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Relocation of OFIX Office and Plaza

From the 1st April the Osaka Foundation of International Exchange (OFIX) will be relocating its office and plaza. Our new address and contact details are outlined below.

The office will not open officially until April 1st, but our new contact details will be in use from March 2nd.

Address:

5th Floor, MyDome Osaka, 2-5 Hommachi-bashi,
Chuo-ku, Osaka-shi, 540-0029

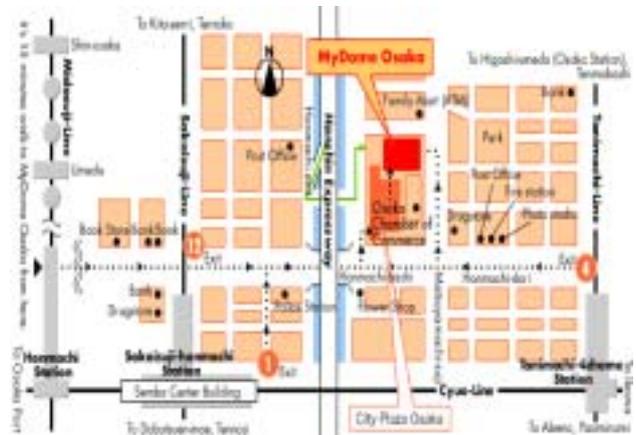
T E L 06 - 6966 - 2400 F A X 06 - 6966 - 2401

E-mail info@ofix.or.jp

Homepage <http://www.ofix.or.jp> } As before

~ OFIX Plaza ~

Open space full of international exchange related information, books, and magazines. Please come and visit.



○ 800m from Exit 1 or 12 of Sakaisujihommachi Station (Chuo Line/Sakaisuji Line, Osaka Subway)

○ 800m from Exit 4 of Tanimachi4-chome Station (Tanimachi Line, Osaka Subway)

(1) OFIX Programme/ Event Reports

■ New OFIX Homepage !

The new and improved OFIX homepage has been unveiled. It is now easier to navigate, with up to date information on all of OFIX's activities and international exchange. URL: <http://www.ofix.or.jp>

Clear and easy to understand !

- New top page design and layout
- Size of characters can be enlarged for easy viewing

Now in 4 languages

- Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean

Up to date list of organisations involved in international exchange (Japanese page only)

- Search according to type of activity or area making information easy to access.
- Useful for creation of links between international

exchange organisations

■ Seeking Residents at Sakai International Student Hall

The Sakai International Hall (Orion International House), is a hall of residence for foreign students run by OFIX.

All rooms come equipped with en-suite bathroom, air conditioner, and fridge. No deposit or key money are required. International exchange events with local residents are also held at the hall. Please visit for a tour of facilities.

Address: 2-226, Higashi Uenoshiba-cho, Kita-ku, Sakai City, Osaka 591-8035, Japan

(about 400m from the Uenoshiba Station on the JR Hanwa Line to north-east.)

Further Details: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/shien/index.html>

OFIX Scholarship Students Graduation Reports

Shi Chen (China)

I have now been in Japan for six years, but clearly remember the first view I had of Japan as I left Kansai airport on the 9th October 2002 when I first arrived. The lush trees, clear blue skies, brand new shiny cars all remain vivid in my memory. Before coming to Japan I had heard about the rich environment and the fact that 67% of the country is covered in forests, but actually seeing the place with my own eyes was overwhelming.

As I became accustomed to life in Japan I gradually came to understand the reasons behind the beautiful environment in Japan. Society in Japan is extremely orderly. Everyone works hard to preserve the environment through recycling, and disposing of rubbish at set times and designated places. The rubbish is then reused effectively, and this wonderful system is one of the reasons the environment is kept so clean.

Also, Japanese people have a love of nature and of life in general. Four years ago I went hiking at Rokko Mountain. As we reached the top it felt like we were enveloped in lush greenery. I forgot that I was in the island nation of Japan. After that I saw something amazing written on an information board at the summit which again proved how environmentally aware the Japanese are.

It said that during the Second World War the majority of the trees on Rokko Mountain were burnt to the ground. The present day Rokko Mountain is the result of years and years of effort on the part of locals to replant trees and return the area to its former beauty.

I believe that economic prosperity of a country can be aided by the nature and efforts of the citizens. The environmental beauty can also be credited to citizens in this way. As a foreign student from China, it is my hope that China too will come to achieve some of this amidst the current remarkable period of economic growth.

My six years as a foreign student in Japan have been such a wonderful experience. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the people that helped me during my time here, and in particular OFIX for supporting me during the last 2 years as one of their scholarship students. Theirs was not merely financial support, but thanks to their generosity I was able to further my understanding of Japanese culture.

I will graduate in March, after which I will take up work at a science based company in Japan and work on product development. I will endeavor to do my best as a way of paying back those that helped me get to where I am.

Zhang Yue (China)

I am from Jiangsu Province in China, and came to Japan to study and further my knowledge. I studied Mass Communications for 4 years at Kansai University in Osaka Prefecture. After this I began postgraduate studies at the same university. As a masters student at Kansai University I was able to learn from many knowledgeable teachers, make use of the libraries to further my research, write reports and papers, take part in the university festivals and speech days, and a number of international symposiums in Osaka and the Kansai region. My main area of research was on the future development of the IT industry in Japan and China.

Taking part in exchange with fellow international and Japanese students was of great benefit to me. As a recipient of the OFIX scholarship I was able to take part in many fun international exchange activities. I believe that in order to develop international understanding it is important to respect each other and from these roots exchange will develop and grow. Taking part in the activities arranged by OFIX I was able to further my exchange with Japanese people, and I believe that my fellow scholarship students and I will work in the future to promote friendship relations between Japan and our respective countries.

After graduation I plan to use all that I have learnt in Japan to open up doors in this new information age. My dream has always been to return to China and start a consulting firm for Chinese and Japanese IT businesses. In order to do this I aim to further my specialist knowledge, undertake market research, and make efforts with my continued studies.

I am eternally grateful to all at OFIX, thanks to whom I was able to make the most of my time as a foreign student in Osaka. As a modern "ambassador" for Sino-Japanese relations I hope to continue to contribute to future collaborative scientific research, as well as to cultural exchange and economic development.



Scholarship students in Japanese dress

Shi (left), Zhang (right)

(3) OFIX Network

Pacific Research Exchange Center (PREX)

The Pacific Research Exchange Center (PREX), was established in April 1990 with the cooperation of industry, academic and government institutions. It aims to support the career development of those from developing countries in Asia and the Pacific region, and to further international exchange through the organization of study trips to Japan. PREX also organizes and in the region of 40 foreign technical training study tours on behalf of JICA.

Themes of the training include business management, the development of small-scale businesses, regional and tourism development, and the environment.

It is now 18 years since the establishment of PREX, and in that time over 10,000 people have taken part in training arranged by the organization. PREX maintains a strong alumni network with events taking place in 13 countries and regions across Asia and Central America.

In 2008 PREX received the Kansai Seminar Prize as well as a prize from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign

Affairs for its contribution towards human resource development in developing countries and its promotion of mutual international understanding.

[Address] 502 pia NPO, 2-8-24 Chikko, Minato-ku, Osaka-shi

[Tel] 06-4395-2650

[HP] http://www.prex-hrd.or.jp/index_e.html



Trainees presenting what they have learnt during PREX training.

(4) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

Romance, Japan Style!

Hi everyone,

Is Valentines Day a big thing where you are from? If so I hope you had a romance packed one! Valentines Day in Japan is slightly different from that of the UK so I thought I'd write this month and say a little bit about both.

Valentines Day in the UK is a day for couples to go out on a date, and have a fancy meal somewhere. If the husband/boyfriend is a romantic and thoughtful type of guy then he may also send his wife/girlfriend a bouquet of flowers to mark the occasion. Needless to say as a true English gent of the old school variety I make of point of doing so every year!

People also send cards to people they like, and if they are a bit embarrassed about it they will often leave them unsigned to keep their identity a mystery. When I was a kid I would always get a few anonymous cards which was very exciting. I would be at school the next day desperately trying to work out who it was that liked me! I found out later that for the most part it was just my mum or grandma having a laugh!

In Japan things are quite different, and came as a bit of a shock when I first experienced Valentines Day here. For starters the onus is pretty much entirely on women to make an effort in the romance stakes. All the guys

need do is sit back, relax, and wait for their partner to give them some chocolates. Sounds like a good idea to me! This custom was more or less started by the clever marketing men at Morinaga, one of the biggest Japanese sweet companies, in order to sell more chocolate! The funniest part is that it has become an obligation for female workers to give male co-workers "giri-choko", literally meaning "obligatory chocolates". Then there are "honmei-choko", which are the more fancy chocolates given to actual loved ones.

I was actually out for dinner on Valentines Day this year and was amazed to see the majority of women paying for their boyfriends! Japanese men really have it easy don't they! I tried the same thing, but unfortunately didn't get away with it!

But let it be said that the men don't get let off completely from all of the "giri-choko" fun! The 14th March is called White Day, and is the day when men are supposed to return the favour to those that gave them chocolates on Valentines Day. And in case you were wondering, yes, this day was also the creation of the chocolate companies! Whilst all this chocolate fun is nice, all of these rules, and the somewhat silly addition of White Day only serve to take the spontaneity out of what is, after all, supposed to be a day of romance, not a

day of filling the coffers of the multinational chocolate companies!



Tell us about your country

In the April edition of OFIX News I'm hoping to put together a comparison of spring traditions/customs from around the world. For example, in the UK we have Easter and spring cleaning, and in Japan there is the great "hanami" (cherry blossom viewing) tradition. Please get in touch with information about spring traditions in your country at the following address: clubnews@ofix.or.jp

(5) Volunteer News

JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers Report

Ms. Mayumi Yamamoto wrote to us while she was working as a JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteer in Bolivia. She returned to Japan in spring 2008

I came to Bolivia in March 2006 as a JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteer. I am involved in youth work.

The area of Bolivia is roughly three times the size of Japan. It is an inland country situated roughly in the centre of South America. I live in the capital La Paz which is situated at just about the same height as Mt. Fuji in Japan. It is the highest situated capital in the world.

My office is about 1 hour by bus away from where I live, in a place called El Alto. I work at a place similar to a community centre in Japan. The activities at the centre are aimed at children from 5 years old to adults. For example, I teach primary school age kids about the correct disposal of rubbish, and about differences between Bolivian and Japanese culture. I also teach Japanese to local residents.

In Bolivia there are many Japanese second hand cars on the road. This is perhaps because there are many residents of Japanese descent who came here after the

war. In August there was a local sports day and dance festival which I was able to take part in. It was like I was back in Japan. These Bolivians of Japanese descent are really proud of their ancestry and where they came from. I really respect these people and cannot imagine the hardships they must have gone through when arriving in a foreign land from Japan.

I have learnt so much during my time in Bolivia, and hope to bring all of these experiences back with me to Japan.



Lesson in Bolivia

- Information for foreign residents in Osaka <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/life/index.html>
- Seeking residents for the Orion International Hall <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/shien/index.html>
- Become a supporting member of OFIX http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/ofix/index3_1.html

Comments and suggestions for OFIX News: info@ofix.or.jp

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

Register to OFIX News: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/mail/index.html>

OFIX News Back Numbers: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/mail/backnumber.html>

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