Des Moines-Kofu/Iowa-Yamanashi
50th Anniversary Event

Des Moines and Kofu, Japan celebrated their 50th anniversary as sister cities in August, 2008. Iowa and Yamanashi will honor their 50th anniversary as sister states in 2010. Throughout 2008 multiple events took place to celebrate the successful relationship between the cities of Kofu and Des Moines. Enjoy the photos from the 2008 and 2009 events and learn about future events!

2008 Events

March 7-9
Kids Fest at Iowa State Fairgrounds Varied Industries Building
The kickoff event took place March 7-9 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds Varied Industries Building. The Kids Fest booth featured kids learning how to make a simple origami paper cup and then filling it with rice crackers. They also practiced painting Hiragana symbols and had their pictures taken behind a kimono cutout.

50th Anniversary Booth

Volunteers at the Booth
April 3-9

Des Moines Mayor’s Delegation Visits Kofu

The 5-member Mayor’s delegation received a very warm welcome in Kofu and was treated royally everywhere they went. The group enjoyed Takeda Shingen Festival as Mayor Cownie rode a horse dressed as a samurai general and paraded among 1500 other participants. The delegation also visited Shosenkyo valley, Mt. Fuji area, Nippon Electronics Co., Inden (deer skin products), a Jewelry maker, a grocery store, two schools, and the Lieutenant Governor’s office. Some members also visited the Kofu Police Department and Kofu Board of Education. Local TV, newspaper, and newsletters covered the delegation’s visit.

Snap shots from Takeda Shingen Festival:

Kofu Mayor Miyajima and Des Moines Mayor Cownie

Mayor Cownie and His Generals

Mayor Cownie and His Troop from Osato Community

Taiko Drummers Performing in Front of Kofu City Hall
Thursday, April 24
Drake Karaoke Festival
About 70 to 80 Karaoke fans attended this annual event at Drake and sang songs mostly in Japanese. The only non-Japanese song sung was in Spanish. Judges Elaine Imlau and Carol Brown were very impressed with the participants’ singing abilities and knowledge of Japanese. Three prizes of a $30 gift certificate from Miyabi restaurant went to two Drake students and one Valley High School student.
Saturday, May 17
Asian Heritage Festival
A hand-painted, multi-color 38-foot Samurai banner was donated to the 50th anniversary committee by Tokyo Kougei Co. in Yamanashi. The banner decorated the background of a stage at the Asian Heritage Festival. Mrs. Yurika Kanai-Molloy’s Japanese students from Valley High School danced to the music of Okinawa Taiko drummers.

Okinawa Taiko Group Performs with Valley High School Students

Students from Valley High School Japanese Class Dance “Tankoubushi”

Tuesday, July 1
“Rakugo”, Japanese traditional one-man comedy story telling by Mr. Kaishi Katsura at Indian Hills Middle School in Clive
Mr. Kaishi Katsura, who has been appointed by the Japanese Ministry of Culture as a cultural ambassador, performed this traditional art to the audience of over 200 as a part of his North American tour. With a lot of laughter, the audience enjoyed this 400 year old traditional art form. The 50th anniversary committee was one of the sponsors of this event that was organized by Japan American Society of Iowa. You can enjoy some photos from Kaishi’s web site in Japanese: http://eigorakugo.exblog.jp/8603106/
Thursday, August 7 to Sunday, August 17
Iowa State Fair
Varied Industries Building
Photo Exhibit of the Best Art Works Done by Elementary School Students in Kofu
With our request, Kofu City sent us a CD that has a collection of the best art works from elementary school students in Kofu. The 50th committee made a photo exhibit of those works and displayed them in a booth in the Varied Industries Building at the Iowa State Fair.

Friday, August 8, 6:00-9:00 PM
The Des Moines Club
Kofu Mayor’s Formal Reception
Kofu Mayor Miyajima and four delegates arrived in Des Moines on August 7th. On the 8th, they visited Des Moines City Hall in the morning for signing of a document that re-affirms the future sister city relationship between the two sister cities. In the afternoon, the delegation visited Riverwoods Elementary School and met the Superintendent of the Des Moines Schools, toured the Downtown School, and visited the Downtown Community Alliance to discuss revitalization of a city center. The 50th committee held a gala that night at the Embassy Club, which was attended by 100 guests, including the Deputy Consul General from Consulate General of Japan at Chicago.
The delegation spent the following day visiting Downtown Farmer’s Market, Historical Building, and Iowa State Fair. In the morning, the delegation was given a large framed painting of Des Moines downtown by the Des Moines city council at a meeting in which they discussed various city affairs. In the afternoon, Mayor Miyajima joined Mayor Cownie and planted a Japanese maple tree in Pioneer Park to commemorate the 50th anniversary of this successful sister city relationship. A potluck party with visiting Kofu middle school and high school students and their host families followed the tree planting.
Monday, August 11
Bill Riley Stage at the Iowa State Fair
Taiko Performance
An acclaimed Japanese music/dance group, Mu Taiko Group from Minneapolis, performed and enchanted the audience that filled the Bill Riley Theater. Kofu Board of Education’s student group performed a Japanese dance prior to the Mu performance.

Friday, August 15
Merle Hay Mall
Kofu Yamanashi International Exchange Band (44 members) Performs with the Greater Des Moines Community Band
Conductor Hiroshi Genma formed a 44-member band in Kofu and visited Des Moines to celebrate the 50th anniversary. The ages of musicians ranged from 13 through 78. On Friday, the Greater Des Moines Community Band, conducted by Vic Anderson, joined the Kofu Yamanashi International Exchange Band playing a wide variety of Japanese and American music at Merle Hay Mall. Kofu band members were home hosted by members of the 50th anniversary committee, the Greater Des Moines Community Band, Japan America Society of Iowa, and friends of Iowa Sister States. A farewell potluck was held at Raccoon River Park Nature Lodge. Following their stay in Des Moines, the Kofu Yamanashi International Exchange band also performed in two other cities: Muscatine, Iowa and Fairfield, California.
Saturday, August 16
AE Stage at the Iowa State Fair
Kofu Yamanashi International Exchange Band Performs with the Greater Des Moines Community Band

August 15, 7:30 PM
Gray’s Lake Terrace 1, 2, and 3
Candle Service and a Japanese Film
Following one of the Japanese Buddhist traditions, participants in this event constructed and floated paper boats which held a lighted candle on Gray’s Lake to symbolize our wish for peace around the world. A presentation of a Japanese film “Totoro” followed.

Thursday, October 16
Sushi Chef Visits Des Moines Area Community College
DMACC culinary arts program invited Mr. Ikeda, a Japanese sushi chef from a popular restaurant in Kofu, to do a demonstration for their culinary arts program. Sixty students attended the demonstration and learned how to make different sushi dishes.

Sunday, October 19
Sushi Festival at Downtown Holiday Inn
Chef Ikeda and Chef Yamamoto of Miyabi 9 in Des Moines served delicious sushi to over 200 people gathered at the Sushi Festival at the Downtown Holiday Inn. The participants enjoyed delicious sushi while watching a tea ceremony, browsing Japanese items for sale at JASI table, and playing Japanese games. Des Moines Parks and Recreation helped sell tickets for this event.
Chef Ikeda Prepares Sushi

Chef Ikeda and Chef Yamamoto

Citizens Line Up for Delicious Sushi

Drake Volunteers Teach Japanese Games

Mr. Hagins Conducts Tea Ceremony
2009

50th Anniversary Citizen's Group Visit to Kofu
The 50th Anniversary Citizen's Group visit to Kofu departed on June 9 and returned on June 25. Don Chesnut and Carol Brown were official representatives of the Greater Des Moines Sister City Commission. There were eight other Des Moines citizens in the group. Several members of the group were home hosted by Kofu citizens whom we had met during previous sister city exchanges. The Yamanaka Family hosted a sayonara party in their lovely traditional Japanese home on our last night in Kofu for the entire group. We left our sister city with a warm feeling of continuing friendships, future projects and exchanges, and a great appreciation for each other and the customs and traditions which make each of us unique.

The entire group took the opportunity to visit other traditional and interesting places in Japan including Kyoto, Hiroshima, Miyajima, Nara, and Kurashiki, but it was Kofu that made us feel at home in Japan.
Iowa Ladies in Kimonos in Front of Mt. Fuji

Learning How to Eat Japanese Food

Yukata-Clad Iowans Relax at Yogyai Onsen Hot Spring

A Sight in Tokyo

The Group Encountered a Wedding in Kyoto
Future Events

2010

January to March
The State Historical Museum
Touring Exhibition of Japanese Dolls sponsored by the Japan Foundation.

August - Iowa State Fair
Yamanashi Governor Visits Iowa
An official celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Yamanashi-Iowa sister states relationship will be held at the site of the Yamanashi Bell. Yamanashi delegation will visit Iowa government facilities and businesses, and meet with people who have contributed to the exchanges between these two states.

2011

November 20
Iowa Governor Visits Yamanashi
The Iowa Governor’s delegation will visit Yamanashi to participate in a ceremony celebrating the history of exchanges between the two states.