County Optimists.





Angels vs. Tigers game at Angel Stadium. Angels won 4 – 0!

**Sunday, July 27**

AM – 5:00pm  
5:30pm

Free time with Host Families  
“Mata Ne” Reception



Mata Ne Reception with Host Families and Supporters

**Monday, July 28**

9:00am-10:00pm

Disneyland!



**Tuesday, July 29**

Free day with Host Families



On July 29, several Host Families opted to visit The US Open of Surfing at the Huntington Beach Pier.

**Wednesday, July 30**

1:45pm flight home  
4:45pm (July 31)

Delta Air Lines #283  
Arrive Narita, Japan



After a tearful send off at Los Angeles International Airport, the TOMODACHI-NAJAS "FYCEP's" Delta Air Lines flight takes off from LAX for Tokyo

## Immediate Benefits of the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program

In 2013, we learned the exchange program 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 began studying English harder!

The 2013 exchange's 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. The 2014 exchange participants will give a similar presentation.

On September 11, 2014, as part of a JASSC's *Goodwill Tour Through Tohoku*, a 16-member delegation visited Fukushima Aikuen. The members of the tour included ~

*Terry S. Hara, Chairman, JASSC and Member, USCJ  
Joseph C. Portillo, Co-Vice Chairman / Chairman-Elect, JASSC  
Edward Perron, Chairman Emeritus, JASSC  
Douglas Erber, President, JASSC  
Two members of the JASSC Board of Directors  
Three members of the JASSC Board of Governors  
Seven prominent members of JASSC*

During the visit, we spoke with Fukushima Aikuen's Director, Mr. Hisao Saito. He reported a similar fact shared by the chaperone (page 3 of this report). Specifically, in the three decades Mr. Saito has worked at Fukushima Aikuen, no project or programs have had the same positive influence on the children as the TOMODACHI-NAJAS Grassroots Exchange Program. Saito added, "The children from the delegation have a new poise, maturity and confidence they lacked prior to the exchange". He thanked everyone involved to make the Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program possible.

Today, every child at FA hopes to visit the US, and the exchange participants want to visit US again. They also want to play some role in the US-Japan relationship.

## Lessons Learned

For the exchange this year, we wanted to increase opportunities to meet with US-Japan Council members, especially with the US-Japan Council's Emerging Leaders. We were pleased several USJC leaders and members attended the Welcome and "Mata Ne" receptions.

We were also pleased to join the large delegation participating in the 3rd TOMODACHI-MUFG International Exchange Program. Our TOMODACHI-NAJAS and the TOMODACHI-MUFG participants both enjoyed a special "Cook Out" visit to Tanaka Farms. It was a good opportunity for all the children to meet each other.

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!

## Special Appreciation and Acknowledgment

*Airline Sponsor*

**Delta Air Lines**

*Welcome Reception Sponsors*

**Ninoska and William French**

**Ramen Burger®**

*“Mata Ne” Reception Sponsor*

**Rikiko Kubo Family**

*Special Interpreter*

**Isis Kubo**

*Generous Financial Supporters*

**Tammie Kanda**

**Rikiko Kubo Family**

**Henry Ota**

*Pro Bono Representation provided by*

**Seyfarth Shaw LLP**

### Host Families

**Mieko and Douglas Erber, and Ryan (7) and Katie (6)**

*Host Family of Haruka Iino and Narumi Iwase*

**Frances and Mickey Matsumoto, and Brandon (20), Jay (17) and Paige (15)**

*Host Family of Tomohiro Kuroki and Mao Arakida*

**Yumi and Douglas Montgomery, and Alec (6)**

*Host Family of Chihiro Iwasaki and Yuma Ujiie*

**Ellyn Iwata, and Warren (23), Derek (21) and Jason (16)**

*Host Family of Nene Hashimoto and Yasuaki Suzuki*

**Carmen and George Erber**

*Host Family of Yoshikuni “Yoshi” Endo, Chaperone*

*Special Host Family and Exchange Program Participants*

**Rikiko Kubo Family**

## **Special Activities' Sponsors** (Listed in chronological order)

### *Welcome Reception*

**Ninoska and William French**

**Jeffrey Shimamoto**

**Ramen Burger®**

**Henry Ota**, Vice Chairman, US–Japan Council

**Curtiss Takada Rooks**, Member, JASSC Board of Governors and Member, US–Japan Council

**Kay Amano**, “FYCEP Angel”

**June Aochi Berk**, “FYCEP Angel”

**Tammie Kanda**, “FYCEP Angel”

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

**Deputy Chief David Yamahata** (Ret.), 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

### *Day at the Beach*

**Ellyn Iwata**

**Jason Yamashita**

### *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**

### *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

**Little Tokyo Community Council** – Beautification Committee

**Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California**

**Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple**

### *Poolside BBQ Reception*

**The Honorable Masahiro Suga**, Acting Consul General of Japan

**Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles**

### *Inspirational Conversation for the FYCEP Exchange Participants*

**Shin Koyamada**, JASSC Special Ambassador. TV and Movie Actor and Producer.

*University of Southern California – Guided Tour and Lunch*

**Grace A. Shiba**, Senior Director of Alumni Relations  
**Tammie Kanda**, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor  
**Isis Kubo**, Interpreter

*Tour of Endeavour Space Shuttle at California Science Center*

**William T. Harris**, Senior Vice President of Development and Marketing, CSC  
**Patrick Love**, Executive Assistant, CSC  
**Tammie Kanda**, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor  
**Isis Kubo**, Interpreter

*Cookout Tour and BBQ Lunch at Tanaka Farms*

**Glenn Tanaka**  
**Tanaka Family**  
**Yuko Kaifu**, Member, US–Japan Council  
**3<sup>rd</sup> TOMODACHI-MUFG International Exchange Program**

*Harbour Surfboards – Tour of the one of the world’s oldest surfboard manufacturing shops*

**Robert Howson**, General Manager and COO

*Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim Game*

**Neil Viserto**, Senior Director, Corporate Sponsorships

*“Mata Ne” Farewell Reception*

**Rikiko Kubo Family**  
**Yuko Kaifu**, Member, US–Japan Council  
**Tammie Kanda**, FYCEP Volunteer & Sponsor  
**La Terazza Club House**  
**Kings Hawaiian Bakery**

*Visit to Disneyland*

**Kayleigh Erber**, Disneyland Resort  
**Sandie Hubert**, Disneyland Resort  
**Tammie Kanda**, FYCEP Committee and Sponsor  
**Pepi Kelman**

***Fukushima Youth Cultural Exchange Program – Planning Committee***

<b>June Aochi Berk</b>	<b>Atsuko Lee</b>
<b>Harumi Hata</b>	<b>Howard Nishimura</b>
<b>Ernest Hida</b>	<b>Reiko Sakata</b>
<b>Shige Higashi</b>	<b>Aki Tsurukame</b>
<b>Tammie Kanda</b>	<b>Vivien Usui</b>
<b>Thomas O’Kelly</b>	<b>Teruko Weinberg</b>

***JASSC Staff***

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**Kay Amano**, Programs Director  
**Gifford Saneto**, Office Manager  
**Stephanie Simpson-White**, Membership Development Coordinator