

Exchange Students talk about what they wish to do



Mahiro Takemura

I feel very happy to be able to visit Lismore this time, because I have wanted to go there since I was a junior high school girl. I will try to communicate well with local citizens in order not to make this precious opportunity needless.



Chihiro Hayasi

Staying with a foreign family is my first experience. I am getting very nervous before my homestay in Lismore, but I intend to positively talk to the family members in order to let them understand Japan and Takada better and for me to learn more about Australia. I hope to be a person who acts as a bridge between Yamato Takada and Lismore.



Yuka Yamano

I want to tell local people about Japanese traditional culture as much as possible during my stay in Lismore. I do want to tell them especially about our culture such as "itadakimasu" and "gochisomasa" we Japanese say naturally before and after meals respectively. I hope that they have a little or much interest in Japanese culture like this. I also want to learn and experience Australian culture, their ways of living and manners and customs as well. After returning home I'd like to tell my family and friends what I have learned about Australia.



Yuumi Yoshida

I would like to be friends with all the members of my Australian family and also to enjoy the life there. I have a lot of things to learn about Yamato Takada, so I will try to make efforts to learn about Takada as much as possible and I want to tell Australian people about our wonderful city Yamato Takada. I believe this opportunity will help me learn a lot about Australia and Takada.



Honoka Kawaura

This is my first visit to Australia. One of my friends lives in Australia and she tells me that Australia is a wonderful country, so I am very happy to have a good opportunity to visit such a fabulous country.



Miyuki Uno

The Seeds of Happiness

I believe Japanese exchange students to sow seeds that will link with happiness of people in Lismore through this program. I will support them as a teacher. I would like to introduce how Dongo elementary school district is wonderful to Lismore people. And I will tell students a lot of beauty of Lismore. May children grow into persons who like themselves and be proud of their places where they live.



The Bamboo Shoots

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We do hope The Bamboo Shoots born out of the soil of Yamato-Takada will grow up and act as a go-between for the citizens in Lismore and in Yamato-Takada



Greatly Delighted, First Reunion in 23 years



On the 23rd March Ric and I flew to Yamato Takada for our three week holiday to experience the beauty of the cherry blossoms. Home stay was graciously offered to us by a dear friend, Etsuko. Another treasured friend Mitsuko was handling our social calendar.

We are so blessed to have made so many friends over the 23 years we were involved with the Sister City Student Exchange Program, much of that time as Co-ordinators.

The trust, faith, loyalty and love shown to us each time we visit Yamato Takada is astounding to us. This time we were pleasantly surprised if not a little shocked to be given a reception attended by over fifty former exchange students and teachers. It was a trip down memory lane as we caught up on the latest news from students like Yukiko, our student from 1994 and so many more. I am sure if our first student, Aki from 1992 had been in Japan she would have attended but she has been living and working in Australia. The student exchange program began on 1986, a young man who was in the second group to visit Lismore attended, we have known Taro for many years through his mother who has been a strong supporter of the Sister City since that time. Each one wrote a message which was very moving, a real privilege to know we have changed young lives. This was held on 5th April at Sazanka Hall and attended by Mayor Yoshida and the President of the Lismore- Yamato Takada Association. Just when we thought things were as good as they get we were once again honoured to be granted "Friendly Envoy" status which included a certificate and badges with the sakura flower



and wattle as part of each city was represented. Ric and I are very proud of the contribution we have made to Sister City Association over the many years and although we certainly didn't expect the recognition that was bestowed on us we are grateful to be appreciated. We will open our home to anyone who wants to visit us. We know we are very welcome there.

To say we had a wonderful time is a huge understatement, we went walking along the riverbank most days admiring the changes in the cherry blossom trees, we watched them from start of blooming to falling to the ground like a massive pale pink carpet and the new shoots of green leaves appear, we saw them in the day and lit up by night. Absolutely beautiful!

As to the rest of the time, we attended english lessons, art classes, flower making, special lunches and dinners with friends. We were taken to Osaka by Yukiko and her family to the Harukas 300 building to view Osaka from 300 metres up, amazing! A train trip to Yoshino, a ride on the oldest cable car in Japan to a famous area for cherry blossoms where we were lucky enough to see a procession of monks from a temple there. Arisa and Yoshiko from City Office took us to Asuka to view over 100 displays of dolls, one display alone contained over 500 dolls, fantastic!

It was a wonderful holiday and I have over 1,000 photos to prove it. Thank you Yamato Takada, we love you as much as you obviously love us. It is obvious we know some of your city very well and it was fun going for a walk to see if we would meet someone we knew, most times we did.

Until next time....



written by Colleen Virtue

'MIROKU BUDDHA SEATED STATUE'



The Seated Stature of Mirokubutsu, or the Bodhisattva, was designated as a National Important Cultural Asset on September 6, 2012. This Buddhist stature was enshrined in the refurbished Main Hall of Miroku-ji

temple on February 24, 2015, after it had been restored to its original appearance in a specialized institution for restoration. In terms of 'national important cultural asset' this is the second case in Takada next to the Main Temple of Fudo-in.





Friendly Interaction with an Australian Elementary School

On 18th of February an Elementary School children in Yamato Takada City interacted with an Elementary School children in Lismore, Australia, for the first time on the net-phone "Skype." The schools are in the Sister School relations between the two cities. The Japanese children talked to them, saying loudly "Good morning" toward the microphone linked up to the network. The children, who wore aprons used at lunchtime, introduced a

varied menu and plates for school meals and Australian children introduced themselves in Japanese, saying "Hajimemashite," and after that they showed some sports like karate, soccer, and cricket. The children of the two schools looked kind of nervous at first because it was their first experiences to communicate with each other on Skype, but they were gradually relaxing themselves, having a good time interacting with each other



Homeroom teacher's impressions of the "Student Exchange Program"

My children could have a precious experience through the interaction this time. I got a good impression of them, who really showed me lively expressions on their faces and they were much more active than when they studied about Australia in their social studies class. Even some children who felt weak in English enjoyed interacting directly with Australian children on Skype.

At first I had no idea what to do for my children, but soon I noticed that I was needlessly worried about myself because they were gradually getting along with them looking at each other, waving their hands with smiles and clapping their hands. No language was necessary among them. I was very surprised at the children's power shown to each other. I could sense their feelings through their words in their mind, "We want to let them know about ourselves better," and "We want to know more about them." The program ended before I knew it, but after it was over almost all my children looked sad, saying that they wanted to have more time with Australian children on Skype.

Though it was a short time attempt, it was very significant for the children to experience a different culture and to understand each other's different manners and customs and also a different way of thinking and living even though they were of an age.

Through this program my children had a keen interest in a foreign country, Australia, and they had a strong will of visiting the country. In fact they came to know that though it was very important to learn about everything through books for themselves, but it was much more important to directly understand other countries and people as well. I do want to have another opportunity like this for my children in the future.

Children's Impressions of the Interaction on Skype



- I met Australian children for the first time, but we could have a good time talking to them without feeling nervous. I was happy to know that they played games like baseball, which we didn't know very well.
- When I entered my classroom, I found a lot of news reporters were waiting for us, so I got nervous at first, but as soon as the skype program began, I could relax myself to see them waving their welcoming hands to us. School children in Lismore were all smiles and we could make friends with them without any troubles. I was very very happy to know about Australia and to be able to make ourselves understood as well.



- I had a great time with them. Australian children were full of energy and they told us many things, such as sports and different kinds of culture and so on.
- I was very excited through this program. I could have contact with children living very far from Takada.
- I could exchange questions with Lismore children. It was very interesting to ask some questions to them and answer the questions they asked us as well. I knew for the first time that they played karate. I could know that each of them had his or her food likes or dislikes for lunch.
- Some had only fruit and others had different meals. I was very interested in it. I wish we could have a school shop at Okanishi Elementary School. I wanted to have another chance to talk to them on Skype.
- I was very nervous with a pounding heart at the beginning of the program, but my tense gradually melted away because Australian children waved their hands back to us. Of course they were speaking English among them and when I saw them speaking English to each other, I felt they were very cool, so I wanted to be a good speaker of English one day.

6th -Year Children, Happy Smiles on their First Attempt

Principal of Okanishi Elementary School (municipal)
Chiemi Nishikawa

"Hello" said Japanese children and "konnichiwa" said Australian children.

Right at the very beginning of their first interaction on Skype did they call out loud to each other with their own words mentioned above. I was quite a lot surprised at this. On the screen there appeared Our Lady Help of Christian School children who wore slightly bashful smiles on their faces. Our school became a sister school with this school in Lismore, NSW, Australia, in August, 2014. After that 3rd-year children had an opportunity to send the DVD to the school, which introduced our school, and in February this year 6th -year children were able to have a happy chance to talk to them on skype for the first time.

On the very day of interaction our children were waiting for the moment before the screen with a pounding heart and with slightly nervous looks on their faces as well, but happily as they proceeded to explain their everyday life at school, they began to show calm looks on their faces little by little. Australian children, too, did a great job relaxing themselves in their tension. The first exchange program ended in a great success, which made me feel as if my heart was beating with joy.

Using their partner's language children showed their menu for school lunch and talked about school sports they took part in regularly. Our children were able to understand how to spend

their life at Our Lady Help of Christian School through the pictures on the screen. They could feel a sense of closeness with Australian children though the two schools were very far from each other.

I think our children were fairly surprised to know that there were differences in life at school between Japan and Australia and at the same time I myself could realise their strong will through their words and behavior in the course of the exchange program that they really wanted to let them know how they spend their everyday life at school. I also realised the importance of experience in doing anything. The two school children showed us happy and gentle smiles on their faces, which I could see all through the screen.

However far the sister school in Lismore lies away from our school in Takada, we have come to know that it is possible for the two sister schools to interact with each other in this way. I believe that this interaction led to a great delight for our students. As principal I do want to make this kind of interaction more active in the future in order for our students to make the friendship with Australian sister school children much deeper and to strengthen their cross-cultural understanding. At the same time I want our children to experience different cultures and to have a broad knowledge and a flexible ability of thinking, hoping they will grow up with generosity and tolerance.