

www.spokanesistercities.org

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 15, 2011

International District Arts Walk. Celebrate art, diversity and culture. There will be local art, literature, live music, dance demonstrations and children's activities. 1700-1800 blocks of East Sprague. 5pm-9pm. Free.

July 20-24, 2011

U.S. Inter-Regional Highland Dance Championships. Several highland dance events; highland dancers from around the world. Sunday's event, at Riverfront Park, will be free to the public. INB Performing Arts Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., Spokane. For more information, call 879-3352.



Sister Cities Association President Margo Buckles shown at the Jilin Sister Cities Society's Lantern Festival, held at the Bay Market, in February.

Why I joined Sister Cities

*By Margo Buckles
Sister Cities Association President*

Much of the first quarter of this year has been dedicated to celebrating the 50-year Sister Cities relationship between Spokane and Nishinomiya, Japan. Since 1961, the two cities have engaged in exchanges of students, culture and ideas, serving as a model to other Spokane sister cities relationships.

I attended many of the events organized by the Spokane Nishinomiya Sister City Society (*See "A Golden Milestone," page 3*). I was impressed particularly by Nishinomiya's Mayor Kouno. At several events, Mayor Kouno addressed the audience in English, which he does not speak. In anticipation of the visit, he asked a Spokane teacher currently working in Nishinomiya to record his speeches. He then practiced in English for hours. As a gesture of friendship, Mayor Kouno chose to communicate with his hosts in our language rather than rely on his competent interpreter. Amazing!

This brings me to the reason that I joined the Sister Cities organization – an interest in other cultures and a desire to meet people in other lands – in short – to make friends. I have gained that and so much more.

First, I have had the pleasure of working with many terrific people

within Sister Cities. I have been impressed with the hard work and passion of these people. These are people dedicated to the idea that we need to reach out to one another globally. I once attended an export seminar where the instructor said, "No two countries with a McDonalds in them have ever gone to war." He was commenting on how business connections bring countries closer together. Sister Cities does the same, except at the individual level.

Second, I have had the added benefit of learning about other cultures. Over the years, I have eaten Irish dinners in March, where I have partaken of mushy peas (believe me, they are delicious) along with corned beef and cabbage, accompanied by Celtic dancing and singing. I have attended Chinese New Year's celebrations, cooked basic Chinese food and used a hot pot. My family and I ate bulgolggi and kim chee and have learned about the incredible economic development occurring in South Korea. And, as I discussed in my last article, I have seen how the Nishinomiya Society excites the next generation of Americans about the possibilities of exchange with another culture.

Finally, through our Sister Cities

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August 6, 2011

Spokane Highland Games. Highland dancing, bagpipe music, heavy athletic competitions, sword and other demonstrations, tug-of-war, and merchandise. 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. \$8:00 - adults; \$3.00 to \$5.00 - seniors and youth. Spokane County Fair and Expo Center, 404 N. Havana, Spokane. For more information call 922-3661.

August 20, 2011

Unity in the Community. Spokane's multi-cultural celebration, with world music, food, and dance. 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Riverfront Park, 507 N. Howard St., Spokane. Free. For more information, call 209-2634.

Nishinomiya Mayor – Honorary Grand Marshall of 2011 Lilac Parade



Lilac Festival President Myron Bursell (left) met and greeted Nishinomiya's Mayor Kouno (shown right) at the beginning of the Lilac Festival Armed Forces Day Torchlight Parade. The Mayor also was enthusiastically greeted by the audience along Spokane streets as he passed along the parade route.

Jecheon Society awards 2 scholarships

The Spokane-Jecheon Sister City Association has awarded two scholarships for study in Korea. The 2011 recipients are **Matthew Winchell and Amanda Ramey**.

Matthew, a graduate student in Korean Studies at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu, is attending Sogang University in Seoul this summer. While in Korea, he will be studying the Korean language and conducting research at the Korean Film Archive.

A graduate of Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Matthew previously lived in Korea more than three years, during which he taught English as a Second Language and studied Korean.

Matthew visited Jecheon a few years ago. His parents are Susan and Dick Winchell of Spokane.

Amanda is a junior in the Political Science Department at Whitworth

University. She will attend Korea University in Seoul during the fall semester this year. She plans to study political science, Korea in the global market economy, and the Korean language.

Amanda's interest in Korea stems from a friend's inspiring experience while doing foreign study in Korea. She feels her study "will provide me with a unique opportunity to better understand Korean politics and expose me to academics and culture that differ from the environment in Spokane..."

Amanda wants to visit Jecheon during her study in Korea. She graduated from high school in California.

Since 2006, the Spokane-Jecheon Sister City Association has awarded eight scholarships to students at Spokane area universities or who are from Spokane, for study at four- year universities in Korea.

A golden milestone

By Charles Rehberg

The weekend's predominant color was lilac, as in the Lilac Festival, but the memories are golden.

A delegation of 40 Japanese visitors arrived May 20 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Spokane - Nishinomiya Sister City partnership.

Months, even years, of planning paid off in a succession of successful events.

Among the memories:

* The sun-splashed greeting at Spokane International Airport by a dozen or so Spokane Sister City members who huddled with the visitors for group photos behind a colorful welcome banner.

* The convivial Friday night welcome reception at the Davenport Hotel's venerable Elizabethan room, highlighted by a gracious Mayor Mary Verner greeting and posing for pictures with each and every visitor. Despite the guests' long hours of travel and the language barriers, old – and new – acquaintances flourished.

* The wonderful representation in the Lilac Festival - Armed Forces Day Torchlight Parade which took Sister City awareness to new heights with tens of thousands of spectators and a cable TV audience.

Despite persistently chilly winds, Nishinomiya Mayor Masahiro Kouno, the parade's Honorary Grand Marshall, showed a well-practiced parade wave from atop the rear seat of a Cadillac convertible. He was joined by Assembly Speaker Sachihiko

Kamitani and Spokane Society President Rol Herriges.

Right behind Mayor Kouno's car was the Riverfront Park red train, carrying about half the Nishinomiya delegation and some Spokane Sister City participants.

With help from the clanging train bell and energetic parade waving from the train cars, the chilled crowd provided a warm reception all along the parade route. The rest of the Japanese delegation watched from bleachers near their hotel.

Following the train was the convertible carrying Mayor Verner and a grandchild. It was perfect parade placement, since the Mayor, under the organization's bylaws, is honorary chair of the Sister City Society.

* On Sunday, May 22, despite cool, cloudy weather, the Japanese delegation and a good turnout of Spokane Sister City representatives gathered at the Nishinomiya Tsutakawa Japanese Garden in Manito Park.

The event began with a new presentation written for the occasion and performed by Spokane's Taiko drummers.

The mayors and Sister City chairs offered official greetings, then joined to pour water brought from Japan and from the Spokane River from the bridge in the Japanese Garden into the koi pond, as a symbol of past and future friendship.

Special recognition went to the Tsutakawa family and to the vendors who designed and produced the "Japan Hope" T-shirts. The shirts have provided thousands of dollars to relief

agencies in the wake of the springtime earthquake and tsunami in northeast Japan. They were the idea of Spokane's Mits Nakamura, a board member of both the Spokane-Nishinomiya Society and the Spokane Sister Cities Association. His relentlessly successful sales effort garnered a section front photo in The Spokesman-Review Voice section, another testament to Sister City awareness.

* On that Sunday night the 40 visitors and a like number of Spokane participants gathered in the elegant Georgian Room at the Spokane Athletic Club for a banquet.

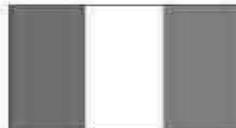
Sue Rodman's colleagues at Whitman Elementary guided a large student group which presented several Japanese folk songs with voice, drums and marimbas. Many in the Japanese delegation sang along and some tears of joy accompanied the music. Student sales of a DVD also provided money for Japanese relief agencies.

The mayors and Sister City leaders – HERRIGES and Akihiro Nakahara – said just the right things and the evening ended with the debut of the 50th Anniversary DVD, an adjunct to a 40-page booklet which chronicles many of the Sister City exchanges.

* On Monday, May 23, a farewell reception at the Arbor Crest Winery concluded the long festive weekend.

* On Tuesday morning Spokane's airport lived up to its

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Spokane Sister Cities Association

808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, WA 99201

E-mail

sistercities@spokanecity.org

Editors

Margo Buckles
Polly Kaczmarek

Promoting Citizen Diplomacy

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SPOKANE SISTER CITIES ASSOCIATION

808 W. SPOKANE FALLS BLVD.

SPOKANE, WA 99201

EMAIL: sistercities@spokanecity.org

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connection, I have made new friends, which was my original purpose in joining. In additional to the friends I have made in Spokane over the last 6 years, I have met people from overseas. For example, last year, the Jilin Society president asked for volunteers to host some Chinese children visiting Spokane. As a result, my family met a young boy from Chengdu last summer. Despite the language barrier, we all had a terrific time. Our guest learned to fish and to play Go Fish! in English. Yicheng taught my kids Rock, Paper, Scissors in Chinese, and I caught my son saying “Xie Xie” (thank you) while playing with YiCheng. Once again, we were reminded that we are more similar than we are different. We look forward to hosting another boy later this summer.

I hope that your Sister Cities experience is just as fruitful as mine has been.

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"international" description as the Japanese Sister City delegation departed, along with of Mukogawa Fort Wright Institute students who celebrated commencement on Sunday. For the Sister City folks, hugs and warm handshakes abounded, along with the oft-repeated phrase, "see you in September."

On Sept. 12, Mayor Verner and President Herriges will lead a Spokane delegation of 20+ people to Nishinomiya to continue the Golden Anniversary celebration.

It does take a whole village, or at least a large Sister City committee, to plan and execute a weekend celebration as elaborate as this one.

Congratulations – and heartfelt thanks – to all who worked so hard. If success is measured, and rewarded, in smiles, this milestone weekend was indeed golden.

(Chuck Rehberg is a vice president of the Spokane-Nishinomiya Society and immediate past president of the Spokane Sister Cities Association.)



**Celebrating 50
years of people-
to-people
exchanges.
Congratulations
to Spokane, WA
USA and
Nishinomiya,
Japan.**