



Sister City News

Palmer, Alaska - Saroma, Japan

夏 Summer
2019

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George Carté - A Cultivator of Culture and Connection

By Carla Swick

On June 28, 2019 Palmer's and Saroma's beloved George Carté peacefully passed away in Idaho, surrounded by family at his side. George's passing leaves a hole in the heart for so many of us, especially me. George, his wife Kathy, and I all visited Saroma for the first time in 1987. That is where we first met Yuko Hirouchi, our translator, who had just started working for Saroma Town Hall. Who knew then that that three week-long trip together would change all of our lives!

While Ishiguro-sensei and Ed Holmes planted the seeds of friendship that started our rich sister city relationship in 1980, it was George who passionately cultivated that relationship. His main focus was always on the kids. He understood the power of personal growth through cultural exchange. He was a workhorse for the program. He personally volunteered for years to teach beginning Japanese language classes at the Palmer library, as he learned the language himself. He and Kathy started Children's Day in Palmer so families could learn more about Saroma and Japanese culture. During his 14 years as Mayor of Palmer, he loved meeting the Palmer



and Saroma exchange students and listening to their stories. He supported my exchanges to Saroma, and was thrilled when I became the first ALT (assistant language teacher) from Palmer to teach in Saroma.

I will never forget the day when George told me that he wanted to be the next ALT in Saroma and had decided not to run in the next mayoral election so he would be available to do so. When I told the staff at Saroma Town Hall, they of course thought I was joking! What mayor would give up his position to become an assistant teacher? George

Carté would. He was ready to "live the connection" for himself. It was his new life dream - to move to Saroma and teach English. As Kathy Carté recalls, "It was remarkable. Saroma was the perfect fit. There was no getting used to it, because we already knew the people... And life truly centered around community,... and Saroma was such a kind, loving, and generous community!" George and Kathy lived for three and a half years in Saroma from 1997 - 2000 and those years were some of the best years of their lives. "The hard part wasn't going to Saroma, but





Quarterly Calendar of Events

Saroma Welcome & Farewell Potlucks

Saroma students and chaperones will be visiting Palmer this September.

Please join us for one or both community potlucks.

Welcome Potluck

Wed, Sept 11th - PJMS - 6pm
potluck theme = favorite dish

Farewell Potluck

Mon, Sept 23rd - PHS - 6pm
potluck theme = Alaskan (wild game, seafood, local veggies)

Senshi Con 2019

An annual convention that caters to enthusiasts of Asian culture, animation, graphic novels, and gaming; where you can share your fandoms, make new friends, and enjoy costumes, live events, panels, contests, and shop your favorite artists and vendors. Hilton Hotel - Sept 28-29
<https://senshicon.org/>

Tomo No Kai Fall Family Dinner

Each year the Sand Lake Elementary, Mears Middle School, and Dimond High School communities gather together for an evening of good fun, food, entertainment, and Japanese culture. Oct 12th, 6 - 8 pm, Mears Middle School, Anchorage.

George Carté - A Cultivator of Culture and Connection

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leaving Saroma.”

While it is sad that I can't call George on the phone or read his Facebook posts anymore, I know he is still cheering on the Sister City program from his new home. And I know he is proud that

his efforts from day one has blossomed into a program that will be celebrating 40 years of exchange in July of 2020, with over 700 student/citizen exchanges. Thank you George for your selfless service. We will not forget your Santa-like magic, pas-

sion for everything Palmer & Saroma, and commitment to culture and kids! Please join the Carté family for George's memorial service on Thursday, October 10th from 2-4pm at the United Protestant Church (Presbyterian) in Palmer.



George with Saroma exchange students



George welcoming a Saroma adult delegation to Alaska

Noodle Chute at Palmer Pride

This year we had a light rain at Palmer Pride while we visited friends and neighbors to celebrate all that is wonderful about Palmer. The Palmer High School and Jr/Middle School students did a fantastic job running the Palmer Saroma Kai noodle chute - where folks try to catch a meal of somen noodles and grapes using chopsticks. We learned how to play this game in Saroma, Japan.



Palmer students adding noodles to the chute

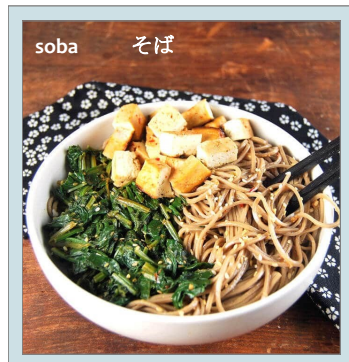


Community members catching noodles

Language Corner

Vocabulary to describe noodles in Japan:

Romaji	Kana	English
udon	うどん	udon (wheat noodles)
soumen	そうめん	somen (thin noodles)
soba	そば	soba (buckwheat noodles)
raamen	ラーメン	ramen (Chinese noodles)
yakisoba	やきそば	fried noodles, with ham/sausage and vegetables



soba そば

Palmer to Saroma - Exchange Highlights

By Palmer High School & Palmer Jr/Middle School Students

Each summer, the City of Saroma generously hosts a group of students and chaperones from Palmer.

This year's visit occurred in late June and early July. Students immersed themselves into the culture by attending school, participating in local activities, and living with Japanese host families.

Below are some of their highlights from the trip.

Josie Piersma PHS 11th Grade

One special memory in Saroma was the day of the Shrine Spring Festival, and the time I spent with the Saroma High Brass Band. Hashimoto sensei, the music teacher, was a very memorable, kind, and charming person. We joined her choir class and sight-read the song *Anata E*. One of my wishes while in Saroma was to take a music class and to participate in the brass band. And I got to do both! They even invited me to perform with them at the Shrine Spring Festival. I was a bit shocked, because I barely had even one practice with them! The images and feelings I had during that time are already so nostalgic. My heart is filled with such a warmth, from being a part of something so amazing and making friends with welcoming classmates. Putting it into words is a very difficult, but I am so grateful for the memorable opportunities I was given. Thank you so much, Saroma High Brass Band!

Nick Young PHS 12th Grade

My favorite moment from my stay in Saroma was celebrating my 17th birthday with my host family, the Okizaki's. Throughout this experience my host family was very welcoming. They asked me what I would like to do, where I would like to go, and what I would like to see every day. For my birthday, they took me to Kappa, a yakiniku restaurant in town. We ate a birthday cake that my host family picked out, and they sang happy birthday. The owner gave us some extra meat to cook as a special birthday gift. My host family had made a reservation beforehand, bought me birthday presents, including handkerchiefs and a watch that matches my host brother's, and treated me like I was family. I feel like Saroma is my 2nd home, and that my host family is my 2nd family.

Nika Demientieff PHS 12th Grade

When I think of the Japan trip, I cherish the time spent with my host family, the Nomura's. One memorable experience is the time they asked me to read to the students of Saroma Elementary School. My host mom, Okaasan, and I read the books: *Hungry Hungry Caterpillar*, *Two Mice: Kuri and Kura*, and *Pon-Pon Poncho*. She read in Japanese and I read in English. The six to eight-year-olds were quite a rambunctious bunch. But as soon as they could see the huge

picture book, their focus was 100%. Someday, I would love to be a teacher so that experience for me was amazing. I realized that I loved being in the teacher role. Teaching makes me happy. And someday I wish to return to Japan as a full-fledged teacher.

Ky Bryant PHS 12th Grade

Our last week in Japan, we went biking along the beach of Lake Saroma. It was beautiful, but also really, really hot. The wind as we sped down the trails felt amazing and was much needed after traveling by car most of the day. We rode all the way to the end of the trail, and then, on the way back, we stopped and played on the shore of the Okhotsk Sea, stepping into the water and collecting rocks and shells. We yelled and messed around and I made a flag out of a piece of kelp tied around some driftwood. We suddenly realized that we were late and all rushed back to the rental to return our bikes on time. Then we tried pumpkin ice cream at Minori at the end of the day. What a perfect day!



Cooling off in the Okhotsk Sea



Josie with the Saroma High Brass Band at the Shrine Spring Festival



Nick's Birthday Celebration

"I feel like Saroma is my 2nd home..."
Nick Young



Nika & Saroma Elementary students after a reading lesson

Palmer to Saroma - Exchange Highlights Cont.

Vanessa Johnson PHS 12th Grade

Shopping in Japan was a special treat for me. We visited the open-air shopping street in front of the Senso-ji Temple in Asakusa. It was very "touristy," at first glance. There were so many people. It hit me that we were in one of the most populated cities in the world at that moment. The booths were much smaller than I expected, but there were rows upon rows of knick-knacks, and souvenirs and racks filled with I ♥ Tokyo t-shirts and Happi jackets. I had fun shopping and buying plenty of souvenirs for my family.

Dillon Johnson PJMS 8th Grade

Going to Japan was a lot of fun. I met new people, tried new foods, and overall had a great time. When traveling, you often forget about the planes, subways, and busses that take you from place to place. For me, however, Japan's transportation system was a highlight.

In Vancouver, we boarded for Narita Airport. While in Tokyo, we used a lot of metros for going everywhere. Then we flew from Tokyo to Memanbet-su, where the city staff picked us up in a fleet of cars.

This trip was amazing. Don't forget who makes these trips possible whether it be the pilots, ground personal, or the people who keep the metros safe and clean. Japan was awesome and I hope to come back.

Larkin Christiansen PJMS 8th Grade

My favorite memory in Saroma would be going to a festival and seeing the fireworks with my host family and Ky's host family. The fireworks were so pretty and we were so close to them it felt like the sparks were going to fall on us! I have never seen fireworks so close before. The fireworks were big and bright - red, blue, and gold sparks flying everywhere.

We also played festival games, watched performances, and ate a lot of food. One game that we played was a game where there were little toys in a pond and we had to scoop up as much as we could and we got to keep them. The performances that I saw were so cool! There was singing and dancing. My favorite festival food was chocolate covered bananas. The festival was so fun and I'd love to go again someday.

Abby Pettit PJMS 8th Grade

My favorite outing in Saroma was when we went to karaoke and a 100 yen shop in Kitami, a larger city about 25 minutes away from Saroma.

My favorite part about karaoke was that we held nothing back. We danced and sang our hearts out. While we were singing, we made new connections with each other because we knew some of the same songs. And we sang childish songs like *Frozen* or older songs like *We will Rock You*.

Next, we went to one of the many 100 yen stores in Kitami. This store is basically a \$1 store but with much more and higher quality. The 100 yen store has food, candy, toys, toiletries, kitchen gadgets, candles, school supplies, basically anything that you can get in a convenient store but for cheap! I loved it there because you could get 20 things for only 2000 yen. At a normal store this would cost well over 6000 yen.

Overall, this outing to Kitami was great. I had so much fun there and made many good memories. I hope to visit Saroma again and then drive to Kitami for a day to dance, sing, and shop!

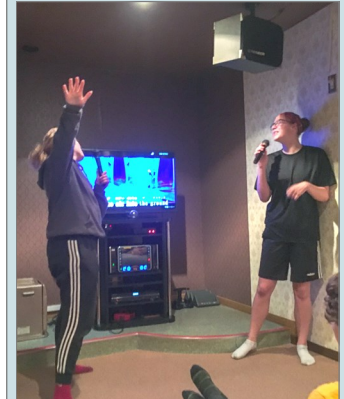
Kylee Covalt PJMS 8th Grade

My favorite memory in Saroma is when we all went and took a cooking class at the middle school. It gave me the chance to cook something from a culture I wasn't used to. Being in the cooking class and doing things with people I call friends gave me a chance to appreciate being in Saroma. It was so much fun and I learned how to cook new dishes.

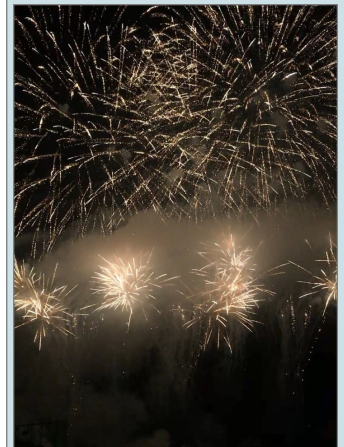
We also took a cooking class at the high school which was great. I don't think I've ever had something close to what we ate, making it really exciting. Cooking is one of my favorite things, so it was really amazing to cook Japanese food. It was one of the best memories I had in Saroma.



Cooking Class at Saroma Jr High



Karaoke in Kitami



Festival Fireworks



Vanessa - Happy Shopper

Introducing Akiho Negishi

2019 - 2020 Palmer High School J-LEAP Teacher

Konnichiwa minasan – Hello everyone! I am Akiho Negishi from Saitama, Japan. I will be co-teaching Japanese with Swick-sensei for the 2019-2020 school year, thanks to a J-LEAP grant. I am sincerely honored to start my career at Palmer High School. Thank you very much for having me here.

I was born and raised in Kawagoe, my hometown, for 24 years. Kawagoe is called 'Ko-Edo' which means a small Edo since the place flourished as a town of trading/commerce like true Edo over hundreds of years. You can have a look at historical buildings and enjoy some sweets made with sweet potato in my town. I recommend you visit if you are going to go to Tokyo; it takes only one hour by train.

I visited Salem, Oregon for 10 days as an exchange student of my town's sister-city program when I was 18 years old. This experience changed my life as I realized there were teachers and students who learned Japanese with passion! From that time, my curiosity of languages grew bigger and bigger.

After that, I studied English linguistics and second language acquisition at my university in Japan and got a qualification as a Japanese language teacher after my graduation. I am interested in cognitive linguistics right now because of my synesthesia.

This is my first time to live long-term out of Japan. I am so excited to try something new that I have never done. In the magnifi-

cent nature of Alaska, I want to try hiking, cross-country skiing, kayaking, and fishing – I cannot list them all! Also, I always enjoy music, playing the piano, and cooking as my hobby.

My goal as a teacher from Japan is to support Palmer's students and to give them opportunities and new perspectives. I have always been inspired by Assistant Language Teachers, who came from foreign countries to teach English in Japan.

I also would like to learn and get my new mindset as we learn together. We are life-long learners. I am looking forward to meeting all of you from the bottom of my heart. Douzo yoroshiku onegai shimasu. GO MOOSE!



Akiho Negishi



Negishi-sensei & Swick-sensei

Year-Long Exchange Student Highlights

After a long, long flight, 西岡夏穂 Natsuho Nishioka finally made it to Alaska! ようこそ! She is from Saroma High School and will be studying one year at Palmer High School as an exchange student. Thank you Anesia & Redona Grazio for opening your hearts & home to this amazing girl!

On August 6th, Aki Shimizu will be arriving in Alaska. She will also be studying at Palmer High School for one year and will be

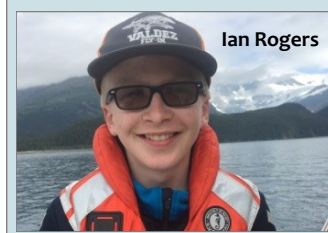
hosted by the Piersma Family. Meanwhile, Palmer students Ian Rogers and Sophia Dick will be exchange students for one year at Saroma High School and Takefu Higashi High School.

In Ian's words: "I'm honored to have the opportunity to spend the next school year in Saroma. Though learning Japanese is very challenging, I really enjoy it, and I'm especially interested in Japanese culture.

I will be staying with the Nagase family. They have four children and I'm very grateful that they invited me into their family. Their oldest son, Fumiya, came to Palmer last September. I'm thankful for the Sister City Program and Mrs. Swick's determination to help me reach my goal of going to school in Japan. I will make sure to represent Palmer well during my exchange year in Saroma. Thank you City of Palmer, Saroma Town, and Swick-sensei!"



Natsuho Nishioka



Ian Rogers

Cultural Corner

Cup Noodles Museum

If you find yourself traveling through Yokohama, Japan be sure to visit the Cup Noodles Museum.

The museum is filled with workshops and exhibits. You can learn how to make ramen, customize the flavor

of your own cup noodles, and design your own cup noodles packaging.

You will also learn about Momofuko Ando, the father of cup noodles, and see a reconstruction of the small shed from which he first worked.



Yokohama Cup Noodles Museum - www.cupnoodles-museum.jp/en/



The Sister City Program , established in 1980, works together with the Sister Schools Program in the cities of Palmer, Alaska and Saroma, Japan, to promote cultural enlightenment, student and teacher exchanges, international good will and lasting relationships between cities.

This newsletter is published by Palmer Saroma Kai, an organization that provides encouragement and support for the relationship between the Sister Cities of Palmer, Alaska and Saroma, Japan.



To submit articles, photos, or items of public interest, please contact Carla Swick at carlaswick2010@gmail.com or by phone 907-775-0807.

Your comments, suggestions, and constructive feedback are welcome!