

October 2009

Number Seventeen

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Upcoming Events:

- February 13, 2010
MSCA annual Valentine Dance
- May 1-31, 2010 3rd
Annual Artist Exchange at Mendocino Art Center
- May 21-26, 2010
(about) student exchange from Miasa: mostly 4th & 5th graders and adults who will need HOME-STAYS (see back page for more details!

Mendocino Sister Cities Association, Inc.



To Miasa-Omachi June 23-July 9, 2009

No two trips are ever the same, and this most recent trip is no exception. Even though we followed the same route and schedule as we did in 2007, this latest journey with 23 students and 13 adults had its own subtle differences and logistical inconveniences.

We landed in Japan on June 24 and were met at the Osaka airport by our guides, Hosoi Tadashi and Otsuka-san. We then took a bus to the new Utano Youth Hostel, just rebuilt from the ground up.

First we toured our favorite sites like Kinkaku-ji and Ryoanji, described by student Celeste Fox Kump: "The rock garden at Ryoanji had a really beautiful tree and really big pond. Then we saw the main feature. Fifteen rocks were arranged in a sea of raked gravel. Each rock represents a different island. We meditated for five minutes and looked at the rocks. I loved it!"

Everyone said they "loved it." Even though there was talk that this

was "the worst trip ever," that was not the case. Logistically, the trip did have problems that put some extra stress on co-leaders Marci, Dave and I (which may have lent to the idea that this was a terrible trip), but overall, the group shrugged off the problems and pulled together as a team after a few days and everybody seemed very excited by what they were experiencing.

We next went to Nara to see the Todai-ji Daibutsu Temple and in Kyoto, the Chion-in Temple and the majestic Kiyomizudera Temple.

On the way to Hiroshima we departed the Shinkansen (Bullet train) in Himeji to tour the world

famous Himeji-jo (Castle).

After arriving in Hiroshima we settled in for the night but only after we sat by the river and shot off sky rockets to celebrate student Nico Brunner-Caldiera's birthday.

We went walking through a light rainfall the few blocks to the Hiroshima International Peace Park. We spent about two hours walking around the park, viewing the memorials to the people who died there on August 6, 1945. I do not think I have ever seen so many saddened, tear-filled eyes as after each person's exit from the museum, which truly is overwhelming.

Student Muriel Shattuck later wrote: "Yesterday was one of the saddest days of my life. We went to Hiroshima and we learned the true story of the A-bomb attack on Japan. We learned how the bomb hit and immediately killed thousands of people and the survivor's hands were melted and their skin hung from their



Students tossing coins into Prayer Rock depressions at Kinkaku-ji Temple, Kyoto

arms. I cried for so long.” Seemingly in a sympathetic gesture, the rain started falling harder as we waited for everyone to exit the museum.



*Rosa, Jessie, Jack & Erin
Burning Incense at Todai-ji
Temple*

We visited the beautiful little island of Miyajima to see the huge vermilion painted Torii Gate that sits in the bay.

In Kamakura we saw the Hase-dera (Temple of 10,000 Buddhas), Kencho-ji and the Bronze Daibutsu (Buddha).

As student Leah Sophia Harr observed in one of her writings, “I was amazed by the sight of the bronze Buddha. It was startling to think that a huge wave came all the way from the ocean to the building where the bronze Buddha sat, and swept the building away leaving the Buddha.”

We always divided up into small groups for lunch. Rosa Aum later wrote: “Learning Japanese enough to ask a waitress for water or tea was useful and fun. When we ate in a no-English restaurant we had such a blast with pointing at the pictures of the food. In fact we always steered away from English speaking places.”

In Tokyo we once again visited the Miraikan Tech-

Center. We did something new by also touring the Edo Museum. Student Tavi Hillesland wrote: “The Miraikan Tech Center was great but I could have used about two more hours there. The Edo Museum was super awesome, but again, I could have used quite a bit more time. I thought the ancient part was as interesting as it would get, so I read all of the displays. Consequently I had five minutes to speed through the most interesting part, the 1900’s.”



*Haley, Alana, Erin, &
Cielle below Torii gate at
Ryoanji Temple*

Ah yes, time... so much to see, so little time. The lament of so many inquisitive minds.

After riding the Shinkansen to Nagano and touring the Zenkoji Temple, we arrived in Miasa at exactly 5:30 pm where we were welcomed with speeches and tables of food at the “Welcome Party.” After all the welcome speeches and feasting we were taken home by our individual homestay hosts

for another meal at their homes. We had told everyone to “Save room for dessert!” Little did they realize, we were not kidding.

Our visit included gathering at the Crafts Center where the students were given the task of tying the drum heads to alderwood Taiko drum bodies handmade by Tokio Oda; having a free day with our homestay hosts; and being welcomed at the Miasa Middle School, which is now the Sister School of our Mendocino K-8 School.

We went to Omachi City Hall for a meeting with Omachi Mayor Ushikoshi and viewed the art galleries where the 2009 Mendocino/Miasa-Omachi Art Exchange Show was held.

The group’s adults were treated to a wonderful traditional Japanese dinner at Poka Poka Land by Mayor Ushikoshi, Miasa-Omachi Sister Cities Association (MOSCA) chief, Kitazawa-san and several other local dignitaries.

On the last day in Miasa the students sang for the senior citizens at the Senior Health Center, fol-



Mendocino Students Communicating with Japanese Students

lowed that night by the Farewell Party where the Mendocino women and girls were dressed up in beautiful kimonos, and the men and boys in Yukatas. Speeches were made, gifts were exchanged, a filling dinner was served and then music was played by several groups. There was Taiko, contemporary and traditional Japanese music. From our group Ella Childs played the chrome flute, Tavi Hillesland sang a song from “The Sound of Music” and accompanied herself on the piano, and everyone was thoroughly entertained by two pieces of music played on the piano by the very accomplished Haley Perry.

Rosa Aum wrote in her journal about our last night in Miasa: “Another good part of the trip were the baths at Poka Poka



*Eating Okonomiyaki for
Lunch on Miyajima*

Land, which were very relaxing, especially the one where we laid down in the jets.”

The morning of departure we were met in the lobby by the homestay hosts and MOSCA volunteers. A chorus of teary-eyed “See you agains” and “arigatos” were heard as we boarded the bus for Nagano Shinkansen Station.

It's great to hear things like the following from students as attentive during the trip as Leah Sophia Harr: "I absolutely loved Miasa. It had many kind people and my homestay families were very hospitable. I would like to thank Marci, Mike and Dave for showing us these beautiful places and going out of their way to make all this possible. I would also like to thank

Travis for showing us around the cities and Chelsea for translating and all the chaperones for holding our money and taking care of us."

As Celeste Fox Kump wrote: "I love Japan and will miss it when I go back home. I guess that means I'll just have to come back!" My sentiments exactly.

Minnasan, domo arigato gozaimashita!

Mike L. Evans
MSCA President

If you wish to read the thoroughly detailed version of this trip and view photos you can go to the MSCA web site, www.mendosca.org and click "Past Trips."



Mendocino Student Group Gathered at 800 Year Old Cherry Tree



Sarah and Miasa Student



Mendocino Students Learning Taiko from Miasa Student Teacher



Artist Exchange 2009



On June 17, 2009, nine Mendocino County artists, sponsored by the Mendocino/Miasa-Omachi Sister Cities Associations, boarded a plane headed for Tokyo, Japan. This was Mendocino's first artist exchange trip to Miasa-Omachi. The nine artists who traveled to Japan included myself (Sharon Garner, Board member and trip leader), Sachiko Kusachi, Ling-Yen Jones, Deborah Lennox, Paulo Ferreira, Walt Padgett, Carmen Fraser, Bob Rhoades, and Maeve Croghan. Twenty additional local artists' work was also exhibited in the show.

We arrived in Omachi, and were royally greeted by city officials, homestay hosts and two lovely geisha! We were taken to see the two galleries where our art was on display, one was a traditional Japanese home, now a museum, that was craftily converted into a lovely showcase for hanging art. The second, a large double room loft above a business was spacious and airy. This gallery



Mendocino Exchange Artists Sachiko Kusachi, Sharon Garner, and Ling-Yen Jones

housed paintings, photographs, weavings, mobiles, jewelry and wearable art. In both galleries the pieces were beautifully and impeccably displayed. In addition, the city's local businesses and galleries all had announcements of the show and reception (held several days later). We were next received by the Mayor of Omachi, Toru Ushikoshi, and several city officials for an official welcome to Omachi.

Our homestays were wonderful! Our hosts made every effort to immerse us in Japanese culture and hospitality. Each day the group was taken on various trips to art museums (including the Matsumoto Museum of Art, which housed the Mendocino show during a week in

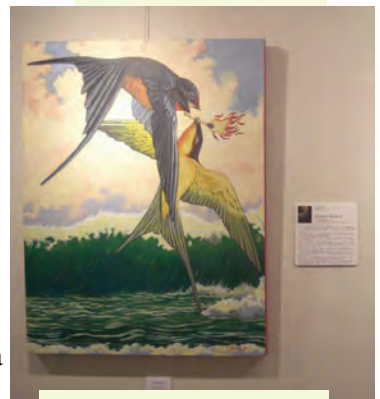
September) an incredible wood block art museum, temples and various Omachi places of great interest, such as the Salt Road. We also witnessed a Buddhist ceremony that only takes place every 7 years!

This tradition requires that the monks read all of the texts of Buddha. The artists just happened to be in Omachi during this very special celebration.

One would be remiss to not mention the fabulous food and numerous parties prepared in honor of the artists. Our final evening was spent at the famous Poka Poka land, which is a Japanese spa.

After 5 days in Miasa-Omachi, the artists split up into several groups to travel in Japan on their own.

All in all, the trip was wonderful; a time that will not be forgotten by those who went. The artists will share many fond memories, inspired by their surroundings and the art that they viewed, and some may want to travel to Japan



"Last Match" by Eduardo Smisson

again in two years! Next May, the Japanese artists will return with their new show. We are looking forward to their visit and hope that the Mendocino Community will come and enjoy their incredible works of craft and art at the Mendocino Art Center.

Sharon Garner, Board Member

Excerpts from Student Journals



Mendocino Students Singing at Miasa Middle School

- Students Pictured Pg. 4:**
- Andrew Matheson
 - Rosa Aum
 - Jack LaTorre
 - Melia Poehlmann
 - Drae Harned-Suarez
 - Leah Sophia Harr
 - Nico Brunner-Caldiera
 - Elizabeth Norvell
 - Devin Dooley

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for the Valentine's dance in February!

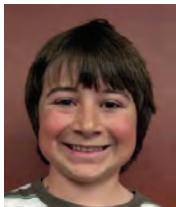
Food, silent auction items, and help on that evening would be appreciated.

Contact Mike or Sharon for details. (Contact info pg. 6)



Torii Gate Guarding Itsukushima Island, popularly referred to as Miyajima Island

If I could pick out my best vacations and make a list, Japan would be on top! My most favorite parts of this trip have been the giant bronze Buddha in Kamakura, the farewell party in Miasa, the baths at Poka-Poka Land, the temple like botanical garden in Kamakura, and staying at our homestays in Miasa-Omachi. Why? Because the giant bronze Buddha was able to survive a tsunami that wiped out the temple that housed it. The farewell party was really fun and neat (except for the girls). The baths in PokaPoka Land were super cool (and a little awkward). The temple was like a garden. It had koi ponds and a cave and this old prayer wheel! Staying with the host families was awesome! I mean they were right in the middle between modern and old fashioned. Plus their meals were so good! It was nice to have a homemade meal instead of super market junk.



When we first got here I got kind of spooked because a car would drive by and where the driver should be, a lady was putting on makeup. I guess I missed the detail about opposite drivers' sides. My friend, Michael, has been to Japan, China, most of Asia and a lot of other places. He says Japan is the most beautiful place in the world. I just might agree.



It amazed me that men have made tracks that go practically forever but it is one solid piece. Being on the bullet train is real cool because it's like an airplane. The attendant comes with food and the seats are just like airplane's (and you're kind of going that fast). The downside is that the bullet train has lots of stops and barely is going far enough to get real fast. Another thing that amazes me is that when you're on the bullet trains there are like no bumps. It's really smooth.



We have had minimal, yet extremely educational conversations with some Japanese school girls and boys. We're in their country and even though we have been studying our Japanese over the past few months they seem to know a lot more English than we do Japanese.

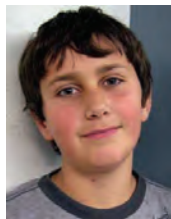
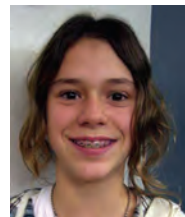
I have had a lot of fun on this trip. My favorite part was the homestays and playing games with them. I went to the dam and the river. I liked the fireworks or walked. It was cool going into the bronze Buddha and the Tokyo Dome was also one of my favorites.



The first time I went on the bullet train was our third or fourth day. The speed overwhelmed me and it was very neat to see a mountain zoom by you. I also enjoyed it because I have a lot of freedom to move seats, to talk to friends, and watch things flash by. The place I liked the most so far is the Himeji Castle. That place is huge. I like the design of it because if someone tried to get into the prince's throne they had to walk through mazes, moats and some samurai houses. I doubt that anyone ever made it to the prince's throne. I also like the walk up to the top to see artifacts and other stuff. I also saw samurai swords. And now we are on a bullet train going over 200 mph!



On the fourth day we went to the Hiroshima Peace Park. It was so sad what happened there. Then we went to an island and it started raining so we ran around on the streets getting wet. It was so fun! Everyone gave us really weird looks. I can't wait to get to Miasa! It will be so great to get out of the cities. Well, the big ones



anyway. It will feel like home again. I had a lot of fun when we went to the castle. My favorite part was the old weapons and guns. I really like the youth hostel and the island of Miyajima. I like the giant wooden Buddha. I discovered my new strengths and my new weaknesses.



I've learned that the drop zone at the amusement park is really fun and that I push a lot and I have stopped biting my nails! We

learned about ourselves and each other, sometimes getting embarrassed but that's what good friends are for, to



push you down and then pick you back up again.

Himeji Castle was the coolest castle because it was fun to climb the stairs to get to the top of it. But it's worth the time to walk up because of the view. The whole trip has been so much fun learning about the Japanese culture and history, and experiencing different things--and



Haley and Alana Feeding the Deer at Nara Park, Nara

More Excerpts from Student Journals



most of all making new friends. Although going to restaurants was really

nice, culture-wise, home-stays were the best. I learned the proper way to act in a Japanese home. Seeing the fog on Miyajima Island was awesome because it kind of reminded me of home, which was odd because I wasn't home-sick.

There are unbelievable amount of vending machines in Japan. You never have to wait long to get relief from the dehydrating heat. For the most part, my overall experience in Japan has been amazing.

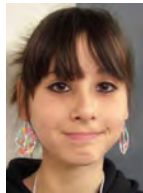


been having conversations with people that speak Japanese.

We also went to Miyajima Island. In fact, that might have been my favorite part because it had been raining that day and it was so nice to be out of the heat. We went around the island stores and streets and water completely soaked us. It was hilarious! They have so much fish here it's crazy. It's very clean here and everyone is very pretty. I'm very much enjoying Japan and I'm so glad I came.

My homestay family took us to a really cool sushi place with the sushi comes around on a conveyor belt and brings you your food.

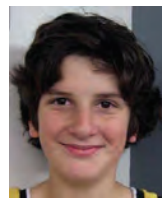
I love the Japanese culture; how manageable and considerate it is, and how different their customs are from ours.



I like the giant gate leading to the giant Buddha. The Buddha was three stories tall and they have this



hole in the wall where people would try to fit through the hole. It was the size of



the Buddha's nostril. Everywhere we go we get stamps and they are all different. I have only

found 2 things that are hard. We have to keep our room clean and when we leave we have to pack and it's hard. I have made more and more friends since we started. My favorite thing is speaking Japanese, like sometimes I use more than three words at a time.

Fish, beef, noodles, and rice. What could be better? Everybody here is helpful and kind. They try really hard to understand you when you can't explain things in Japanese.

Shrines are cool too. They have many beautiful headstones, stone lanterns, and paths. The smell of incense fills the air everywhere you go and people pray and give offerings.

I love Japan and will miss it when I go back home. I guess that means I'll just have to come back!



The first day we were in Miasa we took a walk along the rice paddies. There are so many frogs. You can reach your

hands down and always come up with two or three frogs.

We went to Kurobe Dam and the Japanese Alps. At the top of the mountains

is snow in the summer! We had a snowball fight and slid in the ice. There were also these really cool



Leah Sophia, Lily, Sarah, and Muriel at Farewell Party

Students Pictured Pg. 5:

- Muriel Shattuck
- Jesse Koss Waldo
- Tavi Hillisland
- Devin Dooley
- Erin Thomas
- Alana Bowman
- Haley Perry
- Noah Thomas
- Travis Fein
- Celeste Kump

Mendocino Sister Cities Association, Inc.

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We're on the Web!

mendosca.org



More Excerpts From Student Journals



smoking volcanoes. I love talking to the Japanese students

that are around our age. They know English really well compared to how much Japanese we know. It's fun to use hand motions if someone doesn't understand a word. I have talked to them about five times so far. I'm looking forward to going to the school and meeting the kids.

But you know which is which because the one for the boys has a blue curtain. The girls have a red one. One of the rooms is hotter than the other.



I like Japan because I really fit in. I could be Japanese if I looked more Asian. I think I'm going to live in Tokyo when I'm old enough to move out of the house. I really

love it here. I don't want to leave, but today, sadly, I have to.

Last night was a farewell dinner. We wore kimonos. They were hot and sweaty. Leah could barely breathe.



I plan to come back sometime in the future so I can spend more time in each place. Till then I plan to enjoy everything like it is the last day of my life.



The baths of Poka Poka Land were great. Every day the boy and girl rooms switched.

Students Pictured Pg. 6:

Cielle Watjen-Brown

Seamus Begley

Lily Harrison

Sarah Crowningshield

Ella Childs

HOMESTAY HOSTS NEEDED!!

- For the artists coming in May 2010 contact Sharon Garner; 877-3988 or sharonart_95432@yahoo.com
- For the students coming at the end of May, 2010 contact Debbie Crowningshield; 937-3129 or debcrown@mcn.org



Mendocino Group at Yasaka Fujio Kakuon-ji

Don't Forget!!

- Enclosed is your annual membership renewal form. Please renew and help support or program!
- Sometime in October 2010 applications for the trip to Miasa-Omachi in June/July of 2011 will be handed out. Students in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade will be eligible.