

February 2016

Number Twenty-Three

Board of Directors

Jim Jackson, President

Marci Van Sicklen,
Vice President

Carolyn Zeitler,
Secretary

Carolyn Latkin, Treasurer

Mike Evans

Debbie Crowningshield

Ruth Burnell

Dave Gross

Iana Porter

Jennifer Kalvass

Katy Tahja, Historian

Kay Corcoran,
Honorary Member

June Miller,
Honorary Member

Shizuko McConathy,
Honorary Member

Inside this issue:

*Student Trip 2015
Overview and "Over
the Top"* 1-3

*Student and Adult
Japan Reflections* 3-6

*Reminders, Contact
Information, and A
Special Thank You* 6

Upcoming Events:

- May Students Visit from Miasa HOMESTAY HOSTS NEEDED!
- June Artists's Visit HOMESTAY HOSTS NEEDED!



2015 Group at Yamashina Restaurant

After many months of meetings, our group of 8 Mendocino students, 4 artists, and 6 chaperones set off on June 24th, 2015. We all gathered at SFO, excited at the prospect of going to Japan. Students traveling this year were Kaylin Harr, Jake Harrison, Ben Kroninger, Jack Kroninger, Alex Lindstrom, Nathaniel Mills, Amira Porter-Stauffer, and Henry Thomas. The artists were Carolyn Zeitler, Lisa Orselli, David Linkhart and Sev Ickes. Chaperones included, Dave Gross, Marci Van Sicklen, Debbie Crowningshield, Travis Rzeplinski and parents, Evan Mills and Iana Porter.

We were met at Narita airport by our Miasa friends, Satomi Kondo and Otsukasan, who climbed on the bus with us to Tokyo Central Youth Hostel where we stayed for 3 nights. While in Tokyo the student group visited the Edo Museum, Miraikan Science Museum, and Hachiko the

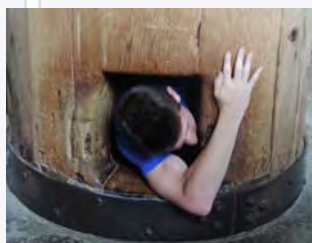
Dog at Shibuya Station. We took a day trip to Kamakura to see the Kamakura Dai-butsu, Kenchoji Temple and Hasedera Temple. When we divided into groups for lunch, many of us raced to the Okonomiyaki restaurant. If you haven't tried this delicious pancake-type Japanese food, you are missing out!

Off to Kyoto to stay at K's House, a backpackers hotel, for 3 nights. K's House is in central Kyoto, a great location to walk to the station for our daily excursions which included Kiyomizu-dera, Ryoanji Zen Garden where we sat and thought about how we can make a difference in the

world. Then a short walk to Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion, where many enjoyed a short version of a traditional tea ceremony. Off to Nara, where the deer run free all over the park, those annoying little buggers. Many nibbles on your backside to get your attention! At Nara Park is Todaiji Temple where the main hall is the world's largest wooden building. One of Japan's

Donor List From 2015 Fundraiser

Alegria Inn / Lost Whale Inn	Raven's Restaurant
Alexis Moyer	Rhoda Teplow
Anchor Charter Boats	Roundman's Smokehouse
Big River Trading Company	Sage's Computer
Bookwinkles	Sharon Garner
Catch-A-Canoe	Shizuko McConathy
Christine Schomer	Skunk Train
Compass Rose	Suzye Ogawa
Susan Faunce	Thanksgiving Coffee Company
Harvest Market	Viraporn's Restaurant
Katy Tahja	Safari
MacCallum House Restaurant	Yarrow Summers
Twila Rutherford	Sev Ickes
Mendocino Automotive and Towing	Toulouse Vineyards
Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens	Brutocao Cellars
Margaret O'Rourke	Lazy Creek Vineyards
Mendocino Heritage Furniture	Seebass Vineyards
Mendocino Sports Club	Handley Cellars
Michael Anderson	Philo Ridge Vineyards
Molly Harrison	Balo Vineyards
Moss Rock	Roederer Estates
Outdoor Store	Scharffenberger Cellars
Out of this World	Husch Vineyards
Patterson's Pub	Signal Ridge Winery
Piaci Pub & Pizzeria	Lula Cellars



THANK YOU!!!!!!

largest bronze statues of Buddha is housed here. Some tried to crawl through a hole in a pillar which is the size of Buddha's nose! Lots of giggles and holding our breath to see who would get stuck. K's House did not have a seita (bath) so we walked down the street to enjoy the warm and cold waters of a traditional Japanese bath house.

hostel, a welcome break from eating out. Archery anyone? Seems that Debbie had the best score of 45. Travis and Otsuka-san were a little quiet after that! Good job Debbie! Up bright and early to load our bus to Teteyama to begin our Alpine Route over the Japanese Alps. WOW. What a day this was. . . .

We were now over 7500 feet in elevation, with snow banks in the parking area over 20 feet high! Luck was with us as it was a beautiful day, almost t-shirt weather. Snowball fights immediately erupted while several adults silently crept



Side of Kurobe Dam

rode in a ropeway gondola for seven minutes seemingly straight down the moun-

tainside. The initial start involved a sudden drop of about a foot, causing all of us a nervous glance around, wondering if this route was really the best idea. Things quickly

smoothed on

this longest unsupported gondola in all of Japan. It was a thrill for all! We embarked, again in a tunnel and climbed aboard another cable car. For five minutes we descended seemingly again, straight down, all inside the mountain, finally getting off and walking a short distance to sunlight.

We were now standing on the highest arch dam in Japan, the Kurobe Dam. We were in awe, walking the quarter mile across, looking down at the rainbow created by the huge volume of water being released to the river far below, marveling at the beautiful lake behind, visiting the historical museum on



Snow Wall & The Top (End of Bus Ride)

“Over the Top”

We first travelled two hours by chartered bus from Takayama through Toyama to Teteyama, the start of the Alpine Route. Transferring to a cog railway that went up

an incline slope of about 65 degrees for about seven minutes, we experienced our first nervous thrill. We then rode an hour on a special Highland

Bus, passing through a primeval forest containing 1000-year-old cedars and beech trees, often viewing 30-pound monkeys along the roadside. As we ascended, the terrain slowly evolved from forest to wetland to high alpine and snow. Hiking trails branched out in all directions, with glimpses of wildflowers in the tundra area.



July 1st we were off to Takayama for sightseeing, public baths, shopping, finding the path to enlightenment and the Kenchoji Youth Hostel. We walked to Hida Folk Village, where the houses were built during the Edo Period (1603-1867) and were relocated to create the museum in 1971. The group cooked both dinners and their breakfasts at the



Group at Kurobe Dam

away to enjoy a quiet hot spring bath (the highest onsen in all Japan!), while overlooking the bubbling volcanic vents in the area. This area is the “highlight” of the Alpine Route. The vistas were magnificent, with towering peaks, ice covered lakes, and blue sky all around. There were several hike-in lodges, beckoning on the higher mountain slopes. Most of the closest trails were covered with boardwalks so we didn't even get our feet wet.

After a bite to eat, we boarded the Tateyama Tunnel Electric Trolley Bus for a ten-minute ride directly through the mountain. Emerging, on the north side of the Alps, we now

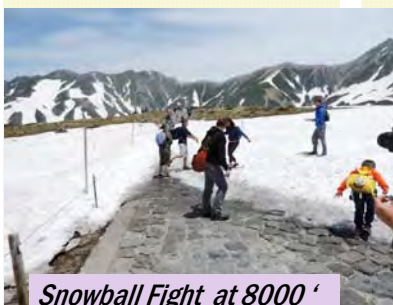
the dam project, gazing at the majestic peaks towering above and trying to spot the gondola swinging high up



Hot Sidewalk Path at Tateyama

the mountain side far in the distance. It was definitely time to just sit and stare and eat an ice cream cone!

We finally left the area by



Snowball Fight at 8000'



Crossing the Dam

walking into another tunnel and getting on the trolley bus to pass in darkness through the center of Mt. Akawawa-dake. This tunnel, a 16 minute ride, was the hardest part of the digging. Over 171 workers lost their lives in the seven year construction of this tunnel and the rest of the dam project.

We now got on a regular

bus to descend down a beautiful river canyon and completed the final 40 minutes of the journey.

Finally, we reached the terminus of the northern end of the Alpine Route and met our original chartered bus, full of our luggage, that had dropped us off hours earlier at the beginning. The students loved the day. The adults thought by far it was the best route to reach Omachi/Miasa. We now had about a half-hour ride. The kids in the bus quieted down as we approached our final destination. They were a bit

nervous, wondering how it would be, leaving the Mendocino adult chaperones, meeting their host Japanese families, and going off with them for two days. Of course their worries were groundless as the Miasa parents and children were wonderful, greeting us with flags and hellos, and ushering into a decorated hall with a wonderful welcoming dinner. Lots of American style food (pizza, sandwiches, chicken nuggets, soda, etc.) helped to make the students feel at ease. Each host family had a table set aside for themselves and for their Mendocino guests, and within a few minutes, there was animated talk going back and forth. Then after some speeches, the Mendocino students had one last meeting, alone with their leaders, who reminded them of manners, what they had learned, and please, please...don't pull the plug!



At the Fish Market

They gathered their luggage, re-found their Miasa families, and drove off into the night to a wonderful Japanese home stay adventure.

Joyful Japan Impressions by Evan Mills

Perfect purple pickles
awaken my taste buds
Succulent sashimi slides
down just right.
Tempting tamagoyaki tickles
my tummy
Gentle green gardens of
Kamakura calm my soul
Perfect pearls of rain bouncing
off the lotus leaves

Benevolent Buddha keeps his
composure, even through tsunami
Hilariously packed like sloshing
sardines on the metro
evokes hidden Japanese laughter
Fickle Fuji surprising emerges
just outside our Shinkansen window
Peoples' pride stamped everywhere,
even in magnificent manhole cover designs

Joyful Japan



Nathaniel Mills

My classmate, Henry, and I have only positive things to say about our Homestay. Our first day there we were exhausted from all the walking and sitting throughout our journey over Mt. Tateyama. As soon as we walked through their door for the first time the father, Yosuke, introduced us to the rest of the family. Miyuki was the mother.



Nathaniel & Evan Mills

Urara was the oldest daughter and child; Kokoro was the second eldest child and youngest daughter; and Tao was the only son and youngest of the three. We were given a brief tour around the house and said, "Goodnight" to our new family. The next morning, after a fresh and handmade breakfast comprised of honey, fruits, butter and bread, Urara gave us a bunch of options on how to spend our day. Fortunately, there was an abundance of options, so Henry and I spent a large amount of time discussing them. We chose Matsumoto Castle. Miyuki stayed at home while everyone else came with us. I was curious to learn about my homestay. Henry and I had a great time learning about Japanese history and culture. It was one of the best opportunities to learn more about our host families. When we arrived back to the

house, I discovered that they had a piano. I then entertained all the people in the house by cranking out tasty tunes. Friends of our host family then came over for dinner and lit fireworks with us to celebrate the 4th of July! The dinner was Indian food with a Japanese twist. It was a blast. During that time I socialized with the adults as well as the kids, and one thing's for sure, they love fireworks in gargantuan proportions.

The next day, Henry and I were



Kaylin and Amira Homestay

told that we would go to a taiko drumming festival. Henry in particular was extremely excited. When we arrived, everyone else from Mendocino was there as well. The experience started off with the making of petite hand held drums. It was a unique way to have people understand the drum and how it works. The festival continued on with groups from nearby schools performing two to three songs each. I thought that the Miasa group exceeded expectations. Our host family treated all of us to an Onsen hot spring bath before heading home.

Two classmates of Henry and I came over and we jammed on the piano for an hour and half. The last treat for the day was when a large serving of tempura made its way to the table. It was beautifully decorated with other food to show the tempura's vibrant golden brown color. With our stomachs satisfied we then hit the hay.

The next day would be the day when Henry and I would give out presents, and that is exactly what we did. Right after break-

fast Henry and I brought out our bags full of presents. Everyone was overjoyed by what we delivered to them. What I received from them was the following: One pair of wooden sandals, Japanese snacks, and other little gifts that were sweet.

After spending the next day at the Miasa school, we were all tired, but every classmate of mine and their host families came over for a party and dinner. I played a set of piano music with inspired people to start dancing and singing. It also was the best way to socialize with people that I never met before. We were all saddened when the party ended.

The next day was the saddest of them all due to the fact that we said goodbye to



At the Miasa School



Making Origami \$ Ring for Omachi Mayor



our beautiful home and family away from home. Then after a calligraphy tutorial at the Miasa school, every student from Mendocino had a special soba noodle lunch. We went to a farewell party where everyone said goodbye to their beloved host families. What an enjoyable and an enriching way to learn each others' culture!

Jack Kroninger



My trip to Japan was one of the best experiences of my life. I mean how many people can say that they

traveled around the world to a foreign country at the age of twelve? My favorite part of the trip was definitely the homestay, because my family made me feel so welcome.

The first day that we got to Miasa-Omachi, we got off the bus and it looked like everyone from the entire town was at the government building to welcome us. After we got our luggage off the bus we went inside and had a banquet dinner with all the families. Sunday was a free day to spend with our family. We went to Matsumoto Castle with most

of

the other families. After that we went back home and had a great dinner.

The second free day we spent at a taiko drumming ceremony and we went to a natural hot spring. Then my family took us to a bowling arcade place.

The next two days were both school days and were very fun. After the first school day we went and saw the mayor of all of the Miasa-Omachi city area, it was a great meeting.



Amira Porter-Staffer

The homestays were my favorite part of the trip. At my homestay there was a grandma and a grandpa, a mom and two girls, 14 and 10.

There was an uncle and an aunt next door and a 7 year old cousin. I also enjoyed Kyoto, the big Buddha, big temple, Tokyo at night, and meeting everyone in Miasa. I can't wait to see everyone in Mendocino next year.

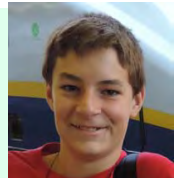


Kaylin Harr

Japan was a wonderful experience. There are so many

magnificent temples and sights to see, not to mention the delicious food. Even so, my favorite part was when we went to Miasa and stayed with our delightful homestay family. Everyone was so nice and friendly to us "ugly Americans" and the school was an amazing experience. I hope to go again someday.

Jake Harrison



The trip from my hometown, Chico, all the way to Japan, has been quite

the trip. I enjoyed most of it. I've tried some nasty and good food. I loved the baths and the hot springs were okay. I didn't like all the insects floating in it. At first I didn't think that the baths would be fun, but, in fact, they were my favorite part. My favorite food was definitely the okonomiyaki. The whole trip was great and it will give us

many stories to tell our families and friends.



Henry Thomas

My experience in Japan has been one of the most eye-opening I have ever had and we have only been here one day. These memories will last forever. The big Buddha was amazing. I can not wait for more of Japan!

Alex Lindstrom

My experience in Japan so far has been amazing! My group has gone to some awesome places so far we have been to Kamakura seeing the giant Buddha and other temples and shrines. Now we are on the bullet train to Kyoto. I am excited for whatever comes next... One of my favorite parts of the trip to Japan was probably Tokyo because it's so different from the U.S. Seeing it light up at night or walking past giant billboards in Japanese made me realize just how far from home I really was. I liked seeing the Japanese mall on the last night in Tokyo and looking at the lit-up signs. It was so different and cool. I hope I can come back someday.



were gone, I felt alone. This feeling faded when we went to Matsumoto castle. The same day, we hiked up to see an old dam by their house. But best of all, the fireworks. We went to the store and bought at least 50 dollars worth of rockets, sparklers, and fountains of all shapes and sizes. That night, families and friends from all over the valley came to watch and light off hundreds of beautiful fireworks. But all the fun came to an end as soon as the local police showed up. Thanks to the wonderful hospitality and the great welcome, the homestay was definitely the highlight of the trip.

David Linkhart

I am so grateful to have visited Japan on the 2015 trip sponsored by the Mendocino Sister Cities Association.



derful food for us, and provide accommodations. I especially want to thank my home stay family, Noboru, Reiko, and Asahi, for taking me into their home, providing wonderful

meals, a quiet place to sleep in Noboru's studio, Japanese language lessons, and great taxi service! Their home is located on the outskirts of Omachi surrounded by apple orchards and

rice fields. It was really beautiful there. I also want to thank Tokio Oda for taking so much of his own time over several days to lead us (the artists group) around to visit Japanese artists' studios and also for having me stay one night in his wonderfully designed "Penguin" house. And just one more thing – the Taiko drumming at the going away party was awesome! I look forward to May and June of 2016 when I can see Japanese visitors from Miasa – Omachi in Mendo-

Iana Porter

When I was a little girl in Mendocino, I would walk down the hill from my grandparents' house to the headlands and ponder the vastness of the ocean. I wondered what was beyond the horizon. My grandfather said that far, far across the endless water sat the country of Japan. I fantasized about this distant land—a mysterious parallel world, separated by the sea.

It was a dream come true to finally journey to the place that had occupied my childhood imagination – here I was traipsing through Tokyo, meditating in an ancient monastery, venturing through historic villages, awed by the ancient architecture of towering temples. Sharing this adventure with my daughter and the wonderful group of Mendocino kids, with their humor, curiosity, and cour-

age, was an absolute delight.

The highlight of my trip was my homestay. Massan and Kuko and their children welcomed me with a beautiful hand-carved sign and flowers. Daughters

Hida Minzoku Village, Takayama

Honoka and Mei giggled as they taught me origami, Ohajiki, and Japanese words. Four-year-old Moeto charmingly ran through the house calling "Iana Porter-san!" Each day was a new adventure – a firefly festival, Japanese washi papermaking class, delicious breakfasts of green tea sweet bread, onsen Japanese baths, fireworks, cooking together, and long discussions with dictionaries into the night. I will never forget the generosity and warmth of my Japanese family. This spring, Honoka will come to Mendocino. I can't wait to see her again!

It was a remarkable privilege to travel to Japan and witness the friendship between our communities. Thanks to all the wonderful people of Miasa, that faraway country across the sea feels very close to home.

Carolyn Zeitler
"Just Another Sardine"

Mendocino is a lazy little town. One can almost walk down the middle of the street. Therefore, it is with great curiosity that I observed the teeming masses of people that make up the city of Tokyo. Everywhere one looks there is a sea of heads and bodies. In the rain it becomes a sea of umbrellas everywhere. Most

Ben Kroninger

I think the homestays were the best part of the trip. Seeing a family on the other side of the ocean was amazing. Being in their home, eating their food, and participating in their daily lives were my favorite moments of the trip. At first, I was very nervous. The last thing I wanted to do was insult them by doing something wrong or not eating certain food. The second day was when the homesickness set in. I was not homesick in the beginning because I was with the group. Now that they

**Artist Group at Matsumoto Castle**

I couldn't imagine trying to do this on my own! The cultural exchange program arranged by the association was just fantastic, and the Japanese people we met did so much to make our visit really memorable and special. Many of the local people took several days off from their own usual routines to show us around, prepare won-

Fireworks



Mendocino Sister Cities Association, Inc.

*P.O. Box 2451
Mendocino, CA 95460*

Contact Information:

President - Jim Jackson - jackson@mcn.org

Vice President - Marci Van Sicklen - marci@mcn.org

Treasurer - Carolyn Latkin - clatkin@gmail.com

Secretary - Carolyn Zeitler - carolynzeitler@yahoo.com



With Mayor of Omachi

gleefully photographed. Five crab sellers were lined up offering tastes to each passer-by. A booth on the side was grilling fresh-caught delicacies -- I snacked on a brochette of lovely scallops.

Back at our host's kitchen, out came the knives, daikon, lemons, and an enormous cutting board. I watched from the sidelines as our host produced a remarkable platter of sashimi - Spanish mackerel, halibut, sweet shrimp, tuna, squid, and other fish I had never encountered before. The final masterpiece was like a still-life painting of the deep sea.

Guests soon began arriving, along with a Japanese "Gospel Singer" fresh in from Tokyo. She sang "This Little Light of Mine," and we all sang along. This diminutive lady belted it out like Odetta. We later talked about American folk music, and she explained how influential it had been

in Japan. Yet another a great connection between the US and Japan! Blowfish fins given to us earlier that day by one of the fish mongers added additional "notes" to the palette of the local sake and enlivened the conversation



Artists With Marsaru Isoiwa

We're on the Web
www.mendosca.org

natives seem not be bothered by the crunch of humanity. It is rather like swimming in a school of tightly packed fish, all swimming in harmony. When one needs to get on or off, the school flows around as one makes a ripple to go in another direction with another school. I am sure this is a result of many years of practice. Perhaps it is out of necessity of living with so many people in so small a space. However it originates, it

works. For a Mendocino native, it was another new adventure to become a

The day began with a three-hour round-trip journey with Koichi and Dave Gross to the Sea of Japan to obtain fish for sashimi. After a wonderful drive through the mountains and onto the plain, we arrived at a very walkable



Tokyo At Night

fish market. We were the only foreigners. The rainbow array of colors and textures was remarkable. Whole fish were procured, many more were

we all sang along. This diminutive lady belted it out like Odetta. We later talked about American folk music, and she explained how influential it had been

Thank You, Nathaniel Mills!!

Thank you for the wonderful video (On our Facebook page or on mendosca.org). This will be such a great way to show perspective student travelers about our program. Secondly, thank you for upgrading our website (work in progress), making it so much more "user-friendly"!

--YOU'RE THE BEST!!!

Evan Mills

Dreamy Sashimi

I spent as much time in my host family's kitchen as possible. Koichi has an unassuming expertise with food, and was eager to share a few tricks. Helping roll and slice udon noodles with him was a real treat, although I admit to not being the one who dutifully got up (twice) during the night to punch down the rising dough. But the best treat of all was a day-long adventure leading up to a big party for the trip leaders, chaperones, and local partners in the MSCA exchange.



Don't Forget!!

- Mail in the enclosed form with your dues or...
- Go to the website: www.mendosca.org, select Application forms, and follow the instructions.
- Email or print out and mail in your membership renewal form. **Please renew and help support our program!**