

INDEPENDENCE-HIGASHIMURAYAMA

Sister City

NEWSLETTER

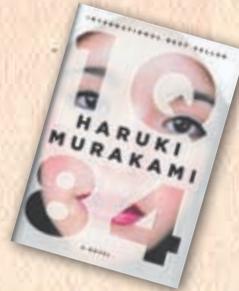
Spring 2012

Table of Contents

3) 2012 Student Ambassador Update

4) State of the Sister City with the Chairman

5) Book Review: 1Q84 by Haruki Murakami



Getting the JSCC Word Out

6)  24th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival

History, Guest Artist, and Activities

7) Anniversary Celebration Announcements

8) 2012 Calendar of Major Events

Student Ambassador Update

Contributed By: Ken Mulliken Ph.D. – Teacher Escort for 2012

When Mayor Reimal announced that the 2011 sister-city exchange would be canceled due to uncertainty resulting from the tragic tsunami at Fukushima, the Student Ambassadors from Independence to Higashimurayama were disappointed and somewhat disheartened. At that time, the potential for health risks associated with the destruction of the nuclear power plant remained uncertain. As it turned out our sister city was essentially unaffected, however, the concerns were valid. Although saddened by the exchange's cancellation, the Independence Student Ambassadors realized that even if there were no radiation problems in Higashimurayama, our Japanese friends would have their hands full without the additional burdens associated with hosting us. As a result, our Student Ambassadors turned their attention to interacting with the students visiting from Japan during the summer, and then preparing for the 2012 trip.

We have retained a strong core group of Student Ambassadors for 2012, although some of the most enthusiastic students could not extend their plans from 2011 to 2012 due to other commitments. We will miss them and the unique flair they brought to our group. At the same time, we have welcomed

other students who have applied and gone through the interview process. Although 2012's compilation of Student Ambassadors is slightly different than 2011's group would have been, they are bonding together well and enjoy each other's company. They are respectful of each other and are eager to learn.

In preparation for our stay in Higashimurayama we have focused our attention in three areas. First, we have been learning more about Independence, Missouri, and the United States. We have met with city officials to better understand how our government works, learn what community concerns currently exist, and discuss what unique and appealing attributes our city possesses. Second, we have participated in activities that have brought us closer together. These have included games and team-building activities. Third, we have tried to

learn some Japanese customs, traditions, history, and language. A few of our Student Ambassadors have been able to take private Japanese-language lessons. This will no doubt enhance their visit to Japan. However, any attempts our students make at expressing themselves in Japanese will be appreciated by our hosts and make them feel more immersed in the experience. Consequently, at our last meeting we played "Pictionary Phrase Review."

In this activity, teams of students competed with each other to draw and properly guess Japanese words or phrases. For example, a student may be asked by the teacher escort to draw a picture, within one minute, which prompted his or her team members to correctly guess the word "otsui," which in English means "hot."

For each correct guess they would get one point. Teams alternated and drew Japanese words or phrases ranging from "hashi," meaning chopsticks, to "benjo wa doko desuka?," meaning "where is the toilet." It was a fun and effective method to assist the Student Ambassadors in learning Japanese words and phrases while at the same time bonding as a cohesive group.

Perhaps the most significant symbol of their increasing unity was their unanimous approval of the proposed T-shirt design by Kim Swanner. 2012 will be a GREAT Student Ambassador group and we can't wait to visit Japan!



2012 T-Shirt Design
2012 Student Ambassadors

The State of Sister City

with the Chairman

It is a great privilege to serve the City and the Sister City Committee as the current Chairman. I am excited by the enthusiasm of the Committee to work together to do great things and to celebrate not only our culture and friendships, but that of the Japanese. We just finished celebrating thirty four years of relationship building and cultural exchanges between the City of Higashimurayama, Japan and the City of Independence and look forward to many more.

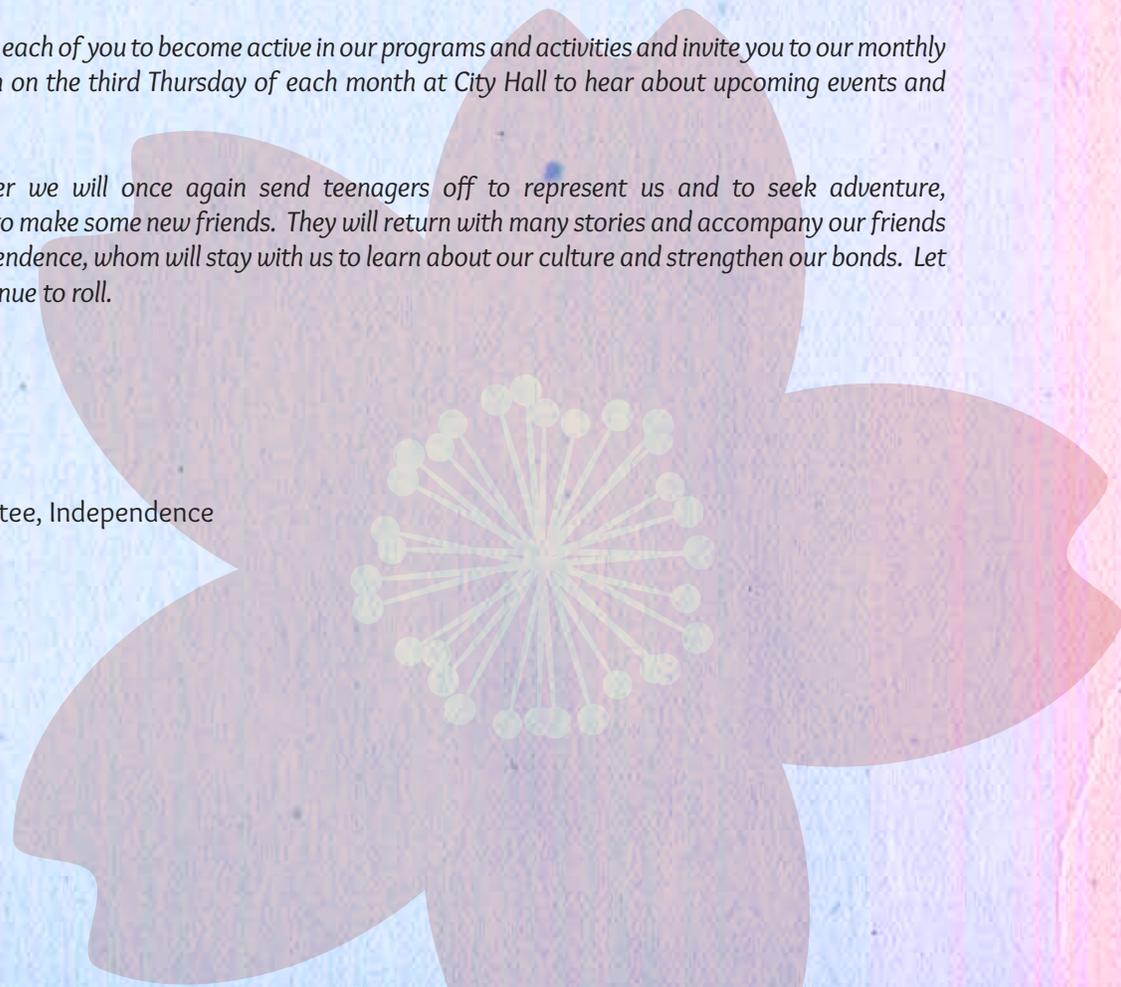
I would like to share with you my personal vision or mission while working with the Committee and the City. First and foremost I see our purpose as building relationships. Without those relationships nothing else can be accomplished. Relationships with each other here in Independence are important so that we can work as a team and not as individuals and to put personal agendas aside. The relationships with our friends in Japan are really what make us tick and work hard. This is the core of what we do in my opinion. We orchestrate a physical cultural exchange each year between students that visit each other's homes. Every fifth year we have an adult exchange which will take place in 2013. We develop not only future, but current understanding and ambassador-like behavior. I see the Sister City Committee as a youth development tool that opens up new avenues in life and exposes those youth to new and adventurous opportunities. I want to see a strong alumni group that continues to contribute to the Sister City Committee and be active as much as possible with our programs.

We face many challenges currently and in the future to make sure that the exchange continues to build those strong bonds of friendship with our friends in Japan. Current economic conditions and natural disasters, can and have, altered some visits; but it has not kept that relationship from continuing. This says something very positive about the quality of what both the Higashimurayama-Independence Friendship Association (HIFA) and the Independence Sister City accomplishes each year.

I encourage each of you to become active in our programs and activities and invite you to our monthly meetings at 7:00pm on the third Thursday of each month at City Hall to hear about upcoming events and plans.

This summer we will once again send teenagers off to represent us and to seek adventure, understanding, and to make some new friends. They will return with many stories and accompany our friends from Japan to Independence, whom will stay with us to learn about our culture and strengthen our bonds. Let the good times continue to roll.

With Respect,
John Seeley
Chairman
Sister City Committee, Independence



Book Review: 1Q84 by: Haruki Murakami

Contributed By: Joe Armin – 5th Grade Teacher Glendale Elementary

1Q84 (a play on the Japanese pronunciation of the year 1984) has been heralded as the masterwork by Murakami, an already successful author of such works as *A Wild Sheep Chase*, *Kafka on the Shore*, and *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*. Set in three serial novellas, this epic begins in Tokyo in the year 1984, but the story runs its course throughout the whole of Japan, from prefecture to prefecture, into and out of this world, and even to a town of cats and back. The story is told from the perspectives of the two main characters, Tengen and Aomame. Chapters alternate between these two characters, giving the



reader the unique perspective of two different sides of the same enigma. The story begins in gridlock on a Tokyo superhighway bridge. Aomame, late for an important yet fatally brief meeting, elects to leave her cab to escape down a set of emergency stairs to the streets below. It is here that the world she knows falls behind and a new world filled with impossibilities opens up to her. It is this new impossible world she will come to call 1Q84. The mysteries of this world slowly reveal themselves to her, and the haunt-

ing memory of a love long lost drives her purpose and seals her fate. Chapter 2 begins with Tengen, a math teacher who moonlights as a novelist, being persuaded by his brilliant, albeit shady, editor to review an applicant's entry into a national writing contest. Tengen recognizes genius in the story, dubbed *Air Chrysalis*, which is written by an unknown and mysterious 17 year old girl, Fuka-Eri. What follows in his attempts to help this young author brings about an inevitable chain of events both unexpected and incredible that only ends on the last page of the book.

Murakami weaves storytelling and philosophy, love and violence, family and chance with a master's touch. His use of traditional Japanese magical realism and modern storytelling creates a potent cocktail of entertainment, adventure, danger, and romance. This novel does not unfold so much as slowly unravel, only to have it tighten its cords again till each loose string meets its counterpart in a most cathartic way.

Getting the JSCC Word Out

At the January 3rd meeting of the Kiwanis club Twyla Olson-Hahn began a campaign to spread the good news about the Japanese Sister City Commission. She began at the logical place, the beginning, 35 years ago, and our statement of purpose. Provide a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and people with the citizens of Higashimurayama, Japan, sister city of Independence, Missouri. Promote mutual understanding, respect and friendship through cultural, economic and other exchanges on people-to-people and city-to-city basis.

Her power point presentation

covered both adult and student delegate visits. There were pictures of activities for visits here as well as in Japan. Twyla also talked about Cherry Blossom Festival, sister schools (Glendale and Pioneer Ridge), the alumni association, face book page, and the Japanese Garden.

Emphasis was on the student delegation exchange and the positive impact it has on both the student delegates and the host families. Many of the relationships developed because of the exchanges have continued over the years. Twyla talked about the student delegate criteria and the need for host families for student

and adult Japanese delegate visits.

Kiwanis statement of purpose is in line with what we are doing to promote youth development. It is a global organization of members of all ages who are dedicated to changing the world one child and one community at a time. Two years ago Kiwanis paid for the horseback riding for the Japanese student delegate visit. Kiwanis understands the importance of giving youth opportunity to experience new cultures and activities.

On February 8, Twyla presented the power point presentation to Truman High School Key Club. Key Club is the high

(...continued on pg 7)

24th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival

Sunday, May 6, 2012
10am - 4pm
\$2.00 Admission

At the Sermon Center
(Corner of Truman and Noland Road in Independence)

This Year's Festival is Blooming with New Features

The Japanese Sister City Committee (JSCC) is very proud about this year's Cherry Blossom Festival in Independence. "We were inspired by all the generosity of spirit from the community during last year's terrible earthquake and tsunami disaster. We wanted to make a really special festival this year," says Jeannae Segura-Brown, festival Chair-person. "We've added lots of local artists and businesses like "Daft Crafts" and "Design Living". We have "Game Café" joining us. They will be promoting a Yu-Gi-Oh mini-tourney, and have lots of other Japanese style games to play and buy. We are very excited about our guest artist, Mary Bliss who will be providing on site glazing and firing of ceramic pots in the Raku style. We will also have "Rosie's Café" which will

be serving a Japanese style dinner, and there will be other vendors selling bento boxes, other Japanese foods. The Cherry Limeade Floats are back this year, and folks will enjoy a modern Japanese cooking lesson from Kim Swanner. Of course we always have great authentic Japanese kimono, dishes, and gifts for sale as well as beautiful ikebana arrangements, and calligraphy made to order. Join our Midwest Consul General from Japan who will help us crown our first Cherry Blossom Queen, Mrs. Carolyn Weeks. Performances of Japanese dancing, martial arts, and Japanese folk tales will delight everyone." Admission is \$2.00. All of the money generated by the festival goes to support the summer student exchange.

Activities

- Raku pottery
- Ikebana
- Japanese bazaar
- Yoshiko Yamanaka traditional dance
- Ai Kido Martial Art demonstration
- Daft Crafts
- Design Living
- Game Café
- Japanese cooking demonstration
- Picture sharing room
- Cherry limeade floats
- Cherry Blossom Queen Carolyn Weeks
- Glendale Japanese club performance
- Hand crafted jewelry
- Yu-Gi-Oh mini tournament
- Rosie's Oriental Café

Guest Artist Mary Bliss

Raku is a very exciting process of firing pots dating from 16th century Japan. Mary Bliss has modernized the technique to make it easy, safe, and fun for all ages. Participants glaze their own pre-made pot, and wait several minutes while it is fired in a portable kiln. When the pot is removed red-hot from the kiln, it is placed into a metal can lined with newspapers. After a sensational experience of heat and flame, the pot is finished. Each piece is unique!

Mary Bliss is an experienced ceramic artist and teacher. A graduate of the Kansas City Art Institute with a degree in ceramics, Mary started her Raku technique 5 years ago. Mary's work has

been shown at the Primary Colors Gallery and the 323 Clay Studio in Independence.

On the Raku process, Mary says, "there are many Japanese influences in American ceramics, in terms of glazes

and designs. My passion in life is making things for other people's souls." Contact Mary Bliss at Gilbert Whitney on the Independence Square or at blissraku@gmail.com, or like her on Facebook.



Raku Pottery

Anniversary Celebration

In January Sister City celebrated their 34th anniversary at the Independence Memorial Building on January 28th this year. The celebration is a great time to reminisce together without being asked to work.

This year Rosie "Chiyoko" Smith was surprised with a proclamation from Mayor Reimal, who told about all the years of help Rosie has been to the city and JSCC. Besides working for Sister City using her catering skills, she worked for Fort Osage cafeteria for 20 years. Rosie believed that getting involved with Sister City was a way for her children and grandchildren to learn about where she was born.

Larry Leavy and Sharon Wilson also shared a few thoughts on all the years of working with Rosie and it was decided that she makes the best lemon cake and fried rice around. we found out that her recipe for fried rice takes LOTS of chopping and lots of work to prepare.

Rosie was born in Ymagata City, Japan. We also learned that Rosie was a war bride and upon marrying her husband decided to go to school, and she became an American citizen in 1957. Rosie's husband, Charles,

was a U.S. Army serviceman who passed away in 1978 leaving her with 3 children. all three graduated from Fort Osage High School. She now has seven grandchilfen and 3 great grandchilfen. Rosie always felt it was important for her children and grandchildren to know about Japan. Rosie became aware of the Japanese Sister City Program through Lana White and has been a member since the early 80's. She was appointed to the commission in 2003 until 2009.

So now, January 28th 2012 is ROSIE SMITH DAY! A good time was had by all at the 34th anniversary celebration and we look forward to seeing you all at the Cherry Blossom Festival this year.



34th Sister City Anniversary Celebration



Rosie Smith with Mayor Reimal

Announcements

- Sister City members set up and managed a sales booth at the Japan Festival held at Johnson County community College in October. Proceeds of \$350 help support the student scholarship fund.
- Sister City committee Treasurer and former Chair Jeannae Segura-Brown, lead the Glendale Japan Club in marching in the annual Halloween parade in October. Jeannae has led the group with the help of other teachers at Glendale for over 10 years.

- The first of December, members of Sister City attended the Holiday Luncheon of the Cultural Arts Coalition of Eastern Jackson County. Sister City participates in several events during the year in support of many different art forms from Puppetry to Youth Art. The Banquet was held at Webster House across the street from the Kaufman Performing Arts Center. It is dedicated to the arts, has a shop on the first floor and dining rooms and a restaurant on the second floor.

(... "Getting the JSCC Word Out" continued from pg 5)

school equivalent of Kiwanis Club. They are a service club and they along with some of the adult Kiwanis members help us with the Japanese Garden clean up in November. The Key Club students learned about our organization and particularly about the student delegate trip this summer and the next one in 2014.

Our Japanese Sister City program is a gem in the life of our city. It promotes learning, friendships and life long bonds with people from Japan. We give the youth of our community an opportunity to grow into adulthood with experiences that broaden their understanding of who they are in relationship with others in the world. Twyla will be seeking additional opportunities to share our vision with other organizations in Independence. Please call her if you know of an organization that could benefit from a presentation about our Japanese Sister City Commission.

Upcoming Sister City Events & Activities

May 6 - Cherry Blossom Festival at the Sermon Center

July 13 - July 27 - 2012 American Student Delegation visit to Japan

July 27 - Aug 10 - 2012 Japanese Student Delegation visit to the U.S.

**Sister City Commission Meetings are
held at 7:00 on the 3rd Thursday of
each month at Independence City Hall**

*Want more Sister City?
Check out our website!*

www.indepmo.org/sistercity