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Let's Talk About the World in Kagoshima - The 21st Japanese Speech Contest for Foreigners



Winner: Mr Muhamad Syukri bin Ghazali

From the 32 contestants from 14 countries/regions who took part in the preliminary rounds on 9 January 2016, 10 foreigners from 5 countries/regions were selected to participate in the finals held on 23 January. The winner was Mr Muhamad Syukri bin Ghazali from Malaysia, a Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) for Hioki City, with his speech *"Kuwarzugirai"* (disliking something without having tried it).

Mr Syukri spoke of his experiences when introducing Malaysia's culture in Japan. The durian, Malaysia's typical fruit, would be disliked by the Japanese audience, even by those who had not tried it before, for its pungent smell. But how can one decide that something smells bad without actually seeing or touching it? People's tastes and preferences differ, so how can one determine that it tastes bad? Mr Syukri described how this unfounded prejudice is undeserved with an anecdote of his Japanese friend's encounter with the durian in Malaysia, and called for the importance of actually seeing, feeling and experiencing for oneself before deciding, to an audience of approximately 360 people.

Among other speeches, there were those who spoke of striving towards their dream in Japan, peppering their eloquent Japanese speech with humor and having the audience break out in laughter, and then there were those who moved the listeners to tears.

The venue was moved to Kenmin Hall as of this year. And while we are sure there were contestants who were nervous speaking before the huge crowd, they delivered their speeches with much aplomb and captured the hearts of the audience. We hope to continue providing the opportunity for the citizens of Kagoshima to interact with people of different nationalities and cultures.



Front row: participants; back row: judges

Multiculturalism Project

On 27 June 2015, Kagoshima International Association (KIA) organized a workshop on etiquette at weddings and funerals in Japan for foreign residents to familiarize themselves with the local customs and social manners expected at ceremonial occasions. A speaker from Soroptimist International of Kagoshima came to speak to 21 attendees from 7 different countries.

At the workshop, the participants learned through explanations and actual practice on how to RSVP to a wedding invite, how to use a *shugibukuro* (an envelope for monetary gifts), and how to offer incense at a funeral. One of the participants said, "I was moved by the Japanese culture's politeness and respect for others".

Following last year's success, we also organized a hospital tour that aims to educate foreign residents on the healthcare system and procedure for visiting a hospital, and the "Mount Sakurajima Eruption Evacuation Exercise" co-organized with Kagoshima City. We hope the knowledge gained from these events would serve the attendees well in their day-to-day life in Japan.



At the Japanese etiquette seminar



Practicing a Shinto *tamagushi* offering

Japanese Language and Culture Class



During class



During class

The Japanese Language and Culture Class was held from May 2015 to February 2016 to teach foreigners living in Kagoshima about Japanese customs and useful everyday phrases. The Wednesday and Thursday classes each met 30 times for a combined total of 60 sessions.

This fiscal year, the activities held include opinions exchange sessions about current affairs and topics, and presentations on the students' home country's dishes. The students actively engaged in learning the language despite being nervous. They also took part in etiquette workshops, hospital tours, and evacuation drills as part of the Multiculturalism Project. Through this one year of study, the students deepened their knowledge not just of Japanese language, but also on local culture and lifestyle.

Japanese Language Chat Room



Free discussion on volunteerism

The Japanese Language Chat Room, for foreigners with a grasp of Japanese, was held between May 2015 and March 2016 for a total of 20 sessions.

Guest speakers including officials specializing in administrative procedures and information systems were invited to provide topics useful for living in Kagoshima, such as on residence permits and the My Number system. We have also invited speakers well-versed in Japanese culture such as shochu liquor and tea ceremony to enable participants to interact with Japanese culture. Some feedback include

“I gained confidence in my Japanese”, “I realized there are many things I do not know even after living in Japan for a long time”, “I enjoy coming as I can make friends from different countries”. We hope this class will provide participants the opportunity to make new friends and fuel their desire to learn Japanese.

Public Seminar on International Understanding by Foreign Lecturers

This year, KIA organized 2 public seminars on international understanding, led by foreigners residing in Kagoshima who introduce their home culture to the locals.

The seminar led by New Zealand-born speakers had participants make poi - a ball on a cord - and then use them to perform a traditional Maori poi dance. Feedback from participants include “I was able to feel a familiarity with New Zealand”, “the workshop-style seminar was educational and gave me a direct experience of the culture”. We would like to organize more of such seminars to allow for greater interaction between foreigners and locals and provide them the opportunity to become better acquainted with one another’s cultures.



Public seminar on New Zealand’s culture

In addition, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea, we have held 3 different cultural seminars relating to South Korea. The participants listened attentively to the Korean speakers, and one commented that “despite being a neighboring country, there are so many things I did not know, and this talk helped expand my horizons.”

Alumni of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and Foreign Students as Teachers



At Soo City Takarabekita Elementary School

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) dispatches volunteers known as Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) to countries around the world, and upon their return the JOCVs from Kagoshima Prefecture participate as guest speakers in the “JOCV Alumni and Foreign Students as Teachers” school visit program jointly organized by KIA, the Supporting Organization of JOCV in Kagoshima, and the JOCV Kagoshima Alumni Association. This program dispatches speakers to over 40 schools every year and since its inauguration in 1995, the speakers have visited more than 830 elementary and junior

high schools in the prefecture.

Teachers have praised the opportunity to listen to experiences from the JOCV alumni and foreign students as opposed to gaining information through the media, saying it allows the children to experience the world more intimately. Comments from children include “I want to do what I love and work for the benefit of someone”, “I want to create a future where everyone in the country work together to stop wars”. Besides educating the students about international understanding, these lessons also provide a good opportunity for them to think about their future.

Regional International Exchange Promotion Program



This initiative aims to stimulate interest in international exchange through the setting up of international exchange booths at local festivals with the cooperation of foreign residents and international exchange associations. This fiscal year we have participated in the MBC Summer Festival in Kagoshima City, the International Exchange Festa commemorating the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Satsumasendaishi International Friendship Association in Satsumasendai City, the Chi Kaete Matsuri in Ichikikuchino City, and the Marugoto Ijuin Festival in Hioki City.

At the MBC Summer Festival in July 2015, we set up a booth together with Kagoshima International Exchange Foundation. Besides distributing our Association's pamphlets, we introduced various types of ethnic costumes and held activities where children collected stamped greetings in various languages and made bookmarks using stamps from around the world with the help of Prefectural Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs), foreign students and residents. The festival gained a notch in vibrancy when the CIRs and foreign students went on stage in their colourful dresses to introduce the ethnic costumes.

Services at the International Exchange Plaza

- Events bulletin board
- Rental of flags, ethnic costumes, maps, and UNICEF videos
- Foreign language newspapers, books and magazines for browsing
- Consultation for foreign residents
- Chinese Language Lunchtime Conversation (Tue; 12:00 - 13:00)
- Korean Language Lunchtime Conversation (Wed; 12:30 - 13:30)
- Lunchtime English Club (Fri; 12:00 - 13:00)



We also handle queries on international exchange matters and JICA volunteer work, registration of homestay host families, language studies volunteers, etc. All personal information will be kept confidential, so do not hesitate to stop by if you have any enquiries.

Opening hours: Tue – Sun; 9:00 – 17:00

Closed on Mondays (if Monday is a public holiday, the office will be closed on Tuesday) and during the New Year holiday (29 Dec – 3 Jan).



To contact us about the International Exchange Plaza and/or South Wing publication,

Kagoshima International Association

Kagoshima Prefectural Citizens Exchange Centre, 1F 14-50 Yamashita-cho, Kagoshima City, Japan 892-0816

TEL : 099-221-6620

FAX : 099-221-6643

URL : <http://www.synapse.ne.jp/kia/>

E-mail (general enquiries): kia@po.synapse.ne.jp

E-mail (consultations only): kia8@po.synapse.ne.jp

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Kagoshima.Intl.Assoc/>