



STRAIGHT LINES by well-behaved students in one of Tsuruta's elementary schools who (at right) bow out of respect to a speaker at a graduation ceremony. Below, pictures show young students in daily school life, from visits to farms and Mayor Kenji Nakano's office to physical education and English class with Hood River's Lisa Kawachi.

Submitted photos



Getting Serious in Tsuruta

A peek inside elementary school life in small-town Japan

By **LISA KAWACHI**
Coordinator of International Relations
(Editor's note: Hood River native Lisa Kawachi is currently about six months into her term as the Hood River-Tsuruta Sister City program's Coordinator of International Relations. The job has existed for more than 20 years and places a Hood River resident in Tsuruta full-time to live and work among the townspeople. A big part of the job is teaching English to the town's children.)

taught formalities and etiquette that I've never seen in children at such a young age. They exude so much responsibility and sense of respect.

On a normal day, my English classes officially begin with the student leader settling the class into place and addressing the teacher to announce that the class is ready to begin. The students' desks are cleared and they sit in their chairs, feet together and hands kept

A great example of this is the fact that elementary school students are required to clean the school daily. Students are each assigned sections of the school and there is a special time allotted in the afternoon for cleaning.

The students clean everything from the classroom backboards to the bathroom floors. There's no squabbling or attempt to get out of the cleanup; everyone simply does the work they are expected to do.

dents. Japan puts high importance on fostering big brother/big sister relationships. These student elders are called "sempai" in Japanese. All the students within the school know one another and there is a clear sense of community within the school. The younger children (kouhai) show their respect to their sempai and in return the sempai look out for and provide guidance to the kouhai.

The establishment of this

Host a Tsuruta exchange student

Host families are needed for Tsuruta's annual junior high school student visit to Hood River. The group will be in town March 15-23 and will experience a variety of activities, both as a group and individually with host families.

Host families should have children in middle school, as exchange students will attend school with host brothers/sisters for two days of their stay. Hosting is a great way to experience another culture and make friends from across the world. Japanese language is not required. For more information or to become a host, contact Scott Murahashi at 541-806-0781.



I have now passed the six-month mark of my time here in Tsuruta, Japan, as the Coordinator for International Relations for the Hood River-Tsuruta sister city program.

While living and working among the people of Tsuruta, my job is to facilitate and help foster the relations between Hood River and Tsuruta. Along with that, one of my chief responsibilities is to teach English to the children of Tsuruta. I teach at

neatly folded on top of their desks. If a student is unready for class or sitting inappropriately, the lesson comes to a halt and everyone waits patiently in silence for that student to correct him- or herself.

When I collect papers, they are straightened and presented to me with two hands and a courteous bow from the students. At the end of the lesson, they erase the blackboard for me and help me gather my coat, magnets, flashcards and anything else we have used.

For the most part there is no school employee who has cleaning responsibilities. A custodian is in charge of maintenance issues and groundskeeping, but does not clean as part of his or her daily tasks.

Another responsibility the students have is to serve their own lunch. Meals are made by the kitchen staff, but when it's time for lunch, four or so students from each classroom report to the kitchen dressed in white kitchen uniforms to carry the food back to their class-

relationship starts almost immediately as the first-graders begin their school careers. At the entrance ceremony for elementary school, a representative from the sixth-grade class delivers a speech and officially welcomes them to the school.

First-graders also receive a special yellow case to cover their book bag and a yellow hat. These two items are meant to recognize the first-graders and to tell others that these children are young and just starting out,

'My experience teaching children both in the U.S. and Japan has made me realize students, regardless of their nationality, share at least one thing in common: When it comes down to it, kids are kids. They play, they laugh, they act silly and they have fun no matter what they're doing.'

LISA KAWACHI,
Hood River-Tsuruta CIR



six elementary schools and seven kindergartens in total, and the more I teach, the more I continue to be surprised with Japanese students and the methods in which the schools operate.

There are of course significant differences between our educational systems when it comes to subject matter, requirements and the like, but even just the day-to-day happenings take me by surprise.

The children I teach range in age from 3 to 11. Japanese children are

Sometimes as I'm rushing to cram all my materials in my bag, I have the distinct feeling they are looking at me with amazement at my disregard for order and neatness. I try not to let it faze me too much as I scurry on to my next class, papers and stickers trailing behind me.

The order, neatness and cleanliness of things are very important to Japanese culture and students learn at very young age that they are ultimately the ones responsible for the state of their classroom and school.

rooms. Students do not eat in a cafeteria. No such room exists in a Japanese elementary school.

The students bring a pot of rice, other containers of food and dishware into their classroom and then evenly divide and serve lunch to their classmates. After everyone has finished, the class cleans up and returns the dishes back to the kitchen.

One thing I really commend about the culture here is the relationships between the younger and older stu-

so please support them when you see them.

This support that the students get from their peers is apparent everywhere. Whenever you look the ages of the groups of students are always intermixed. Yes, the students are all divided by grade, but yet they are all there talking and playing together and helping one another out.

The differences between Japanese and American cultures become extremely ap-

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A brief Sister City history

Hood River and Tsuruta recently celebrated the 35th anniversary of their sister city relationship. In the time since the 1977 foundation, thousands of students and adults have traveled between the two small towns to learn about new cultures, make friends and gain a better understanding of different ways of life.

The highly successfully program was founded by Mayor Kenji Nakano (who is still mayor of Tsuruta today) and the late Ray Yasui. When looking for a sister city, Nakano realized that Tsuruta and Hood River had a lot in common and would make for a good match. Like Hood River, Tsuruta is a small town in an apple-producing region, next to a river, on the north side of a volcanic peak (Mount Iwaki).



NEIGHBORS



"Forsaken" — photography first-place winner by Zoe Peterson.



"Lee Min Ho" — portrait winner, pencil by Aely Sarai Gama Diaz.

Mid-Columbia students honored for artwork

The Dalles Art Center has announced the 2013 awards for the Annual Mid Columbia Middle and High School open juried show.

Retired art instructors Doug Leash and Chuck Kornegay were the judges this year. There were a total of 149 high school entries and eight middle school entries.

Hood River Valley High School students won 16 of 21 awards.

Ernie's Locks and Keys,

Kiwanis and Bill Noonan are the sponsors of the cash awards that will be handed out at the reception held March 2, from 3-4 p.m. The Dalles Art Center is located at 220 E. Fourth St.

Here are the second and third-place winners from Hood River Valley High School:

Portraits: second place, "Sandals," pencil by Kaylee Asai; third place, "Beauty," charcoal by Ahnauna An-

draws.

Other Medium: first place, "Be-You-Tiful," collage by Avery Holyoak; second place, "Marlin," oil pastel by Shaelyn Francis; third place, "Octelephant," colored pencil by Gannon Olmstead

3-D: second place, "Mermaid Fishtail," clay by Brenda Ortiz

Honorable Mention
HRVHS winners: "Christmas Veggies," digital photography, by Jen Mikkelsen; "To

War," digital photography, by Jade James; "The Eiffel Tower-Collage," collage by Christina Garcia; "Same Love," Prismacolor pencils and paint, by Natalie Wright; "Sea Flower," mid-range clay and glaze, by Alisha Bales; "Tranquil," clay, by Jessica Wagar; "Abstract Winter Squash," clay and iron oxide, by Sierra Johnson.

For details call the art center at 541-296-4759 or visit thedallesartcenter.org

GTA looks at Gorge technology education

The Gorge Technology Alliance invites the community to a Feb. 26 gathering for a discussion on higher educational initiatives to support science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) opportunities in the Gorge.

Networking starts at 6:30 p.m. at the White Buffalo, 4040 Westcliff Dr., Hood River.

Cost is \$10 for non-GTA members; appetizers are pro-

vided.

Oregon State University Open Campus Coordinators Dani Annala (Hood River County) and Lynette Black (Wasco County) will join Columbia Gorge Community College faculty Dr. Kevin McCabe to discuss their initiatives.

OSU is working on establishing an Open Campus in our region to further develop the universities' resources

available in our community, especially those with a STEM focus.

CGCC is looking to create a two-year engineering certification that will support the region's businesses at many levels. The presenters hope to engage in a conversation with the community about this process, the needs in our region, and business workforce requirements to ensure that their efforts prepare our

residents for jobs available here.

The Gorge Technology Alliance supports, connects and develops the technology community of the Columbia River Gorge. It meets each month with networking and educational opportunities. For questions about the GTA, contact Executive Director Jessica Metta at 541-296-2266 or Jessica@crcta.org.

Soroptimist seeks past 'Opportunity' awardees

Soroptimist of Hood River is hoping to hear from some of the dozens of women who have received its Women's Opportunity Award in the past 15-20 years.

"We know the women who have won these awards are some of the busiest people around, working, going to school and raising their families, but we'd really love to connect briefly just to know how and what they are doing," says Women's Opportunity Award Committee Chair Kate Dougherty.

Three awards are given annually to women financial heads of household who

have chosen to get more training and education in order to better their families' future.

The cash awards of \$500 to \$1,000 each can be used for anything the recipient needs to make it a little easier to get her education, such as child care, gas, car repairs, food or books.

"We also want to invite them to help us honor this year's three recipients at a Soroptimist event on March 6," said Dougherty.

Former recipients are asked to contact her at 541-386-3850 or kated@gorge.net.



Photo by Andy Taylor

TWINS TURN 87

Charles Bovee and his wife Edie of Sitka, Alaska arrived Feb. 8 in Hood River to celebrate two birthdays — his and his sister's. Charles "Chuck" is twins with local Hood Riverite Mel Taylor. Chuck and Mel celebrated their 87th birthday on Sunday, Feb. 10 at Down Manor with their spouses (Edie and Cliff) and most of the Taylor family and some close friends. Cliff, Mel, Chuck and Edie celebrate together at Down Manor.

'Cataclysms' lecture will repeats on Feb. 26

If you missed the "Cataclysms On the Columbia" presentation at Springhouse Cellar Winery on Feb. 19, here's one more chance.

One of the greatest geological events to ever have occurred in North America

was given the name the Missoula Floods. Join the Hood River Watershed Group on Feb. 26 at Columbia Gorge Community College to learn about one of the great forces that shaped the landscape of the Gorge, as well as the in-

credible story of J. Harlen Bretz and his discovery of the floods.

Lecturers Scott Burns and Marjorie Burns, both professors at Portland State University, have recently rewritten a book, "Cataclysms on

the Columbia: The Great Missoula Floods." Doors will open at 6 p.m. and the lecture begins at 6:30 p.m. Suggested donation is \$5. For more information call 541-386-6063 or visit hoodriverswdc.org.

HoodRiverNews.com

TSURUTA

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parent at school ceremonies. There are two significant events in elementary school life. The first is the entrance ceremony for the new first-graders and the second is the graduation ceremony for the sixth-graders. These ceremonies are of course a time of celebration, but they are quite different from what Americans are accustomed to.

As speeches are given, there is an sense of staunchness and rigidity to the ceremony. It is a joyous event, but you would be hard-pressed to find anyone smiling or looking overjoyed. There are strict rules of conduct that the students must abide by and no one strays from these norms.

There are a great number of speeches given at these ceremonies. The mayor of

'Despite the formalities and rules, I have never been around a more friendly culture.'

LISA KAWACHI

Tsuruta and the parent teacher association president are among the honored guests who are invited to deliver speeches and words of encouragement to the students. The students stand or sit in straight lines with their hands at their sides or resting on their laps. Their feet and knees are together and everyone looks ahead attentively without any idle chit-chat or whispering.

It amazes me that there is no movement from the group. They stand or sit motionless for such a long time. There is no fidgeting and no smiling. Everyone acts appropriately. This behavior is what I would expect to see at a military service commen-

dation or something of that nature, not at an elementary school celebration ceremony.

Despite the formalities and rules, I have never been around a more friendly culture. I get to sing, dance, play, and share my culture with students every day. They shower me with handmade crafts and drawings and are constantly trying to add Japanese vocabulary to my repertoire.

My experience teaching children both in the United States and Japan has made me realize students, regardless of their nationality, share at least one thing in common: When it comes down to it, kids are kids. They play, they laugh, they act silly and they have fun, no matter what they're doing. When the time comes to have fun, Japanese children can definitely let loose regardless of their structured environment.

In Japan, though, there is definitely a time and place for such.

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