



# KCC Newsletter

April, 2023

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Vol.  
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## Citizens' Delegation Tour to Torrance to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Sister City Affiliation (2/16-2/23)

A total of 44 Kashiwa citizens, including Mayor Kazumi Ota, City Council Chair, Mr. Norihito Tsumuraya, city officials, and some of the members of the Kashiwa International Relations Association, visited Torrance in California on February 16 to 23. The visitors received a hearty welcome from Mayor George Chen of Torrance, as well as Torrance Sister City Association members, and many other citizens.

At the welcoming ceremony in front of the City Hall, many city employees welcomed us by waving the small national flags of Japan and the U.S., and the Torrance citizen's chorus sang the national anthems of the two countries. They made us feel deeply grateful for the peace relationship. As was customary, a commemorative cherry tree planting was held on the City Hall grounds. At the Torrance Art Museum, a special exhibition by Japanese and Japanese American artists was being held to celebrate our 50th anniversary. At Torrance North High School, which is the sister school of Kashiwa Municipal High School, the students also sang the national anthems of both countries for us. At lunch time, we enjoyed conversations in Japanese with the high school students who were taking Japanese language classes. After lunch, they gave us a school tour of their large campus, where 1,800 students study. That evening, the delegation was divided into two groups: the Mayor's Dinner group and the Home Visit group. At the home visit, the visitors made new friendships with the newly acquainted families. At the picnic in Wilson Park, all of us wore the yellow sister city T-shirts and renewed old friendships. There was even a reunion of a former Kashiwa exchange student and his Torrance host family member, who had not seen each other in decades. On the last day, the Sayonara Banquet featured the 50th anniversary signing by the two mayors, and we paid tribute to Mikko Haggott Henson, who passed away last year and was instrumental in the establishment of the sister city agreement. We pledged to further strengthen the ties between the two cities. A delegation from Torrance is scheduled to visit Kashiwa this October.



Citizens of Kashiwa and Torrance together at the picnic  
(Photo courtesy of City of Torrance)



Mayor Kazumi Ota at the signpost of Kashiwa Street and Kashiwa Court

## A Tour of the Former Yoshida Family Residence with Hina Doll Displays (2/28)

A total of 24 participants (two from the Philippines, one from China, and 21 from Japan) listened attentively to the detailed explanation from Mr. Miyata, a volunteer guide, on omoya (living space area), shoin (study), shin-zashiki (new reception rooms with tatami-mats), the garden, etc. In the garden, he explained the influence of Chinese philosophy on Japanese garden design and showed us the seasonal photo spots.

In front of the hina decorations, which is the main event of the tour, the visitors met the artists of the ceramic hina dolls and of the hanging hina ornaments. They actively exchanged a lot of questions and answers about the hina decorations.

After the tour, some visitors enjoyed coffee or lunch at the Nagayamon Café on the premises, admiring the plum blossoms in full bloom. In the warm early spring weather, it was an enjoyable day to learn about the place with significant history and culture. We thought we would like to come back all year-round in any season, including in the seasons of cherry blossoms and autumn leaves.



Participants listening to the presentation of a hina doll artist.

## The Seventh Japanese Speech Contest in Kashiwa by Foreign Residents --- Mayor's Award Winner "School Teachers"

Sherazi Noor ul Safi From Pakistan

Hello, everyone! I am Sherazi Noor ul Safi from Pakistan.

The theme of my speech is "School Teachers." What kind of image do you have of a teacher? Kind, scary, funny, strict? To me, a teacher is a person who nurtures us not only educationally, but also mentally and emotionally. Someone who teaches us every day with a smile on their face. I always wonder why our teachers are so cheerful and smiling. I would like to talk about such teachers.

I first came to Japan in 2015. I went to school from the end of the 4th grade to the 5th grade. On my first day of school, my teacher came to my house and took me to school together. At that time, I could only understand "yes" in Japanese. So, a Japanese teacher who could speak English came twice a week to help me. My teacher also learned to say "goodbye" in my native Urdu and wished me good-bye every day. I was very happy and will never forget my first teacher in Japan.

A year later, I went back to Pakistan, my home country. However, I strongly wanted to study in Japan, so after five years, in November 2021, I returned to Japan and entered a Japanese school again. At that time, I could speak a little Japanese, but I could not write or read kanji. Even if I could read them, I had no idea what they meant. I was in the third year of junior high school at the time, and I was very worried about whether I would be able to enter high school. My math teacher taught me the basics of junior high school math in a very kind way. Also, my homeroom teacher thought very carefully about which high school was best suited to me and worked very hard to find the right one for me. I am very grateful for that.

And now I have successfully entered high school. I am now taking all the classes in Japanese. It is very hard to keep up with the classes because they are difficult to understand, but I am doing my best. When I ask a question, all of the teachers are always kind and explain in a way I can understand.

Besides studying, I was interested in the student council. I wanted to run for the student council, so I asked my teacher about it. I was about to give up because the work of the student council sounded very hard, and my Japanese was still not good enough. But my teacher said, "Even if your Japanese is not so good, it is okay as long as you are motivated." These words gave me a supportive push and I decided to run for Student Council. I did my best to give a campaign speech. As a result, I was elected as Vice President, which I could not believe at first. I am grateful to the teacher. And not only my teachers in Japan, but also a teacher I had in Pakistan has been helping me. When I participated in an English speech contest the other day, I was very nervous, so I sent an e-mail to the teacher in Pakistan. I had a reply saying, "You're my girl, you can do it," and it cheered me up and made me very happy.

Whenever I have a question, I always ask the teachers. Sometimes I ask the same question several times, but each time they explain to me in an easier way to understand. They teach and talk to and help me a lot other than school subjects. In this way, meeting with such teachers in my daily life have changed my life a lot, and I am very happy now. Thank you very much for your kind attention.



Ms. Sherazi Noor ul Safi

### Announcement

#### Online Study Session "Let's Enjoy SNS: Basic Knowledge of TikTok and YouTube"

Date & Time: Thursday, April 20, 8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Participation fee: free

Application: Sign up directly at the KCC office or send an email to <boshu-1@kira-kira.jp>. Please write your name and phone number. We will send you the URL for participation on the day.

Upcoming study session: Thursday May 25, 8:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Inclusive Society #1 -Foreigners Issues Around Us-

Lecturer: Hatsuo Sugishita







## My Visit to Torrance as a Student Delegate Changed My Life 180 Degrees

Tamiko Ooka (1980 Kashiwa Student Delegate)

February 18, 2023 was the third day of our visit to Torrance to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the sister city affiliation, and the "Friendship Festival" was held at the Armstrong Theater in Torrance. We enjoyed a variety of performances by the people involved with the sister city exchanges, including a chorus presentation by the Torrance citizens, singing and *taiko* drum performances by the former exchange students from Torrance to Kashiwa, and English *rakugo* by Shinoharu Tatekawa (actual name, Ittetsu Kojima), who was a former exchange student from Kashiwa in 1993. We interviewed Tamiko Ooka, a Student Delegate in 1980, who also performed opera on this stage for the 50th Anniversary event.

### What made you to apply for the sister city exchange program in 1980?

---At that time, I was a sophomore in the English and American literature department at university, and I was interested in American culture. Not just visiting places and taking photos. I thought I wanted to get to know people better and to experience American life.

### Please tell us about your observations through your stay in Torrance.

---People in the U.S. were very open-minded and tolerant of different personalities. When I was young, I was very assertive. Back then, people in Japan might have thought of me as a strange person. But the American people accepted me just the way I was. I also made friends with people who I could talk with very closely, and that made me very happy. People were really kind and nice to me, and I realized "Human nature is the same everywhere, even if we live in a different country."

### In what way has the exchange program affected your life?

---The experience changed my life 180 degrees! It made me determined to be a global figure in the future. After graduating from a Japanese university, I worked for a foreign-owned securities firm in Japan for two years, and then, I decided to go to the U.S. to study business. After studying in the U.S., I became a reporter for a Japanese-language newspaper in Los Angeles, specializing in business. Following that, I was involved in such jobs as mergers and acquisitions (M&A), and real-estate investment financing for a Japanese trust bank. I had lived in the U.S. for about 15 years and returned to Japan in 1999 for a posting at a major American securities firm to trade non-performing loans. Now, I am working in investment management at a hedge fund in Tokyo. I owe what I am today to the opportunity that the sister city program offered to me.

### It must have been difficult for a Japanese woman to do so much work in the American business world. How did you overcome the difficulties?

---It was not easy, but in the U.S., I did not feel so much discrimination against women in the workplace, which was commonly seen in Japan in those days. And because of that, I think I was blessed with great opportunities at work in the U.S.

### From what I've heard so far, you have had jobs unrelated to music. You studied at a music college, didn't you?

---I did not go to music school and I sing without being able to read sheet music properly. I love to sing, and one Christmas my American husband gave me a coupon for voice lessons. While taking the voice lessons, I got hooked on opera and began singing in amateur opera groups. I have been doing so for more than 15 years.

### It must be hard to manage opera lessons and stage performances on top of your busy work in the business world. How do you manage that?

--- The less time I have to spend, the more I can concentrate, especially on what I like to do. While singing opera, I have learned to understand Italian. Engaging in favorite activities enriches my life, and because of that, I can work hard.

### What do you expect of the young former delegates and the prospective delegates?

---I encourage the young people to open their minds, to be flexible in thinking, and to have a lot of impactful experiences without any preconceptions. I hope to see many of them considering themselves as the citizens of the world while respecting their Japanese roots, accepting different cultures and people wherever they live, and openly expressing their opinion without hesitation.

(Interview: Noriko Fujita)



Ms. Tamiko Ooka



At the "Friendship Festival," on the far right.  
(Photo courtesy of the City of Torrance)

# April Events

Japanese Shonan Classes		
Online Classes (New Term 4/6-)		
Sat	7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary II
Sun	7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I and Intermediate II
In-person Classes (Shonan Community Center)		
Thu	10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I(2 classes)
Sun	10:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I
Japanese Kashiwa Classes(New Term 4/8 -)		
Online Classes		
Tue	7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I (Unit 20 - )
Wed	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Conversation Elementary 2B (Level 2)
Wed	7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary II (Unit 34 - )
Thu	1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.	Conversation Elementary 2A (Level 2)
Fri	7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary II (Unit 31 - )
Sat	9:30 a.m. - 11:20 a.m.	Conversation Intermediate
In-person Classes (Palette Kashiwa )		
Thu	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	hiragana/katakana
Thu	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	<i>Beginners</i>
Thu	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I (Unit 8 - )
Sat	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I (Unit 7 - )
Sat	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	<i>Minna no Nihongo</i> , Primary I (Unit 22- )
In-person Classes (Kashiwanoha Service Corner)		
Thu	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Conversation Elementary, Introductory and 1
Thu	10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.	Conversation Elementary 2

## Free Legal Advice and Administrative Procedure Support for Foreign Residents

To foreign residents. Are you in need of help? Lawyers and administrative procedure specialists are available for consultation. You can ask for specialists' advice on issues such as family or partner violence, divorce, visa procedures, and problems at work. Reservation necessary.

Date & Time: Wednesday, April 19, 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Place: Palette Kashiwa Room A

Reservation: the KCC office

## Information for Foreign Residents from Kashiwa City

### Consultation for Foreign Residents

Available in English (Thu), Chinese (Wed and Fri), Spanish (Mon), and Korean (2nd and 4th Tue) from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Consultation Counter for Foreign Residents (City Hall Main Office Building, 3rd floor).

Tel: 04 - 7168 - 1033

No reservation required.

### Email distribution service from Kashiwa City

Sign up to receive email announcement from the city, such as information on natural disasters, crimes, and fires of your area in the language of your choice. Scan the QR code and register!



### Multilingual "Koho Kashiwa," monthly official city bulletin

Scan the QR code and select your language under "Foreign Language" to read the official city bulletin, "Koho Kashiwa," selected and translated for foreign residents.



### Links for Multilingual News & BOSAI INFO (Disaster prevention and Coronavirus)

NHK WORLD-JAPAN



Questions?  
Please contact the office of  
Kashiwa Cross-cultural Center (KCC)

Tel: 04-7157-0281 Fax: 04-7165-7321  
Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5:15 p.m.  
Closed on Sundays and national holidays