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【01】 New Year's Reflections

Striving towards a safe and trusted international metropolis
OFIX Administrative Director Masane Odaka

Happy New Year!

I would like to thank everyone for your support and guidance for OFIX's programs last year.

Japan was hit by numerous natural disasters again last year.

A significant amount of damage resulted from earthquakes felt in Kumamoto and Tottori prefectures and from typhoons in various areas in Japan. Let me take this opportunity to express my deep sorrow and sympathy to the victims of these disasters and all those affected.

Now, for Osaka to another step forward as an international metropolis, we must develop our local communities so that foreigners with limited Japanese language ability can live more comfortably. It is therefore crucial that important disaster information is accessible in multiple languages on a day-to-day basis, and our multilingual support systems can be easily put into place if a serious disaster is to occur. At OFIX, in addition to our daily consultation services for foreign residents, we have been working to improve our response capabilities as staff in preparation for a disaster, strengthen the network between Osaka Prefectural Government and related organizations, foster personnel involved in the support effort such as disaster volunteers and develop disaster-related guides in several languages. In collaboration with Osaka Prefectural Government we have also created a manual on how to establish and operate the “Osaka Multilanguage Support Center in Times of Disasters” to smoothly assist foreign residents in the event of a large-scale disaster.

However, it remains difficult to predict when, where and to what magnitude a disaster will occur. Consequently, our response to a potential disaster does not start and end with planning and preparation manuals. Instead, these are a base to slowly but steadily conduct practical hands-on training and build experience, while receiving feedback on how to improve. With that in mind, beginning with the “Osaka Multilanguage Support Center in Times of Disasters Operations Training Drill” on January 17th, we intend to continue to our efforts positively in the future.

We would once again like to ask for your ongoing support and guidance this year.

【02】 Activity Report

■ The 2016 Osaka Invitational Program for Short Term Overseas Trainees in Architecture and Arts(Ando Program)

The eight trainees from eight countries in Asia mentioned in the previous edition successfully completed the 28-day program and returned to their countries on October 20th. Thank you to everyone who supported the program.

In the second-half of the program, trainees took part in ten-day company training programs at one of four construction companies - The Zenitaka Corporation, Obayashi Corporation, Takenaka Corporation and Daiwa House Industry Co., Ltd. Under the warm tutelage of these companies, each trainee visited construction sites and received hands-on experience in the design department of their allocated company. Additionally, during their courtesy visit to Mr. Tadao Ando, they received hugely motivating advice from him about becoming young architects in Asia.

This year's training was hugely positive, with trainees commenting how they were able to deepen their understanding in various fields such as Japanese art, architecture, culture and customs, and share different ideas related to cultural exchange and architectural design with people from many different countries.

○○ Upon finishing the Ando Program ○○ Brahmani Tripuraneni (Trainee from India)

Every day of the 2016 Osaka Invitation Program for Short Term Overseas Trainees in Architecture and Arts had a lasting influence on me. The most memorable event was the dedication shown by Osaka Prefectural Government in making presentations about city planning and government policies, giving me a lot of clarity regarding my current research on "Urban Fringes."

Our courtesy visit to Ando Sensei at his office has also nourished my attitude towards my design approach. I was so thoroughly influenced by the experience that, as a visiting assistant professor at a private Mumbai University, I now teach my students to design with great sensitivity to the environment and its surrounding culture.

I haven't yet bid farewell to Osaka, as I still enjoy green tea and white rice regularly. Osaka will always be a place where part of me belongs.

★One-day Information Service for Foreign Residents ★

***** 【Consultation Services for Citizens】 *****

■ Izumiotsu City Hall One-Day Information Service for Foreign Residents

Date: Thursday October 13th

■ Takaishi City Hall Free Comprehensive Consultation for Takaishi City Residents

Date: Thursday October 20th

In both cities, consultations were conducted by professionals including judicial scriveners, and consultation booths for foreign residents were

administered with the help of English and Chinese interpreters.

■ Tadaoka-cho: Free Consultation for Foreign Residents

Date: Sunday November 13th

A booth was specially set up at the site of the annual Tadaoka-cho Shoko Carnival to attend to consultations from foreign residents regarding their residence status, labor, welfare and daily living. English, Chinese and Indonesian interpreters were also on hand to help with consultations.

■ Shijonawate City: Consultation for Foreign Residents

Date: Friday November 25th

Continuing from last year, this event was held in the evening and an administrative scrivener, social insurance consultant, and city officials involved in human rights consultations and the board of education were on hand to respond to issues. Interpreters of English, Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese and Filipino were available to assist.

■ Daito City: One Day Consultation for Foreign Residents

Date: Sunday December 18th

This consultation service was held at the same time as Daito City's International Exchange Festival, with a lawyer, administrative scrivener and social insurance consultant attending to enquiries from residents and English, Chinese and Vietnamese interpreters were on hand to assist.

★Affiliated Organizations Network★

■ The 19th International Friendship Festival

Date: Wednesday November 23rd (National Holiday)

Location: Japan Foundation Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai

This annual event is held by the Support Council for Participants of Japanese-Language Institute, Kansai (made up of OFIX and the 10 international Exchange organizations in and south of Kishiwada city) to provide students of the institute and local residents a place to come together. This year again saw students set up booths to introduce their countries.

The festival began with a bang this year thanks to a fashion show showcasing students from the institute modelling native attires from their countries. Soon after, each organization set up booths where participants could experience various Japanese cultural activities such as tea ceremony and laido martial arts.

Once again, this year's festival provided students and local residents with the opportunity to come together and bond in a friendly atmosphere.

★International Student Support ★

at Orion International House (Sakai International Hall)

■ Orion International House Evacuation Drill

Date: Saturday November 26th

Participants: 33 Orion residents and others

To ensure a smooth evacuation in the event of a disaster, international students from Orion House and nearby Osaka City University International Residence conduct an evacuation drill together every year.

After an evacuation drill simulating a fire outbreak inside Orion Dormitory, an official from Sakai City Kita Fire Station showed students how to use a fire extinguisher, and then students walked to Nishimozu Elementary School, the designated emergency evacuation area, to familiarize themselves with the route. Also, students learned the correct response to an earthquake and important points for a safe evacuation, making the day educational and students more aware of disaster prevention.

■ Orion International House Local Exchange Event (Winter Party)

Date: Saturday December 10th

Participants 56 Orion residents, local residents and others

A local exchange event is held twice a year for dormitory students and local residents to help them develop friendships in the community. This report is written by one of the Orion tutors who planned and ran the event.

◎◎ Chu Zhao yi (China) ◎◎

In order to make a day a special one for participants, I paid particular attention to aspects such as greeting guests, being the MC, organizing a piano performance, as well as purchasing gifts and food selections. I am very thankful to all the local residents who helped with the preparation. Thank you once again.

★ Disaster-Related Foreigner Support(Disaster Prevention and Drill) ★

■ Sakai and OFIX Co-hosted Event:

Disaster Prevention Workshop for Foreign Residents

Date: Sunday October 23rd

Participants: 64

After a lecture on earthquakes by the Sakai City Crisis Management Office, participants toured around Sakai City Yuya Elementary School - the workshop venue and also designated evacuation site. Here, participants familiarized themselves with the disaster-related goods storage compartment, toilet for use in a disaster, and witnessed a display of disaster goods and emergency supplies.

Thanks to the support of Consulate-General of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in Osaka, and given the Tottori Earthquake that occurred two days earlier, many foreign residents participated in the drill, particularly Vietnamese nationals. We sincerely hope that this event helps people understand the importance of helping yourself and each other in the event of a disaster.

■ (NPO) Tondabayashi Intercultural Communication Center and OFIX Co-hosted Event : Disaster Prevention Workshop and Bus Tour - Let's experience a virtual earthquake!

Date: Saturday December 17th

Participants: 21

In the morning workshop, participants were given a talk from the Tondabayashi City Crisis Management Office about the evacuation process immediately after an earthquake occurs. Participants were taught fundamental aspects such as how to protect yourself first when an

earthquake happens and not to use your bicycle when evacuating.

In the afternoon, participants visited the Osaka City Abeno Life Safety Learning Center where they experienced a virtual earthquake, how to use a fire extinguisher on a small fire and how call 119 to report an emergency. In addition to understanding how terrifying an earthquake can be, participants learned a lot from utilizing information they learned during the morning lecture in the afternoon session.

【03】 State of Employment Opportunities and Support for International Students in Osaka

Approximately 208,000 international students studied in Japan in 2015 (as of May 1st), which is a 13.2% increase from the previous year. International students studying in Osaka Prefecture also increased by 12.5% to about 15,000 people (*1). Moreover, of those studying at Japanese universities in 2015, approximately 16,000 students successfully changed from student to employment visas, which is about double that of 2010 figures. Similarly, the number of international students entering Osaka companies in 2015 more than doubled from 2010, totaling about 1,600 people (*2).

Given this current situation, we asked Mr. Nishimura from the Ehle Institute in Osaka City, which has about 1,200 currently enrolled international students, to contribute an article about their school's employment assistance. Additionally, to show the efforts of local municipalities and their international exchange organizations, we have contributions from Mr. Kawai of Minoh Association For Global Awareness about the current state of internships for international students at their foundation, and Mr. Oku from Sakai City about exchange programs between foreign residents and international students at universities in Sakai and the local community.

*1 Japan Student Services Organization -“FY 2015 International Student Enrollment Survey”

*2 Ministry of Justice Immigration Bureau of Japan -“Job Placement of International Students in Japan Companies Survey in 2015”

- Multicultural Coexistence in an Era of Population Decline
- Company Training System for International Students
Koji Nishimura, Manager Career Support

According to an article in The Nikkei on February 26th 2016, “as of October 1st 2015, Japan’s total population including foreign nationals has decreased by 947,305 people over the last ten years” Given that we are in the midst of a dwindling population with 1 in every 4 people being senior citizens, there is a growing need to develop a multicultural society where high-achieving international students play a significant role.

At Ehle Institute, in addition to regular lessons our international students take part in a two to three-day-a-week company training program for a period of three months (the longest being nine months) where they experience Japanese corporate culture and customs and put to full practical use their language skills, instincts and network from their home countries. Our school's program allows students to contribute their skills such as (1)translation and interpreting work, customer marketing research and sales support, (2)information distribution via media platforms such as Facebook and WeChat, and (3)creating PR-related and presentation documents. By taking part, students acquire skills that cannot be learned in the classroom, are praised by fellow staff, and in some cases, employed

full-time.

Thanks to company training like this, students and companies alike can experience a kind of “internationalization from within”. Bringing the strengths of people with different cultural backgrounds and values together can cause a “chemical reaction” and in turn aid the development of new markets and commodities.

To borrow the words our Director Mr. Hasegawa, “international students are the messengers of peace”. Improving the environment for talented international students to thrive is for the benefit of Japan, and I hope to build a network for such individuals in the fields of industry, government and schools.

- Student Interns Making Our Communities
Daisuke Kawai, Program Manager of Minoh Association
For Global Awareness

Minoh Association For Global Awareness accepts student interns (about five interns for a one-year period) every year. By giving international students the opportunity to work in a Japanese workplace and in the community, we hope that they use their youth, flexibility and cultural backgrounds to bring about fresh ideas to be utilized in their local areas.

The activities of our interns vary, but under the premise of “event planning by international students for international students”, they plan and hold events ranging from “Cooking Classes on How to Use Ingredients Commonly Found in Japanese Supermarkets” to “Kansai’s Best-Kept-Secrets Recommended by Senior International Students”. These events also help bring together members of the foreign student community and those of local organizations.

We often hear international students say, “I don’t have any Japanese friends”. By working together with staff and volunteers, they are given an excellent opportunity to know more about Japanese culture and their local community.

In recent years we have been accepting not only international students, but also Japanese students and young people with foreign roots who aren’t attending university. While it can be difficult for staff members to cope with the growing diversity of interns and their differing levels of experience and generational and cultural backgrounds, their response capabilities have been significantly improved. Our interns are an essential component of our aim to create a harmonious society.

- The International Student Exchange Effort of Sakai City
Tatsuhiro Oku of International Division International Affairs
Department Culture and Tourism Bureau Sakai City government

Sakai City is part of the executive committee made up of OFIX and seven universities located in Sakai and neighboring cities. We are developing projects that aim to provide assistance for international students’ daily lives and advance the international understanding of our citizens through exchanges with international students and local residents. As a critical part of these efforts, we have undertaken programs to promote the exchange between foreign students and the community, and have dispatched international students to schools within Sakai as guest teachers as part of our International Student Dispatch Program.

During this fiscal year, we organized a study tour to a local Danjiri Festival and had an exchange event with the participants, offered an experience of staying over at a Buddhist temple - a major historical

and cultural feature of Sakai City - held a sightseeing tour related to Japanese tea ceremony culture, and arranged home visits to Japanese family homes in the local community as well as host family exchange events. Also, there have been three visits to local elementary schools by international students, with additional visits to junior high and high schools scheduled for February.

With positive feedback from participating foreign students and community residents, we hope to further promote a comfortable lifestyle for international students living in Sakai.

Note: International Students Field Survey: Total of 939 international students studying in Sakai City, living in Sakai City, or enrolled in universities located in neighboring cities (as of May 1st 2016)

【04】 Topics

◆ Looking for Banner Advertisements for OFIX's Website!

OFIX is open to banner advertisements for our website since December.

We are looking for companies and organizations who may be interested for the reasonable price of 10,000 yen per line (tax not included)

For more information: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/banner.html> (Japanese Only)

【05】 Notice

● FAQ for Foreign Residents has been renewed!

We have renewed our "FAQ for Foreign Residents" page on the OFIX website, with content now updated and available in nine languages. The FAQ section summarizes questions and answers most commonly dealt with by staff from Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents.

Content: 8 Q & A sections divided into immigration, nationality · marriage, medical care · welfare, labor, accidents · troubles, education, daily life, housing topics (94 in total)

Languages: 9 (English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, Filipino, Vietnamese and Japanese)

<http://www.ofix.or.jp/life/eng/faq/index.html>

● Sakai International Hall - Orion International House: Tenants wanted from Spring!

OFIX's Sakai International Hall - Orion International House is looking for tenants to reside in the dormitory from April.

For further details:

<http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/accept/support/orion.html>

● OFIX Booth at One World Festival!

One World Festival, Western Japan's largest international cooperation and exchange festival, will take place again this year and OFIX will have a booth.

volunteers to Elementary, Junior High and High schools.

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/training/education/dispatch.html>

※Introducing OFIX's volunteer system

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/accept/volunteer/system.html>

※Request for Donations

⇒ <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/ofix/donation.html>

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⇒ E-mail info@ofix.or.jp

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