

Contents

(1) OFIX Programme/Event Reports

- Medical Interpreter Volunteer Training
- Osaka Foreign Students Music Festival

(2) Osaka International Club

- OFIX Scholarship Student
Ivy Ang (Malaysia)

(3) OFIX Network

- Kansai International Exchange Volunteer Network
(KIV-NET)

(4) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

- Winter in Japan

(5) OFIX International Student Hall News

- Exchange Party for international students and local residents

(1) OFIX Programme/Event Reports

■ Medical Interpreter Volunteer Training

OFIX recently held training sessions for volunteer medical interpreters in collaboration with the AMDA International Medical Information Centre (Kansai) and the Rinku General Medical Centre. The aim of this programme was to train volunteer medical interpreters (English, Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese) to better assist foreign residents when visiting hospital.

The training took place once a week from the 7th Nov ~ 3rd December. During the first training session the Director of the Amda International Medical Information Centre, Mr. Yoneyuki Kobayashi, and the Deputy Director of the Rinku General Medical Centre, Mr. Mamoru Ito, gave presentations to the group giving a general outline of some of the issues involved in medical interpreting for foreign patients. During the 2nd-4th sessions the group received advice from current medical interpreters on the skills required. The group broke up into language specific groups and learned some of the medical vocabulary needed when interpreting for foreigners. They also took part in role-plays.

On the final days training the trainees split into groups again to discuss issues relating to maintaining the privacy of personal details when interpreting. Finally the group gave presentations focusing on what they thought would make a good medical interpreter.

The trainees worked very hard throughout the 5 weeks of training and talked freely and openly during the group

discussions.

Many asked for there to be more training sessions in the questionnaire which all participants filled out on completion of the training.

In total 51 people who took part will register with either the AMDA International Medical Information Centre, or the Rinku General Medical Centre as medical interpreters. We at OFIX hope that those that took part in the training will continue to further their knowledge, and help foreigners feel at ease when receiving medical care and treatment in Osaka.

You will also find further medical information on the OFIX and Osaka Prefectural Government websites.

Trainees reports and questionnaires can be seen here (Japanese only)

http://www.ofix.or.jp/boran/index5_questionnaire.pdf

Medical guide for foreign residents:

<http://www.pref.osaka.jp/iryo/medicalinfo/index.htm>



■ Osaka Foreign Students Music Festival

The 18th Osaka Foreign Students Music Festival was held on Sunday 14th December at the Osaka International House. This event was organised by OFIX in collaboration with the Osaka International House and the Min-On Concert Association. Foreign students based in Osaka thrilled the visitors with traditional music and dance from their home countries. At the end of the festival all of the participants came to the stage to sing Wonderful World.

This year the festival welcomed Enki, a professional lute player from China, who performed a number of rousing numbers. Enki is currently a postgraduate student

at the Osaka Kyoiku University. We hope to welcome more professional artists to the stage in years to come!



The final performance of the night

(2) Osaka International Club

■ OFIX Scholarship Student

Ivy Ang (Malaysia)

Ivy wrote to us recently about her impressions of English language learning in Japan

When I first came to Japan as a foreign student two and a half years ago, many things were new and interesting to me, but of particular interest was the fascination I found that Japanese people hold for the English language. About 3 months after moving to Japan I was on the look out for possible part-time English teaching jobs, and one of my telephone interviews (which took place entirely in English) went like this. At first the conversation proceeded with the interviewer thinking I was from an English speaking country. I took a deep breath when asked if I was from America and answered "No, I am from Malaysia". At this point I was told that I would not be offered the position. I managed to find work with another school, and during one lesson I asked my students why they were so keen to study English. Many said that it was because speaking English sounds cool. I was stunned as to the extent to which they were all so mesmerized by English.

In Malaysia the number of ethnic Chinese that make English their first language over Chinese is rising. On asking a friend why she didn't learn Chinese, she replied that she didn't need to understand Chinese but could succeed perfectly well with English (this was at a time

when the Chinese economy was not going from strength to strength as it is now). Of course, not everyone thinks like this. There are also many people working hard to teach themselves Chinese. Personally I feel grateful that my first language is Chinese for it has helped me to appreciate the wisdom and virtues built up over 5000 years of Chinese history. I, like many Malaysians of Chinese descent, take pride in preserving my own cultural identity, whilst using English as the tool for international communication. One funny thing in Malaysia is that people who affect an American accent when speaking English are not looked on positively all the time, but seen as posers. Perhaps this is due to some sense amongst Malaysians of not wanting to simply follow suit. Of course with English as lingua franca it is important to communicate with a clear and easy to understand accent. However, my experience of being a foreign student in Japan has helped me come to the realization that when speaking English it is not



Ivy trying her hand at a bamboo flute

necessary to speak exactly the same English as a native speaker, or to disregard one's own background and native culture in favour of that of a native English speaker.

(3) OFIX Network

■ Kansai International Exchange Volunteer Network (KIV-NET)

KIV - NET was established in March 1996 following the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference held in Osaka in 1995. The aim of KIV-NET is to facilitate exchange of information between international exchange organisations in Kansai, and to promote volunteer activities in the region. Since then the 8th International Energy Forum, the 3rd World Water Forum, and the 2007 World Athletics Championships have all been held in Osaka, and KIV-NET has assisted in providing volunteers at these events.

With few large scale events being held in Osaka at the present time, the issue of how best to develop KIV-NET was discussed at a recent general meeting. It was felt that as an organisation which represents volunteers in the whole of Kansai, it is of great value to the region to further the scope of activities and further assist in the support of events.

Members of the Osaka SGG Club, Friends of Asia Club, and Supporters Net for Foreigners Osaka were invited to the meeting at which it was also decided that

KIV-NET will actively support and promote the upcoming events in 2010 commemorating the 1300th anniversary of the Nara Heijo-kyo Capital.

At the same meeting KIV-NET welcomed three new members, the Wakayama International Exchange Foundation, the Supporters Net for Foreigners Osaka, and the Kyoto City International Foundation. The total number of members is now 80.

OFIX and the Osaka International Centre alternate secretariat duties on a yearly basis. For further information please get in touch with us.



KIV-NET General Meeting

(4) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

■ Winter in Japan

First of all let me say that I love winter in Osaka. Yes, it can get rather chilly, but I'd take that over the stifling summer heat any day of the week! (Yes, I come from London, where "stifling heat" are words seldom used).

Anyway, I thought I'd write about some of the things that are typical of a Japanese winter. First and foremost, the wonderful little things called Kairo. These are little disposable heat pads available in all shapes and sizes at convenience stores. Shake them a little, stick them to

are a real lifesaver. How do they work? That's this month's homework!

The second indispensable item to help you through a Japanese winter is the wonder that is the Kotatsu. This is a low table fitted with an electric heater. You place a square futon over the frame, and then pop the table top over the futon. Once you are sitting comfortable at the table with the futon wrapped around you, switch on the heater, and you won't want to move again for the rest of the day! With no real central heating in homes in Japan, people rely more on space heating, with the kotatsu being a relatively inexpensive way of keeping warm over the winter months.



Kotatsu



Kairo

whichever part of your body you want to warm up (not directly though, make sure there is a layer of clothing in between) and you are good to go. They stay warm for anything up to 24 hours, and

New Year in Japan is a relatively quiet affair (compared to

the UK at least!), with most people spending it with their families at home. Over the New Year period people eat special food known as osechi-ryori. This is made up of various different foods with particular meanings. For example kazunoko (“kazu” meaning “number”, and “ko” meaning child) is herring roe which is eaten to symbolize a wish to be gifted with numerous children in the New Year, and Tai (also meaning “celebrate”) is red sea-bream, eaten to symbolize an auspicious event. The main dish is Ozoni, which is a soup of mochi rice cakes. Interestingly, in western Japan the broth is made from miso, whereas in eastern Japan it is a clear broth

made from bonito stock.

Another important part of New Year celebrations in Japan is the first visit to a shrine or temple on the 1st January (called hatsumode). The temples and shrines are packed with people making wishes for the coming year, and enjoying the holiday atmosphere.

Although it can get a tad cold, I highly recommend being in Japan for the New Year period. And if at all possible, get yourself invited to a friend's house and experience osechi ryori first hand!

Happy New Year to you all!



Osechi ryori

(5) OFIX International Student Hall News

■ Exchange Party for international students and local residents

With the aim of furthering exchange between foreign students and local residents, OFIX recently held exchange parties at its two international student halls.

Sakai International Hall “Winter Party”
(6th December)

Members of the local residents association gave the students Japanese calligraphy lessons, and the students introduced some fun games to the locals.

Senri International Hall “Christmas Party”
(7th December)

Students joined together with local residents to make pumpkin buns, and play games such as a relay game with chopsticks.



Calligraphy at the Sakai International Hall



Group photo at the Senri International Hall

Event Calendar (Japanese only) <http://www.ofix.or.jp/cgi-bin/calender.cgi>

Seeking residents for the Orion International Hall <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/jigyuu/index4.html>

OFIX Volunteer Information (Japanese only) <http://www.ofix.or.jp/boran/index2.html>

Seeking New OFIX Supporting Members <http://www.ofix.or.jp/sanjyo/index.html> (Japanese only)

Comments/Suggestions: info@ofix.or.jp

Osaka International Club reports: clubnews@ofix.or.jp

To cancel your registration or change your registered email address: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/>

Osaka Foundation of International Exchange

17F Rinku Gate Tower Building, 1 Rinkuorai-kita, Izumisano City, Osaka 598-0048

TEL 072 (460) 2371 FAX 072 (460) 2377

