

President's Message

By Karen Wheeler



Dear Friends:

The month of August 2024 was simply amazing for everyone involved in welcoming eight student ambassadors and their adult leader to Torrance from Kashiwa, Japan. They had two and a half weeks of immersion into American life, as they learned about our City government, our local history, farmer's market, businesses and the SoCal Regional Occupation Center (SCROC).

They took in the sights all around Southern California, from UCLA and Fox Studios, to the San Diego Zoo and Mission Bay. Other excursions included a beach party, Disneyland, the Dodger Game, and a sunset sail on a tall ship. The Japanese student ambassadors really connected with their host families and the Torrance Students. They expressed their gratitude in a very unique and touching way. At the Sayonara Banquet they surprised us with a song they had practiced. Inviting the Torrance Students to join them on stage, they sang "Count on Me" by Bruno Mars. There were a lot of moist eyes in the room. We wistfully said goodbye at the airport the next day, but we know that lifelong friendships were formed, and memories were made. As I told the students, we do have adult delegations that visit between Torrance and Kashiwa every 5 years, so start planning now to come back in 2028! We have some great pictures to share with you in this Newsletter. Please peruse them!

Also in this Newsletter, we have a couple of student reports from our Torrance Student Ambassadors. The students prepared a short report prior to going to Kashiwa, and then learned more about their topic while there. They have completed their written reports and are now presenting them orally at our Monthly Association meetings in September and October. We will include a couple of reports in each Newsletter until you have seen them all.

We are pleased to share another article from one of our friends in KIRA, to continue learning about Kashiwa life and people. One of our English teachers in Kashiwa, Pedro Abina, also has a report for us.

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October 14, 2024

7:00PM

**TORRANCE SISTER CITY
ASSOCIATION MEETING**

Please note change of location:

Torrance Art Museum

Ring the bell at the back entrance

Our next big job will be to make Summer 2025 as wonderful as Summer 2024, so we start laying the groundwork now. First, the election of new Board Members is in progress. TSCA Members are returning their ballots, and there will be some new Board Members to welcome at the October Association meeting.

The process of selecting an adult leader to accompany our 2025 student ambassadors will be completed in October, following interviews with the candidates. The adult leader will be introduced at our Reunion Potluck in January.

The students who would like to become next year's student ambassadors may already be working on their applications, which are due a little earlier this year. (November 15, 2024—See the flyer in this Newsletter.) See our website, torrancesistercity.org for information and to start the application process.

This Spring 2025, we will select an English teacher to work for two years in a Kashiwa high school. English Teacher Chris Pigao will term out in August, and a replacement will be selected to work with Pedro Abino, who will be continuing to teach another year. (See the flyer in this issue for further details about this remarkable opportunity to live and work in Japan.)

Also, we will have the annual excitement of the Bunka-Sai Festival in April, and the process of orientation of the 2025 student ambassadors. Summer 2025 will be here before we know it! But we will be ready, because of the ongoing efforts and contributions of our members, friends, city staff, host families, alumni and corporate benefactors. Thank you all for everything you do.

Torrance Sister City Association

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Please send an email to

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Membership List

Compiled by Alyssa Yamauchi, Membership Chair

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS

INDIVIDUAL (\$20)

Devin Ketch

Photos with our visitors from Kashiwa!

Special thanks to our host families!





English Teacher Report

August in Japan – A Journey in Heat

By Pedro Abina

As August rolls in, the rhythm of life in Japan shifts subtly but noticeably. Students may be on break from classes, but the hallways of the high school in Kashiwa are far from silent. The dedication of the brass band members is palpable as they spend long hours perfecting their intricate routines, their music echoing through the school even during these hot summer days. Japan's summer heat is a frequent topic of conversation, with many locals lamenting the oppressive humidity. The air can feel heavy, and the heat is relentless, but I've found that Japan's climate is surprisingly tolerable. As long as you stay under the shade or keep moving, the breeze offers a refreshing relief, making the humidity manageable. This stands in stark contrast to the dry, intense heat of California, where the sun's rays seem to pierce through any attempts at cooling down. However, there are moments when Japan's humidity can be overwhelming—like on those rainy nights when you're crammed into the last train out of Tokyo, everyone packed together as they try to escape the downpour.

Still, summer in Japan isn't just about the weather; it's also a season of festivals. All across the country, from small towns to big cities, festivals bring people together to celebrate with fireworks, traditional dances, and street food. These events are a highlight of the summer, offering a vibrant glimpse into the culture and traditions that have been passed down through generations. This summer, I found myself craving more than just a respite from the heat. I longed to reconnect with nature, to explore the quieter, more untouched corners of Japan. This desire led me to Okutama, a gem that feels worlds away from the hustle and bustle of Tokyo despite being only about two hours from Shinjuku. My adventure in Okutama took me deep into the heart of its natural beauty, where I hiked down to a secluded part of the river. As I descended, the modern world seemed to slip away, and I felt as though I was traveling back in time. The river, with its crystal-clear waters, was both inviting and intimidating. The current was strong, and the water was freezing, but I was determined to immerse myself in this pristine environment.

Swimming up the river was a challenge; the current fought me every step of the way. But there was a small cave-like area, a natural shelter from the flow of the water. Here, I took a moment to rest, catching my breath and taking in the scene around me. Dragonflies hovered gracefully above the water, their delicate wings catching the sunlight. The clarity of the lake, the towering trees, and the sheer purity of the landscape transported me to another era—a time when nature was untamed and untouched. In that moment, surrounded by the beauty and tranquility of Okutama, I felt a deep connection to Japan's timeless spirit. It was a reminder of what makes this country so special: the harmonious coexistence of the ancient and the modern, the wild and the serene. As August continues, I find myself looking forward to more adventures. There's always something to learn, something to experience, and something to share.





55 hours instead of 10 “A surprising event unheard of ever”

By Seiichi Miyata, 2016 Adult Leader

Every year I feel happy to see the Student Exchange Program ends without any accidents. In 2016, the 43rd Kashiwa Delegation was involved in the airline company's system trouble, which resulted in prominent detour cutting off one and a half day's schedule in Torrance. Let me recollect the situation at that time.

Monday 12 : 40 Left Kashiwa for Narita Airport
August 8 15 : 20 After checking in, our members were in departure lounge.
 16 : 50 The first announcement about possible delay, but actual time uncertain
 20 : 35 Departure for LAX was announced.
 21 : 36 After all boarding, I asked KIRA to inform the delay to TSCA.
 21 : 54 Sudden announcement telling all passengers to get off the plane
 22 : 30 Announcement of the flight cancellation

At first, we were considering to stay at the lounge that night. Soon the airport staff began to provide us the light meals and water. Then I walked around the lounge to observe how the other passengers were doing and saw a lot of travelers who suffered from this airline company's big problem. Then I asked two students to wait in line for asking for the hotel reservation. Soon I joined them and negotiated with the staff about that night hotel accommodation and succeeded. After the baggage claim, it was already about midnight. After we arrived at the hotel, they kindly served us a late dinner at 1 am. Please refer to the following photo.



0 : 30 Arrived at the hotel, took dinner
Tuesday 7 : 00 Left the hotel for Narita Airport
August 9 9 : 00 Mr. Takikawa, chairperson of Torrance Committee/KIRA, and a travel agent arrived at Narita Airport.

On August 9, Mr. Takikawa and a travel agent began to search another way to get to Torrance. But it was difficult to find an airline which could accommodate 9 people at once. Spending many hours to search many routes to Torrance, they finally found the alternative plan. The route was to fly to Detroit first, then fly to Las Vegas, and drive to the City of Torrance by long-distance bus.

17 : 00 Left Narita for Detroit
Tuesday 14 : 50 Arrived at Detroit (local time)
August 9 18 : 00 Left Detroit for Las Vegas (local time)
 21 : 00 Arrived at Las Vegas (local time)
 23 : 00 Left Las Vegas for Torrance by long-distance bus (local time)

All of our transit places were exceptionally new to us. Throughout the travel to Torrance, as an adult leader I had constantly been nervous, thinking not to go to a wrong direction. But my students' cheerfulness and vitality always encouraged me to get us safely to Torrance at 4 am. I never forget the enthusiastic scene all TSCA members and host families were waiting together for our arrival at the city hall even before dawn. Local newspaper said, “Ordinarily 10 hours, they spent 55 hours,” or Odyssey.

Reflecting on the Social Role of Karaoke by John-Milo Ernst

Throughout the Torrance delegation's trip in Japan, I have gotten to learn so much about karaoke and the role it plays in the lives of Japanese people. Even though karaoke was invented in the early 1970s, I know from my experience that its popularity continues to be prominent. While I knew a few things about karaoke going into Japan, I was blown away by many aspects of Japanese karaoke that make it a defining piece of their culture. What I also learned is that Japan has both large karaoke chains, but also small local karaoke clubs. The large ones are found mostly in bigger cities such as Tokyo and Osaka. These karaoke clubs can take up an entire building, filling all its floors with karaoke bars and rooms. You can easily find one by looking for its distinctive giant vertical neon sign with katakana reading "ka-ra-o-ke!" for the whole city to see.

My first experience of karaoke in Japan was with my first host family. They took me to their go-to karaoke spot, Manekineko, a small single-floor karaoke club. Since they have young kids, we rented a room with a play area and anime wallpaper. We took turns singing songs, in both English and Japanese. I had lots of fun, and my singing wasn't too bad, until I heard my host parents sing, and their singing was the best I'd ever heard. I asked them, how are you such good singers? They denied my compliments, but it was true.

My host father explained that it is common for businessmen to practice their singing before a work karaoke outing so as not to embarrass themselves and to impress their bosses. My host mother told me that her passion for singing as a child helped her work better with her coworkers due to the presence of karaoke in the workplace. I knew that karaoke was a work activity, but hearing the stories of my host parents and getting to experience it myself made my perspective much more complex. On one hand I experienced karaoke as a friendly bonding activity, but on the other hand, I could hear in the tone of my host parents' voice that it is also an additional expectation for all Japanese to meet.

I also did karaoke with my second host family, on their TV at home. Since my second host mother was an elementary school teacher and mother of three girls, she did not go to enka but preferred to do karaoke from home. All through the night they sang J-pop for me and I sang Party in the USA for them. The youngest, Iori, who was 5 years old, loved singing along to her favorite Disney songs, even if it was just youtube karaoke on the TV.

What I didn't know was that oftentimes karaoke is featured inside of other sources of entertainment. For example, the bowling alley we went to on our second to last day had a separate hallway lined with private karaoke rooms. This made me realize how Japanese businesses can attract crowds by advertising easy accessibility to multiple forms of entertainment. It also made me realize how easy it is to spend all my money.

On Wednesday July 24th, the Torrance delegation, with some KIRA and Lions club members, went to karaoke in Kashiwa's downtown area. We were blessed with Mike-san's beautiful singing. But later that day, at the dinner hosted by the Lion's Club, our karaoke outing was mentioned frequently. The Torrance delegation then performed Count on Me by Bruno Mars in front of the club. In a way this expressed our appreciation of the role of singing in Japanese events.

One aspect that surprised me the most was the frequency of their karaoke outings. My host brother from Kashiwa, Genki, said he goes to karaoke once a week with his friends. And many other people I talked to said they visit the karaoke club at least once a month. This frequency surprised me, but I learned that it serves my Kashiwa friends in the same way that some of our popular entertainment, like the beach for example, continuously serves us. The abundance and popularity of karaoke in Japan contrasts that of America. Everyone in Japan was so surprised to hear that there's only one karaoke spot in Torrance!

While I am not able to enjoy karaoke the way I can in Japan, that's what makes the Japanese experience so special. The stories I heard and the experience of karaoke while in Japan will stay with me forever.

The Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles co-host a workshop and reception with the California-Japan Sister Cities Network and the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco in Torrance

On September 14, the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles co-hosted a [#California-#Japan](#) Sister City Workshop & Reception in Torrance with the California-Japan Sister Cities Network ([#CJSCN](#)) and the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco.

This event, entitled “Global Connections: Sister Cities, Business and the Next Generation”, was immensely supported by the Torrance Sister City Association ([#TSCA](#)) and City of Torrance. It was attended by 97 people.

In his remarks, Consul General Sone conveyed his appreciation to all the volunteers at sister city organizations and to the presences of JBA (Japanese Business Association) and San Diego JBA, emphasizing that more connections between sister cities and businesses will help the future sustainability of sister city activities.

Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi, a former President of TSCA, also gave remarks, as well as Torrance Mayor George K. Chen, CJSCN President Meg Mizutani, and TSCA President Karen Wheeler.

Ms. Hazel Taniguchi, former President of TSCA, talked about how the organization has been supported by local businesses and how TSCA has in turn been able to give back to that community. Mr. Andy Santonello, owner of Andy’s Termite, who received a TSCA Partnership Award for his long-time contribution to the sister city community, also spoke.

Participants at the Workshop and Reception

Text and photos from the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles office.



EXPERIENCE JAPAN



Torrance Sister City Association

is looking for highly motivated Torrance residents who are high-school sophomores through seniors, 19 years old and younger, to serve as cultural ambassadors in the Student Cultural Exchange Program. Since 1974, TSCA has sponsored hundreds of students to represent the highest qualities of American Youth in Kashiwa, Japan, our sister city, for three unforgettable weeks in July.

2025 applications are available on our website:

torrancesistercity.org

To submit your application or if you have any questions, please email

torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com

- **Promote international friendship and understanding**
- **Become part of a family in Kashiwa, Japan**
- **Visit modern Tokyo and the ancient temples of Kyoto**
- **Gain understanding of Japanese customs and daily life**
- **Experience Hiroshima**
- **Make lifelong friends and much, much more!**

APPLICATION must be received by November 15, 2024 ▪ TorranceSisterCity.org



Teach English in **Kashiwa, Japan**

The Torrance Sister City Association seeks qualified applicants for one high school English teacher in Kashiwa, Japan, the Sister City of Torrance. A minimum one-year contract runs from August 1, 2025, to July 31, 2026. The contract is renewable for a maximum three-year assignment.

Duties: Conduct and assist in a variety of English conversation classes; assist with coordinating campus visits by parents, administrators, and junior high students; and assist with extracurricular activities, which may include judging and assisting with speech contests, serving as adviser to the English Conversation Club and business trips, and coaching students for college interviews. Volunteer work with KIRA (Kashiwa International Relations Association) and other city groups may also be required.

Qualifications

Applicants must:

- Live or work in Torrance
- Be fluent in written and spoken English
- Hold a Bachelor's degree plus a teaching credential or have demonstrated teaching experience
- Possess a keen interest in the Japanese language and culture
- Represent the Torrance Sister City Association and foster the goals and objectives of the English Teacher Exchange Program.

Compensation

- Annual salary of approximately 4,800,000 Japanese yen
- One-way airfare from Los Angeles to Japan
- National health insurance (deducted from monthly salary)
- Subsidized housing and transportation allowance
- Paid Japanese holidays and personal days

To Apply

Please email your resume and cover letter to Lori Chong Eurich (Chair, English Teacher Selection Committee) at torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com

Also, two recent letters of recommendation from people not related to the applicant must be emailed directly to the Chair.

Deadline to apply is

March 20, 2025

Qualified applicants will be scheduled for panel interviews in mid-April 2025.

Questions? Send an email to torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com

Torrance Sister City Association

2024 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Except for the Lifetime Membership*
all dues are in effect from
January 1 to
December 31

Member Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

Email Address _____

My membership is:

☐ New

☐ Renewal

TSCA Directory Update:

☐ New Address

☐ New Telephone Number

☐ New Email Address

☐ I do not want to be listed in the TSCA Directory

TSCA Activities:

☐ I am interested in participating in TSCA activities

Mail your check and this form to:

Torrance Sister City Association
c/o Community Services Department
3031 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$75+
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$125+
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$200+
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership*	\$2,000+

Enclosed is a donation to
TSCA (in addition to
annual dues) \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make your check payable to TSCA

TSCA meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, except in August
and December, at the Civic center West Annex Commission from 7:00 p.m.
TorranceSisterCity.org

*If you have
any questions
about your membership,
please email Alyssa Yamauchi at
tscamembership@gmail.com*

www.torrancesistercity.org



**Torrance Sister City
Association**

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