

# *Independence - Higashimurayama Sister City*

Newsletter Summer 2013



# 35th Anniversary Japanese Delegation Visits Independence



May 9 began an exciting 5 days of activities for our delegates. The first full day of activities was a day of choices. The multi choice day had a wide variety of activities for the delegates. Each of the four choices was lead and planned by a committee member. Saturday was our western theme day and Sunday was a day for the delegates to spend with their host families. On Monday the delegation visited the sister school and in the evening a banquet for a final time together.



The best part of our delegation visit is the time together. We renew old friendships and make new friends. This sentiment was shared by Twyla Olson-Hahn, current chairman of JSCC as closing remarks at the banquet,

*“This evening we celebrated a friendship that began 35 years ago. Friendship is a wonderful description of how we feel about each other but I’d like to suggest a new word to consider. We are not friends we are family. Families celebrate each other’s joys, cry when someone is sad or broken, help when there is a need, and solve problems when there are difficult obstacles. When we are apart our thoughts of each other are close and when we meet again it’s as if no time has gone by. Today I challenge you to look to the past for inspiration and to the future for a continued close bond between our two cities. Let us strive as one family to make the next 35 years spectacular. Thank You.”*



# Multi Choice Day



## Historic Independence Tour

Ten Japanese visitors and several American friends chose the “Historic Independence Tour” for Multi-Choice Day on May 10, 2013. The first stop was the Community of Christ Temple. In addition to learning more about the Latter Day Saint faith traditions, visitors enjoyed the spectacular architecture, Casavant Frères Limitée 5,685 pipe organ, and the Japanese-style meditation garden. The next stop was the National Frontier Trails Museum, where visitors explored westward expansion in the United States, including Lewis and Clark’s Corps of Discovery, and the Santa Fe, California, and Oregon Trails. The group enjoyed lunch at the Courthouse Exchange restaurant, followed by ice cream at Clinton’s Soda Fountain. In the afternoon, the group toured the Vaile Mansion, which was built in 1881 and stands as one of our nation’s premiere examples of Second Empire Victorian architecture. Lastly, the group toured the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum. Visitors were able to walk through a myriad of visual artifacts highlighting the significant historical events of the 33rd President of the United States from 1945 to 1953.



## Garden Excursion

On Friday, the group that chose the garden tour left Gudgell Park Church and headed to City Hall to visit the city’s Japanese Garden. After a brief stop there, they continued on to Bird’s Botanicals (in a cave of all things!) where everyone received an orchid for their lapel or hair. After learning about orchids, they ponied up and left for Powell Gardens. When the group arrived, Janet West had the picnic tables readied for a gourmet picnic. It was rather brisk, but everyone bundled up and enjoyed a wonderful feast. After lunch, it was time for the trip into the gardens. Then the group trekked on to Cockrell General Store for checking out the collection of shops and to do some serious shopping. The final stops was in Blue Springs at the Russell Stover’s Outlet and Antique Store for a lot more heavy shopping!



# Multi Choice Day

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## Golf Day

Five Japanese guests and three Sister City Hosts (Randy Vest, Major Hammett and Chuck Foudree) enjoyed a game of golf at the Drumm Farm Golf Course. After the golf they had lunch at the Courthouse Exchange Restaurant where Mayor Watanabe joined us. That afternoon the group met with Mayor Reimal at his office for a nice visit. Then it was on to the Independence Police Department for the tour. The Japanese guests were given a special treat when they were allowed to shoot official police pistols on the firing range. Finally, they visited the Bass Pro Shop for shopping. All had a great time and enjoyed the day together!



## Art Museum Tour

The Nelson Adkins Art Museum Tour with Lana White as interpreter and Sharon Wilson as host was a great success. The day started with the Independence Japanese Friendship Garden and tour of Independence City Hall. Next stop was the Kauffman Memorial Garden which was in full bloom and enjoyed by all. We started the Nelson-Atkins Museum tour by being greeted by the museum staff and good friend of Lana White who gave us maps and explained a little about how the museum was started and its mission. We were very lucky to have Kathy Vest with us as she explained about the American Indians and some of her favorite paintings. Coleen Faudree and myself showed our strong points at Jack Stack BBQ and shopping. Then after shopping Coleen Faudree and Lana White thought coffee and sweets sounded good. So we decided on the Cheesecake Factory as a good choice. After taking pictures of the fountains and walking around we were all ready to head back to Independence. It was a great American day and enjoyed by all.



# Western Festival is a Highlight of 2013 visit

What an amazing day! The delegates got a sample of the Old West at Big River Ranch in Lexington, Missouri. The ranch is located on a bluff overlooking the Missouri River valley. The weather was perfect and the activities were endless!

Almost all the delegates went horseback riding. The trail led the riders around large fields ready to be planted and through a wooded trail. A fishing expedition to the lake on the property was organized. Fish were caught and cooked at supper time. The Missouri Town Dancers and Missouri Town Band gladly volunteered to entertain us. They came dressed in their historic costumes and brought several old time crafts and demonstrations with them. Music filled the air as we learned dances and enjoyed the music. Robbie Mopin, owner of Big River Ranch took us on a hay ride. There were two hay wagon trips and all who wanted to go were accommodated. Robbie pulled the hay wagon with a tractor to the Missouri River and back. It was a wonderful opportunity to see our great river! There was also an old western movie showing on the movie screen in the corner of the event barn. What fun it was to see John Wayne in one of his many cowboy roles! Historic clothes were also available for anyone who wanted an old time photo. With a saloon backdrop provided by the ranch, and Rachel Hahn-Koppe as photographer, our delegates went home with a unique souvenir.

Meal time is always a highlight of any gathering. Lunch, a community affair was a Hobo stew. It was cooked in large kettles over the fire and all who came brought a can of vegetables to add to the meat in the pots. Home baked bread, salad and cookies and of course s'mores rounded out the meal. Supper was a favorite American choice, 8 oz. steak cooked on the grill. The host families brought a side dish to share potluck style. To round out the meal, fruit crisp was baked in Dutch ovens over the fire.

The finale was a surprise presentation at the corral. We gathered at the bleachers for a group photo. Immediately after the photo a call was received and we learned there had been a bank robbery in Independence and the bad guys were headed our direction. Looking off toward the hills we could see two groups of men on horses, one group in pursuit of the other, guns blazing, and hoofs pounding on the ground. They chased them to the corral, jumped off their horses, and with guns going off and smoke filling the air they had a shoot out until no one was left standing. What a spectacular ending to a glorious day!



# School day at Glendale Elementary



The delegates started their day at the Independence School District Administrative Offices. After breakfast and greetings by Dr. Jim Hinson, Superintendent, the delegates and hosts were taken on a tour of the building (the former Independence Regional Health Center).

A police motorcade then escorted everyone to Glendale Elementary School, sister school of Megurita Elementary School in Higashimurayama. We were greeted by flag waving students and teachers waiting outside to welcome the delegates. After being escorted to their seats on the stage in the gymnasium, they were treated to a program by the enthusiastic Glendale student body. Delegates were then assigned to a classroom and had the unique opportunity to visit and interact with students in that classroom.

A luncheon in the library for delegates, hosts, teachers and staff was provided by the school district and the Glendale PTA. This allowed the delegates and teachers additional time to create new friendships or renew old ones. Visiting Glendale is always an enjoyable highlight of each Sister City delegation visit. Delegates then spent the afternoon with host families or visiting Independence Square for shopping and touring.



# 35th Anniversary Banquet

We celebrated 35 years of friendship with Higashimurayama at a banquet the evening before the Japanese delegation returned home. Good food and memories filled the evening. We recognized Higashimurayama International Friendship Association with a certificate of appreciation.

The highlight of the evening was honoring Lana White. Lana White, the founder of our organization was remembered with gifts and speeches from Higashimurayama International Friendship Association, Japanese Sister City Committee and the City of Independence. Lana has retired from serving on the committee. Her dedication and guidance through the years has made JSCC the thriving organization it is today. Thank you Lana White for all you have done!



# Interview with the 2014 Adult Delegate: Gary Moxley

*Would you answer a few questions about yourself and your experience with the Independence Sister City Program?*

Not a problem

*What do you do?*

I am a sales engineer. I work with engineers and various municipalities on water and wastewater treatment plants. When I'm not working, I'm busy with the family and church.

*So you are married?*

Yes. Actually I will be celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary while in Japan.

*You said family, do you have kids?*

I have 4 daughters. They are 27, 25, 23, and 18 years old.

*What do you like to do for fun?*

I enjoy all kinds of outdoor activities...boating, scuba diving, fishing, hunting, traveling, swimming, and just about anything outdoors.

*How long have you lived here?*

I moved to Independence in 1986.

*How did you get involved in Independence Sister City?*

My sister-in-law Kristin went to Japan in 1985 as a delegate. I remember her excitement prior to going, but the stories of her travel and the pictures were really cool. She made a connection with her host family that has lasted a life time. In 2000, a member of our church asked my wife and I if we would be willing to be a Sister City Host Family. Absolutely! It was awesome! We have been hooked ever since. We have had 7 girls and one adult stay with us over the years.

*What makes this program so awesome?*

There are many facets that make it a great program. There is the opportunity to learn about different cultures. Sharing experiences with new or different foods, family play time, and family time talking. While the youth are in your house, they truly become a part of your family and we have been able to stay in contact with each of them over the years. Each of them is welcome to come home any time because our house will always be open for them. One year, three of the girls came home for Christmas.

*Have any of your daughters gone to Japan?*

Three of them have been. They each loved it. They also became part of their Japanese family. Photos and e-mails go back and forth as they keep in touch. My oldest

daughter got married in 2012 and her Japanese family came for the wedding. That was a great honor and a true sign of how strong the family connections are.

*How did you afford to pay for them all to go?*

I am glad you asked. I don't want youth to panic when they see the cost. Our daughters worked on fundraiser programs with Sister City, they also sent letters to family and friends asking for sponsorship on this cultural exchange. They received enough contributions to cover their cost. In return for the sponsorships, they presented photos and a testimonial about the trip.

*Have you ever traveled with youth on a long trip?*

I have been on several mission trips with youth from our church. We went to Matamoros Mexico, Thunder Bay, Canada, Springfield, MO, and a few others.

*What would you like to see accomplished on this trip?*

This will be the 36th Anniversary of our Sister City relationship. I would like to see continued growth of this strong relationship. I would like to see the youth develop a connection with their host family that will last forever. I would like to see our group have fun, do the tourist thing, but I would really like to see us make a connection with the community of Higashimurayama at a deeper level.

Thank you for your time in answering these questions. This should be a good experience for all that get to participate.



# Announcements and Calendar of Events



## 2014 Student Recruitment Article Here

The Japanese Sister City Committee is currently accepting applications for the 2014 Student Exchange with our sister city, Higashimurayama, Japan. The exchange is scheduled for June 2014. Students who qualify will spend two weeks in Higashimurayama, Japan. They will live with a Japanese family, meet with Higashimurayama city council members, participate in community service projects, build friendships with Japanese teens and young adults, experience local history and culture, and take classes at Megurita Elementary School and Higashimurayama 2nd Jr. High School.

Interested students can download an application from our website [www.indepmo.org/sistercity](http://www.indepmo.org/sistercity) by clicking on the "exchange program" tab, or pick one up in their school's library. The application deadline is September 15th, 2013. Once the application is submitted, the students will be called for an interview with JSCC. Applications can be submitted to:

Japanese Sister City Committee  
C/O Twyla Olson-Hahn  
111 E. Maple  
Independence, MO 64011

or by email to: [twylaolson@gmail.com](mailto:twylaolson@gmail.com)

If there are any questions regarding the exchange, please contact Jeannae Segura-Brown at [jeannae\\_segura-brown@idschools.org](mailto:jeannae_segura-brown@idschools.org) or 816-365-4759

## Upcoming Events:

Anniversary Party January 25, 2014 Truman Memorial Bld.  
Cherry Blossom Festival April 27, 2014, Sermon Center  
Japanese Garden work day November 9th, 2013 at approximately 10 a.m.  
Volunteers always welcome!

