



# Sister City News

Palmer, Alaska - Saroma, Japan

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2017

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## Reflections from a First Year J-LEAP Teacher *by Miharu Hayazaki*

One year has already passed. It's scary how fast it has flown by. Last year was one of the most fulfilling years of my life. I have learned so many things every day since coming to Alaska. I love Palmer and I love Palmer High. Team-teaching with Swick-sensei has really broadened my perspective and experience as a teacher. It's such a gift. I am so lucky that I was placed here. For me, spending time at school interacting

with the staff and students is more rewarding than spending time on my own during the weekends. It was my first time teaching Japanese full-time, and I realized once again that I truly love teaching Japanese. I am so thankful to the J-LEAP Program and Palmer High School for giving me this precious experience. My dream of teaching Japanese in America came true and I now have seven months left in this program. I have no doubt that this experience is shaping and influencing my life and who I will become.

get to know our students on a deeper level. I felt a strong sense of responsibility as I stepped into the teaching role. I also learned how to build trusting relationships with our students by seriously thinking about each student individually.

One of my goals for my remaining time here is to be able to introduce more Japanese culture and things to our students. In order to do this, I plan to create more opportunities for people to share opinions and get together before and after school. Also, this year we started a Japanese P.E. class at Palmer High. We teach this class in Japanese, and expose our students to Japanese related P.E. activities. To tell you the truth, at first I had no idea in the world how it would go, but with everyone's cooperation it is a success. We have taught Japanese stretching, radio exercise, the UFO Dance, line formations, badminton, dodgeball, how to cheer in Japanese, yoga, etc. Every day, by trial and error, we are trying to create classes that are safe, inspiring, and fun.

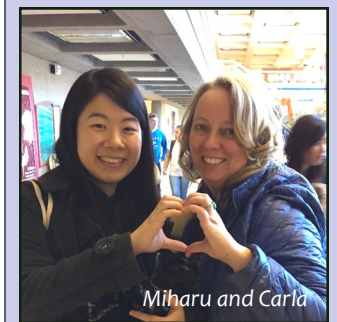
To be honest, I don't really know if I have grown up this last year, but I think I am much more confident in class and around others. Last year we especially put a lot of effort into our outreach classes at other schools and did mini-Japanese lessons in numerous classes. I am really happy that I was able to share Japanese language and culture with not only high school students, but with Palmer's elementary and middle school students too. At Palmer High School, I was really able to



Teaching - Palmer High School



Palmer Homecoming & Saroma Student Visit



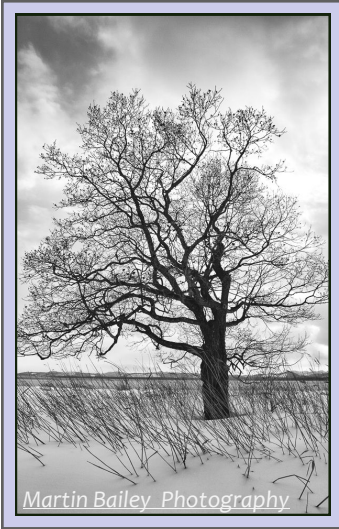
Miharu and Carla



Teaching - Academy Charter



World Language Competition, Anchorage



Martin Bailey Photography

## Upcoming Calendar of Events

### Japan AK Association's Rice Pounding Festival

Sunday, December 3rd from 3 - 6 pm at the Asian Alaskan Cultural Center (Northwood Elementary, Anchorage).

**Free** (but bring some spending money for delicious rice cakes, drinks, and the Japanese goods flea market)

### Christmas Cranes

Saturday, Dec 9th 2017 from 12- 3pm. **FREE**

Palmer Library  
655 S Valley Way, Palmer

*See the back page of the newsletter for more details.*

### Cranes for Hiroshima

Sunday, Jan 21th 2018 from 12:30- 2:30 pm. **FREE**

Palmer United Protestant Church (Church of 1000 Trees) 713 S Denali St, Palmer

*See the back page of the newsletter for more details.*

## Medical Services in Saroma

By Eva Venema

I aspire to be a physician, and therefore decided it would be my topic of research during my exchange in Saroma, Japan. I discovered that Japan has a well thought out medical field.

During our walk through the town of Saroma to the medical clinic, I pondered what might surprise me the most, the bedside manner, number of people who visit the clinic, the technology used for surgeries. When we arrived to the brick building of Saroma Clinic we were introduced to a tall and muscular man with white Crocs. He was one of two doctors at the clinic. He was a general doctor, able to handle a case of the sniffles to a colonoscopy.

I noticed the emptiness of the clinic, and was told through a translator that the clinic closes at 3:00 p.m. The closest available help one could find was a hospital around an hour away. However, patients could spend the night at the clinic if prescribed by their doctor or nurse.

We continued our tour by examining a patient room. It was

smaller than American examining rooms; the ten of us managed to squeeze together shoulder to shoulder, with some flooding out the door. Around the room I saw several cartoon characters by the computer and the door, the physician pointed to one with a smile and said, "For the children".

Next we visited a spacious room with an x-ray and a MRI machine. I almost squealed in delight. I asked how the small city could manage to afford something like this. The radiologist informed me that the city donated the machine to the clinic. It was used on minimal cases, but it was still a sight to see.

We continued to the general examining area. This area started with a smaller room used for blood work, getting your temperature taken, and your weight. Next, a nurse would take the patient to one of 20 beds in a large connected room.

To my surprise, I was told that every citizen in Saroma is required to get a physical every

year, limiting health problems that could occur in the future.

We ended the tour of the first floor by exploring the surgery room. It had an endoscope and the doctor said that the most common cases that require surgeries are removals of the appendix and endoscopies to find toys children swallowed. We all had a giggle.

Up the stairs were the patient rooms, the cafeteria, and a large room used for meetings.

I asked the physician what medical school was like. Not to my surprise, it required hard work and determination. He started working in a hospital on the island of Hokkaido a couple hours away from Saroma, but moved to the clinic and never regretted it.

As we made our departure, I knew I would always cherish my stay in Saroma, with the knowledge I gained in not only how Saroma clinic functions but also the kindness and respect all the people in Saroma showed me.

## Saroma Church Visit

Pastors Tim & Leisa Carrick of the United Protestant Presbyterian Church (the log church) in Palmer paid a visit to their Sister Church in Saroma this past July. The two churches entered into a Sister Church relationship back in 1994 when a couple dozen people from Palmer visited Saroma for Saroma's 100th anniversary celebration. Tim was part of that 1994 delegation.

About a decade ago, the Saroma Presbyterian Church replaced their old church with a new log church, inspired by UPPC's log church. Mayor Akio

Kawane attended the worship service in July, and with delight told the Carricks that many people in Saroma (Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto) took part in the building of Saroma's new log church.

The pastor of the Saroma church is Rev. Mayumi Morishita. She lives in Kitami with her husband Rev. Kazuhiko Morishita who is the pastor of the Kitami Presbyterian Church.





# Palmer to Saroma - Exchange Highlights

## Derek Hallman

Saroma, Japan is very unique because it hosts a 100 kilometer ultra marathon that goes around Lake Saroma. The race is about 62 miles long. That is like running from Palmer to Eagle River and back. The 1st place finisher of 2017 finished in 6 hours 14 minutes 18 seconds. My host father, Tadashi Nagano, ran in the ultra marathon for his 9th time. He completed it at about 12 hours and 45 minutes. I was sadly sick and didn't get to go, but it was still cool knowing he ran it.

## Zöe Patton-Meyer

When I saw my host sister Aina Takase and the other Saroma students holding welcome signs for us at the airport, I knew that I was where I was meant to be. It was so heartwarming. I truly hadn't known how close I was going to be with this group until I bawled my eyes out when we were leaving Saroma. For my very first breakfast in Saroma, I have to say I was VERY impressed. Usually here in the United States we have one thing as our main part of breakfast. In Japan, I had a varied assortment of small dishes. Which brings me to the topic of culture contrast and comparison. Like many of us Americans, they too sit on the couches with their snacks and watch game shows. They also have daily sports practices. What I found especially interesting though was the cleanliness of everything - not one wrapper in sight! To maintain cleanliness the Japanese wear indoor shoes and outdoor shoes. Another big difference from the two cultures is how polite everybody is - and I mean everybody. No one was condescending to another person because they were higher in rank (as far as I could understand). When we asked the vice principal what disciplinary actions he takes he said, "No discipline." It wasn't needed. Everybody in Saroma was so

kind. I feel the thing our Palmer community has most in common with the town of Saroma is a friendly smile. The town of Saroma is beautiful, but I feel its people are even more so.

## Cheyenne Frantzi

The people of Saroma are amazing! I had such a great experience, but my favorite part was meeting all of the new people. I was welcomed by everyone and I felt like no one judged you by the way you looked, but by the way you acted. I wish more people in Palmer were like that. The people of Saroma in my eyes are amazing role models. The students of Saroma, and especially my host sister Yuzuki Yoshino, were so welcoming and friendly and made me feel at home. I made so many new friends because of this sister school exchange. I will never forget my new Saroma friends because they helped my become a better person.

## Hailee Godfrey

Konnichiwa, last summer I went to Saroma, Japan as a sister school exchange student. I love school, so I really enjoyed learning about their school system. One surprise was the size of the school. Palmer High has about 800 students which feels big, but Saroma High has about 80 students. Also, during a school day Saroma students have 6 classes and a home room session. They stay in their home room for all their classes unless they have music or gym. As a result, you get to know all your classmates really well. During the 10 minute passing periods, students can get their books or whatever they may need for the next class. Also during this period the teachers are the ones who change from classroom to classroom. Here at Palmer High the students are the ones rushing from class to class. In Matsui, schools run on a semester system while in Saroma there are three terms. It was really interesting to learn about the

differences between school in Saroma and Palmer.

## Wade Keyes

Saroma is located on Hokkaido, the largest Japanese prefecture with the most arable land. With all this arable land, agriculture is everywhere in Hokkaido, and Saroma is no different. On the 30 minute bus ride from my host family's house to the high school, every glimpse of scenery is of fields. One of the things that fascinated me was the density of the crops in the Japanese fields. Every inch of farmland was occupied. When I asked how they managed this, I was told they use machines to precisely plot out the fields and plant the seeds. In Palmer, we also use machines to transplant into the fields, but the density achieved in Japan is incredible. Every possible square centimeter is filled with plants. When we drove past a field of onions, you could have almost thought that the greens were a field of dark grass. Hokkaido's main crops are rice, onions, wheat, and potatoes. Saroma, of course, is famous for its pumpkins; they are the number one producer of pumpkins in Japan.

## Cal Tipton

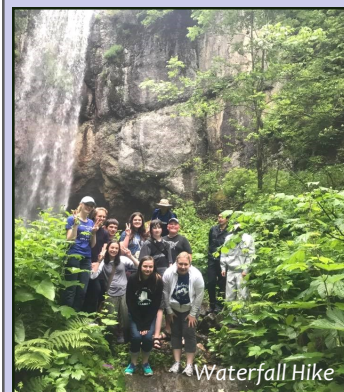
My experience in Saroma, Japan has been the most memorable trip for me to date. If I had to pick a favorite part I would definitely say the homestay. My family was so welcoming and helpful that I felt right at home. We were also supposed to pick a research for while we were in Saroma. I picked architecture, because my aunt was into interior design and I was very influenced by her. One thing I noticed was how rooms were open with optional dividers. I felt this really warmed a room, and showed how the Japanese can make a lot out of less. I especially felt this was noticeable when we went to the temple. Overall this trip was unforgettable.



Fun, fun, fun!



Visiting Saroma City Hall



Waterfall Hike



Lake Saroma Fishing Boat



Saroma Classroom



## Saroma to Palmer - Exchange Highlights

### Mikaze Nakayama

What surprised me when I first came to Palmer was the mountains and the cold wind. I should have brought more coats. The mountains in Japan are smooth shaped and have trees growing on them, but the mountains in Alaska are sharp and cool. There was a Japanese classroom at Palmer High School and everyone was using Japanese. I was surprised to sing a song in Japanese before eating lunch. PHS Japanese was a fun class. Because the school is big, I think that I would surely get lost if I transferred to Palmer High. I could not speak English well and I could not talk with my host family so much, but I was delighted to talk to Wade a lot. I loved shopping with my host family, especially at the Farmers Market. And shooting guns was so much fun. Thank you to Wade and my Alaskan family for two weeks packed with fun memories. Let's meet again in the future.

### Haruki Kato

I am very grateful to Hailee and the Godfrey family. They took me to various places and gave me so many experiences. I was very happy because you guys celebrated my birthday, too. On weekdays I was able to interact with teachers and students at Palmer High School. It was very fun and I made new friends. I enjoyed going to Palmer High so much, because everyone was very friendly and gentle. I am very sad when I think that I can not go to Palmer High School from now. Two weeks in Alaska felt short and I can honestly say I do not want to go back to Japan. I think this memory will never be forgotten. Thank you to all of the people who took care of me.

### Aina Takase

First of all, I would like to talk about school. It was a pleasure to have applause and cheers

from everyone when dancing to the musical karaoke at the school's welcome party. Everywhere in the school was wide and it seemed to get lost easily. Also, since everyone was funny and gentle, it was easy to connect with people. Next, I would like to talk about my host family. Zoe was so funny that our friendship was very deep and sincere. Levi loved games and I enjoyed playing games together. (I was so surprised at his long hair when I first met.) I was pleased that my host father loved me so much. Thank you for taking me to various places. My mother's cooking was very delicious. What I felt most about by experiencing is yesterday's drive with my family. I was so happy that I could not express it with words. I got soaked up, because it was my life memories. Did you have a pleasant two weeks of me staying with you? I was very happy. I did a lot of things, went to various places,... the words were difficult, but I am very grateful. Thank you very much.

### Risa Nagano

Hello, everyone. First I was very happy during my two weeks in Palmer. My host family gently accepted me. And everyone in the school gave me a hello. I think people in Palmer are very kind. Next, what I was happy to experience was teaching songs and Janken -- rock, paper, scissors-- at Sherrod Elementary School. I am shy. So I thought it was impossible at first. But the students were very kind and enjoyed playing the games. Finally, thank you to my host family who lovingly took care of me. Let's see each other in the future somewhere.

### Shiho Hatanaka

When I was 14 years old, I came to the City of Palmer for the first time through the middle school exchange. My two weeks at PJMS inspired me to

try for a one year exchange at Palmer High. It took a lot of procedures and paperwork, but thanks to my parents, the staff of Saroma Town Hall, Palmer High School, and teacher Carla Swick, I am here. I really owe you all so much. I really love my homestay family. Angelina's family is so kind, funny, and sweet. Studying abroad is harder than I thought, but I have a lot of people who support me. And when I come home from school every day, I have a warm family to greet me. So I can do my best. I would like to enjoy my remaining seven months as a Moose!

### Toki Yamaguchi

It was a big deal for me to have American meals and be able to do so many things with Cal and my host family. Thank you to everybody who casually talked to me at school. I am really thankful to you.



Having Fun



Swanson Elem. School Visit

*"I really love my homestay family."*

Shiho Hatanaka



Palmer Fire Department Visit



VanderWeele Farm Tour

# Sister Elementary School Signings *by Tanya Lang & Carla Swick*

September 12th, 2017 was a red-letter-day for the Palmer Saroma Sister School Program. At two schoolwide assemblies, Palmer and Saroma school representatives signed an agreement making Swanson Elementary and Sherrod Elementary official sister schools with Saroma Elementary.

There has been a desire to become formal sister schools for a long time, and this will further strengthen friendships and communications that have been going on for years. For example, Saroma Middle/High School delegations always visit Swanson and Sherrod Elementary during their yearly visit in September. Likewise, the Palmer Middle/High School delegations visit Saroma Elementary during their annual summer exchange to Saroma.

About nine years ago, then Sherrod 5th grade teacher Sean Williams and Saroma's assistant language teacher Sean Holland used their technological skills to connect classrooms at a deeper level. They developed joint science projects, like cultivating tulips and used Skype to connect the students in real time. Cultural exchanges via Skype continues today and last spring Sherrod 5th graders introduced Groundhog's Day while Saroma students with assistant lan-

guage teacher Brenna Kennicker talked about Setsubun and demonstrated mamemaki - The Bean Throwing Festival.

At the signing ceremony, the Saroma Delegation was given a warm Palmer-style welcome. Swanson students welcomed the Saroma guests with high 5's as they entered the building and serenaded them with their *Welcome Song* at the assembly. In the afternoon, Palmer High School Japanese language teachers Carla Swick and Michiru Hayazaki along with the visiting Saroma Delegation, broke into four teaching teams and taught all 435 Sherrod students a special Japanese lesson to commemorate the day.

During the afternoon assembly, Sherrod Elementary students sang the *Alaska Flag Song*, and the Saroma students entertained the audience with a fan dance. Both schools presented beautiful handmade banners to take back to Saroma Elementary. The Swanson and Sherrod Elementary Sister School Agreement was signed by Dr. Monica Goyette, Superintendent of Mat Su Borough School District; Michinori Nakagawa, Superintendent of Saroma Schools; Mary Kate Johnston, Principal of Swanson Elementary; Dan Michael, Principal of Sherrod Elementary; Sean Williams,

Sherrod Elementary Sister School Coordinator; Yuko Hirouchi, Saroma Sister School Coordinator; and Carla Swick, Palmer Saroma Kai President.

Superintendent Michinori Nakagawa's made his first international trip for this special ceremony. He told the elementary school students and staff, "More than 650 citizens from Palmer and Saroma have visited each other since 1980, and I hope many of you will visit Saroma in the future, too." Sean Williams, now Sherrod librarian, will join the 2018 Palmer Delegation as a chaperone and elementary school representative.

For Tanya Lang, a Sherrod Elementary 3rd grade resource teacher, the signing of the agreement felt like coming full circle. She first visited Saroma with her grandfather, Edward Homes, when she was 8 years old and a 3rd grader at Sherrod Elementary. She proudly said: "By signing this agreement we are continuing on with the friendship and tradition that was started nearly 40 years ago between the sister cities of Palmer and Saroma, and honoring the men that brought us together, Mutsuhiro Ishiguro Sensei, and my grandfather Edward Holmes. I know my grandfather is looking down on us and smiling from above."

## My Time In Palmer *by Tomoharu Watanabe (Saroma High English Teacher)*

Wow, it's already been about 2 months since I went to Palmer. The program was a totally unforgettable experience for me, and I have been thinking about Alaska since the trip (that means everyday. I'm serious). Especially, I'm thinking about the people living in Palmer because you're kind of my only true friends who actually live in America. In the beginning of this trip, almost everyday, I was surprised at many differences in Palmer, Alaska. The cars driving opposite side, every house

looks twice as enormous as Japanese one, foods are big and tastes totally different (even we had the same kind looking foods), and Moose are everywhere (and of course, somebody shoots them). However, the family looks exact the same as Japanese one. Every host family I visited and stayed with had a warm and loving home atmosphere, and children are filled with their parents' love. It is said that it's how much time you spent together and sharing touching experienc-

es together that is crucial for conveying affection to your children, for I could feel that when I'm looking back at my memories. Everything was beautiful, and nothing made me sad during my stay in Alaska. I'm now so excited to welcome the delegation from Palmer next year. How amazing this program is. I'd like to thank everyone participating in this program. I'm looking forward to meeting you someday very soon again. Please keep in touch with us!





# Please Join Us for these Sister City Community Events



December 9th, 2017 from 12-3 pm

## Christmas Cranes

*A Colony Christmas Event*

**Saturday, Dec 9<sup>th</sup> 2017, 12- 3pm**  
**Palmer Library, 655 S Valley Way**

Paper cranes are an international symbol of peace and hope and remind us of the Sister City relationship between Palmer, Alaska and Saroma, Japan.

- Make a unique and beautiful ornament for your holiday celebration
- Enjoy family fun for all ages

- Learn more about Saroma, our Sister City in Japan
- FREE materials and instruction
- Donations for food and drinks will go to the student delegation visiting Saroma next year



January 21, 2018 from 12:30-2:30 pm

## Cranes for Hiroshima

Visit with friends, enjoy snacks, and help fold 1000 cranes for presentation at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial.

**Sunday, Jan 21<sup>th</sup> 2018,**  
**12:30 - 2:30 pm**  
**Palmer United Protestant**  
**Church (Church of 1000 Trees)**  
**713 S Denali St**

There will also be a brief annual meeting for Palmer Saroma Kai, a non-profit group that supports the Sister City Program.

The meeting will include reports from the board president and treasurer, as well as board member elections.

If you would like to run for a board member seat, contact Carla Swick at 775-0807.



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](mailto:carlaswick2010@gmail.com) or by phone 907-775-0807.

Your comments, suggestions, and constructive feedback are welcome!