

Letter From NEW YORKERS

Culture Day, a Japanese National Holiday Ashley Matarama

November 3 is a national holiday in Japan known as Culture Day. Unfortunately since it falls on a Saturday this year, workers in Japan might not get a three-day weekend, but nevertheless it is a great opportunity to celebrate culture, the arts and even the sciences. Some institutions and museums offer free admission such as the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo (MOMAT) and the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. Some towns and schools may also prepare parades and festivals near this date and host



Illustration by Ashley Matarama

activities based on local traditions and creative, fun activities. My high school in the States would organize an annual Multicultural Day, where interested members of the Japanese language class could rehearse and perform Soran Bushi (a traditional folk song about fisherman said to have originated in Hokkaido) in front of students and staff. Only much later when I taught English in Japan would I come to realize that Soran Bushi is actually performed by Japanese students during Sports Day, an annual school event in the fall season. Whether you're in Japan or stateside, think about what aspects attract you to Japanese art and culture and see if you can take some time out of your day to explore those interests!

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



From left, front row: Ms. Kato, Ms. Narihara, Ms. Isohara and Ms. Kaku; from left, back row: Mr. Nishimura, Ms. Ohtani and Ms. James

Children Peace Messengers from YOKOHAMA Visit United Nations and UNIS

Yokohama City sent four students to New York as "Yokohama Children Peace Messengers" under its promoting program to present Yokohama City Mayor Fumiko Hayashi's message to the United Nations headquarters. They then visited UNICEF headquarters and the United Nations International School (UNIS).

Under the program that the city has carried out since 1965, four students received the Peace Speech Contest Mayor Awards. They had the opportunity to join and experience classes at UNIS on the afternoon of October 18.

The four messengers were 9th grader Mai Katoh, 6th grader Mei Narihara, 6th grader Chihaya Isohara and 9th grader Shin-i Kaku, all from Yokohama City high schools.

Ms. Katoh shared her actions through crowdfunding before she left Japan in her speech. She was impressed by how freely UNIS students move around during group discussions and lunch time with a chair-connected desk and also how warmly they welcomed her to play volleyball during recess.

Ms. Narihara made a speech from the viewpoint of war (an antonym of

peace), stating how important it is to accept hard facts and to learn from failure and success in history. She was pleased to see the way they study with computers at UNIS and the friendly reaction she received when she introduced herself.

Ms. Isohara focused on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17, naming the importance of teamwork and cooperation with our surroundings. She realized the importance of open-minded interaction with other people. Before coming to the United States, she only knew Japanese values. But, after



interacting with cultures built from diverse immigration, she wanted to bring back the lessons she learned to Japan as much as possible, not simply observe them. She could not understand American children's rapid English, but when she caught a word or two that she knew, she was encouraged by her peers exclaiming "Wow!" to speak in English and to feel closer to foreign countries.



DJ ACQUA Comes to New York

In her first release since moving her music base to New York, Saori Toge, a legendary D.J. born in Tokyo, performed in "Don't Leave Me Alone (David Guetta Official Remix)" from Atlantic Records. Ms. Toge, who worked as a member of the band Tokyo Mo Beat, began playing the piano at the age of three or four and fell in love with music. She first encountered music from the West when she was in junior high school and became interested in its unfamiliar beats and musical varieties.

Ms. Kaku promoted the body language behind greeting others, advocating the importance of smiles, but she also realized that while in New York she must learn more English. "Smiles are certainly the common language of the world," she remarked, but she also wishes to interact with diverse cultures through the power of languages.

The four students were led by Headmaster Tamami Ohtani of



Saori Toge as DJ ACQUA

While in senior high school and college, she enjoyed going to the dance club where music could not only be played but also be played with. Since quitting a clerical job after half a year, she has devoted her life to being a DJ. Rated in 2010 as a top DJ in the popular nightlife district of Roppongi in Tokyo, she participated as a DJ at a prestigious artist event, "Dream Festival," hosted by TV Asahi, in 2012 and 2013. At that time she also DJed at clients' storefronts, an activity that drew the fashion industry's attention to her. By then, she was being invited to DJ more than 180 times a year both in Japan and abroad. Since moving to New York in 2014 bringing only a suitcase with her, she has been in many club scenes and music performances. She has also trained herself to be a music producer. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kenji Nakano)

Yokohama City Mutsuura Elementary School and Chair of the Yokohama Children International Peace Program, along with Hideyuki Nishimura, Director of the Yokohama City Board of Education and Vanessa James, Guidance Assistant in the International Education Department. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Kunio Shimura)

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