

Sakura Festival: Cherry blossoms, friendship, optimism

Clark College celebrated its annual Sakura Festival on April 20. Rain and cool temperatures moved the community event from underneath a canopy of cherry blossoms to inside Gaiser Student Center. The event was presented by Clark College, the city of Vancouver and Vancouver Rotary.

Sakura Festival is coming



On Thursday, April 18, Clark College's 2019 Sakura Festival will honor the historic ties of friendship between the sister-

cities of Vancouver, Washington, and Joyo, Japan.

The

festival will begin at 1:00 p.m. with opening remarks near the Royce E. Pollard

Japanese Friendship Garden, which is located next to the Beacock Music Hall on

Clark's main campus. Dignitaries who are scheduled to speak include Mayor Anne

McEnerny Ogle, Clark College President Bob Knight, Japanese Consul General

Takashi Teraoka, and Clark College Japanese Scholarship recipient Kiho Takedoa.

The

opening ceremony will include a koto performance by Yukiko Vossen and a

performance by the Clark College Women's Choral Ensemble. The koto, a stringed

musical instrument, is the national instrument of Japan.

From

2:30 to 3:30 p.m., the Sakura celebration will continue in the Gaiser Student

Center, where guests will enjoy family-friendly cultural activities including

performances by the Clark College Japanese Cultural Club, traditional

calligraphy by Sora Shodo, a greeting from the college's Child & Family

Studies program, and drumming by members of Takohachi TakoQ. Cookies and tea

will be served. Information about the Sakura Ceremony is available at www.clark.edu/cc/sakura.

All

events are free and open to the public. The Sakura Festival is sponsored by

Clark College, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Rotary.

Clark

College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver.

Driving directions

and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps.

Individuals who

need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this

event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at

360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP) or visit the Penguin Union Building room 013.

Sakura returns April 19



On Thursday, April 19, Clark College's 2018 Sakura Festival will honor the historic ties of friendship between the sister-cities of Vancouver, Washington, and Jojo, Japan.

The festival will begin at 1:00 p.m. with opening remarks near the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden, which is located next to the Beacock Music Hall on Clark's main campus. Dignitaries who are scheduled to speak include Mayor Anne McEnerny Ogle, John Kageyama, and Clark College Japanese Scholarship recipient Suzuka Hitomi.

The opening ceremony will include a koto performance by Yukiko Vossen and a performance by the Clark College Women's Choral Ensemble. The koto, a stringed musical instrument, is the national instrument of Japan.

From 2:30 to 3:30 p.m., the Sakura celebration will continue in the Gaiser Student Center, where guests will enjoy family-friendly cultural activities including performances by the Clark College Japanese Cultural Club, traditional dancing by Takako Hara, a greeting from the college's Child & Family Studies program, and drumming by members of Portland Taiko. Cookies and tea will be served. Information about the Sakura Ceremony is available at www.clark.edu/cc/sakura.

All events are free and open to the public. The Sakura Festival is sponsored by Clark College, the City of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Rotary.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP) or visit the Penguin Union Building room 013.

The Roots of Friendship Grow Stronger



The Women's Ensemble gets ready to perform at the 2015 Clark College Sakura Festival.



John Kageyama, *far left*, presented a check to the Clark College Foundation in the names of the Clark College Facilities Services staff in honor of their work to keep his shirofugen cherry trees thriving.

On an unseasonably warm April day, John Kageyama, president of America Kotobuki Electronics, stood on Clark College's main campus below one of the 100 shirofugen cherry trees he had donated to the City of Vancouver 25 years earlier. After a quarter-century, those trees had grown from fragile saplings to stately landmarks whose blossoms fell to the ground like pale pink snow.

"Thank you for taking such good care of these sakura," Kageyama said to the crowd assembled to celebrate the college's annual Sakura Festival on April 16. He noted that shirofugen trees require careful maintenance to flourish. "I never expected the trees to be so beautiful and so big."

This year's event marked not only the 25th anniversary of the trees' planting on Clark's campus, but also the 10th anniversary of the festival itself, which is held by the college in partnership with the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Rotary Club.



Korbin Hair, 5, stands atop a rock in the Japanese Friendship Garden during the 2015 Sakura Festival while his parents, Michael and Judy, stand nearby.

“Each year as these trees blossom, they signal new hopes, new beginnings, and the joyful arrival of spring,” said President Robert K. Knight during his opening remarks. “At the same time, because their blooming season is so brief—only about two weeks—they remind us to enjoy each day and to live life to the fullest.”

The trees are also a symbol of international friendship, and their blossoming has become occasion to celebrate the 20-year sister-city relationship between Vancouver and Joyo, Japan. Many guests were on hand to celebrate that relationship, including Portland Consul General for Japan Hiroshi Furusawa, Vancouver City Councilmembers Alisha Topper and Larry Smith, SEH America Inc. Executive Vice President Tatsuo Ito, Vancouver City Manager Eric Homes, former Vancouver mayor Bruce Hagensen, former Vancouver City Manager Pat McDonnell, and Clark College Trustees Jack Burkman, Royce Pollard, and Rekah Strong.

“We Japanese have had a special affinity for sakura for more than 10 centuries,” said Consul General Furusawa. “Thank you for your warm friendship and strong stewardship of these trees.”

Indeed, Kageyama ended his own remarks by announcing a donation of \$1,000 to the Clark College Foundation in the names of the college's Facilities Services staff members as a way to thank them for their work keeping the trees healthy. He also announced a donation to the Dr. Chihiro I Kanagawa Scholarship, which allows one student from Japan to study at Clark each year.



"Taking political science classes here has given me the opportunity to form my own ideas about Japanese politics," said Dr. Kanagawa Scholarship recipient Erina Yamazaki during the 2015 Sakura Festival.

Clad in a traditional formal kimono, this year's scholarship recipient, Erina Yamazaki, spoke movingly about her experiences both at Clark and in her home province of Fukushima. That region of Japan was devastated in 2011 by a tsunami and resulting nuclear power plant failure. While Yamazaki's home was not affected by the disaster, she remembered it as a "traumatic event" that nevertheless strengthened her faith in international friendship.

"I saw many countries and companies from around the world donated food and money to Japan," she said. "The feeling that we are supported by so many people from all over the world

gives us the motivation to start new things.”

The opening ceremony included performances by flautist LeeAnn McKenna and Yukiko Vossen on the *koto*, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, as well as by the Clark College Women’s Ensemble.



Children from Clark’s Child & Family Studies program show off their sakura-themed artwork during the 2015 Sakura Festival.

Afterward, entertainment included a traditional dance performance by the Clark College Japanese Club, a drum performance by Portland Taiko, and a presentation of sakura-themed art by children from Clark’s Child & Family Studies program. The family-friendly event included lots of free activities and cookies from the Clark College Bakery.

Tax accountant Michael Hair was taking a well-deserved break with his family at the festival after the end of tax season. His elder son, Alex, 9, had the day off from school anyway, and he and Michael were carefully folding origami paper into cranes and frogs. Michael’s wife, Judy, and younger son, Korbin, 5, sat a few tables away watching the taiko drummers perform.



Members of Portland Taiko
Drum perform during the 2015
Sakura Festival.

Michael Hair began taking Japanese classes at Clark last year. "I've always enjoyed other cultures," he said. "It's a full life going to school, going to work, and taking care of a family. But I read something a while back that really stuck with me. It basically said, if there's something you've always wanted to do, go do it; don't wait. So I came here and I actually really enjoy the classes."

Meanwhile, Alex was dancing to the taiko drums in his chair, clearly a fan of the festival. "My favorites are the drums and the origami," he said. "I like the way the drums make me feel like someone's beating on my heart. And I like the origami because it helps me calm down again after the drums."

Sakura is Coming



One of 100 shirofugen cherry trees on Clark's main campus blossoming near the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden, where (weather permitting) the opening remarks for this year's Sakura Festival will be held.

On Thursday, April 16, Clark College's 2015 Sakura Festival will honor the historic ties of friendship between the cities of Vancouver, Washington, and Joyo, Japan. This year's celebration holds particular significance, as it recognizes several important milestones: the 25th anniversary of the donation by Mr. John Kageyama of the 100 shirofugen cherry trees whose blossoming on the Clark College campus this festival celebrates, the 10th anniversary of Clark's Sakura celebration, and the 20th anniversary of the Vancouver-Joyo Sister City relationship.

The festival will begin with opening remarks at 1 p.m. at the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden, which is located next to the Beacock Music Hall on Clark's main campus. (In the event of inclement weather the ceremony will be held in Gaiser

Student Center.) Dignitaries who are scheduled to speak include Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; John Kageyama, President of America Kotobuki; Hiroshi Furusawa, Portland Consul General; Tatsuo Ito, Executive Vice President of SEH America Inc.; and Clark College international student Erina Yamazaki. Located within Kyoto Prefecture, Joyo is Vancouver's official sister city in Japan.

The opening ceremony will include a koto performance by Yukiko Vossen and a performance by the Clark College Women's Ensemble. The koto, a stringed musical instrument, is the national instrument of Japan.

From 2 to 3:30 p.m., the Sakura celebration will continue in the Gaiser Student Center, where guests will enjoy family-friendly cultural activities including a dance performance by the Clark College Japanese Club, a greeting from the children in the college's Child & Family Studies program, and a performance by members of the Portland Taiko Drum Group. Refreshments will be served. Information about the Sakura Ceremony is available at www.clark.edu/cc/sakura.

All events are free and open to the public. The Sakura Festival is sponsored by Clark College, the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Rotary. For video of last year's Sakura celebration, please visit Clark's YouTube channel.

Clark College is located at 1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver. Driving directions and parking maps are available at www.clark.edu/maps. Individuals who need accommodation due to a disability in order to fully participate in this event should contact Clark College's Disability Support Services Office at 360-992-2314 or 360-991-0901 (VP) or visit the Penguin Union Building room 013.

Photo: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Celebrating Spring and Friendship

As he introduced the opening ceremonies of this year's Sakura Festival, Clark College President Bob Knight called the 100 shirofugen trees whose blossoming the festival celebrates "a gift rich with symbolism." As dignitaries from both Japan and Vancouver rose to speak, it became clear how rich that symbolism is.

Vancouver Mayor and Clark College alumnus Tim Leavitt said that here, as in Japan, the annual blossoming of the cherry trees has come to mark the beginning of spring, as well as of the historic bonds between Vancouver and Japan. "The City of Vancouver has long had an affinity with Japan," he said.

"We've hosted cultural exchanges, art exhibits, and have business relationships with firms headquartered here, including Kyocera and SEH America. We've also enjoyed our formal sister city relationship with Joyo for 18 years. For me, the annual Sakura Festival serves as a poignant reminder of our longstanding friendship and the meaningful opportunities that it provides."

Guests from Japan—including America Kotobuki President John Kageyama, Joyo Mayor Toshiharu Okuda, Portland Consul General for Japan Hiroshi Furusawa, and SEH America Inc. Executive Vice President Tatsuo Ito—spoke movingly about the role that *sakura* (cherry blossoms) play in Japanese culture. The blossoms' ephemeral beauty, often lasting just a week or two, symbolizes rebirth, transformation, and the importance of appreciating each moment of life. Additionally, as Consul General Furusawa pointed out, cherry trees have been planted in many prominent locations in the U.S. to symbolize friendship between this country and Japan.

"These magnificent cherry blossoms symbolize the close friendship between the cities of Joyo and Vancouver, as well as between the U.S. and Japan," he said. "May they continue to grow and thrive."

Also present at the event were members of the Rotary Clubs of both Vancouver and Joyo; Clark College trustees Sherry Parker and Jack Burkman; former Vancouver mayor Bruce Hagensen; Vancouver City Councilmembers Bart Hansen, Larry Smith, and Alishia Topper; and Vancouver City Manager Eric Holmes.

The opening ceremony included performances by Yukiko Vossen on the *koto*, a traditional Japanese stringed instrument, as well as by the Clark College Women's Ensemble. Afterward, entertainment included a traditional dance performance by the Clark College Japanese Club, a drum performance by Portland Taiko, and a kimono fashion show with beautiful kimono modeled by Clark students and staff, as well as by children from

Clark's Child & Family Studies program.

Begun in 2006, Clark College's Sakura Festival celebrates John Kageyama's donation of 100 shirofugen cherry trees to the City of Vancouver. The trees were planted on Clark's main campus in 1990; each year, their beautiful pink blossoms transform the campus and prompt a flurry of picnics and picture-taking. Due to rain, this year's festival was held indoors in Gaiser Student Center.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

A Lesson They Can Wear



It's the first sunny day the children in Terry Haye's

classroom in Clark College's Child & Family Studies program have seen for a while, and the classroom's staff need a few moments to gather everyone on the carpeted area normally reserved for Story Time. But as Hays speaks, the children settle down to listen.

"All right, friends," she says. "Let's sit down. I would like to welcome Michiyo to our classroom. Can you say, '*Konnichi wa?*'"

"*Konnichi wa,*" chorus the children, ages 3 to 5. Japanese professor Michiyo Okuhara beams at them.

"*Konnichi wa!* Hello there!" she says. "My name is Michiyo, and I'm going to show you some traditional kimono from Japan." With that, Okuhara pulls a vibrantly patterned kimono from a bag, and the children gasp.

Okuhara doesn't just show off the kimono: With the help of volunteers from Clark's Japanese Club, she fits many of the children with pint-sized kimonos from her collection. She explains that this activity is in preparation for Clark's annual Sakura Festival on April 17, where the children will appear in the finale of a kimono fashion show.



Professor Michiyo Okuhara shows how to wrap a kimono.

While the kimono demonstration is new, the partnership between Hays and Okuhara goes back seven years, when Okuhara's own son was a child in Hays's classroom. At the time, Clark College

had just begun holding a celebration of the campus's 100 shirofugen cherry trees, a living symbol of friendship between the people of Vancouver and Japan. Haye invited Okuhara to visit her classroom to share stories about sakura celebrations in Okuhara's native Japan. From that beginning has developed a rich partnership; today, with the help of the Rotary Club of Vancouver, children in the CFS program participate in an artwork exchange with children in a preschool in Vancouver's sister city of Joyo, Japan. CFS children also attend Sakura each year, learning about Japanese culture.

"I'm always looking for ways to involve our children in the community on campus," says Haye. "It's a wonderful resource for us. We track the [shirofugen] trees each year, visiting them during each season. When they blossom, we have a picnic down there. And having Michiyo visit each year and share her experience, that's a great way for our children to learn about another part of the world."



Teira Harbeson, *left*, and Abigail Sloan, *right*, help a fellow member of the Japanese Club adjust her kimono.

It isn't only the children who are learning: Japanese Club member Teira Harbeson says that visiting the classroom is giving her a taste of what may be in store for her one day. "I want to become a teacher myself," says the 21-year-old

sophomore, who says her interest in Japan was reinforced when she traveled there with Okuhara last year through Clark's Study Abroad program. "I want to travel to Japan and teach English there, and while this is a different age group, it still gives me some experience."

Japanese Club member Abigail Sloan adds that she wished she'd had opportunities to experience other cultures at such an early age. "I think it opens things up for them," says the 15-year-old Mountain View High student, who attends Clark through Running Start. "The world is becoming more and more globalized, and it's really good for citizens to get exposure to other cultures early on."

The time has come for the children to take off their kimono and go play outside. As they wait to have their obi untied, one girl fingers the pink flowers on her kimono thoughtfully. Then she looks up at a visitor and says, "I want to know about Japan. I want to know *lots* more!"

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley

Friendship Blooms Anew



Portland Taiko drummers perform.

Friendship, like all living things, requires regular tending to keep it thriving. And Clark College's 2013 Sakura Festival did just that, strengthening the bonds of friendship that led to Clark receiving a gift of 100 shirofugen cherry trees from John Kageyama, president of America Kotobuki.



Clark College President
Robert K. Knight, John
Kageyama, President of
America Kotobuki

Electronics, Inc., and Tim Leavitt, Mayor of Vancouver.

Kageyama was present at the opening ceremony for the festival, held April 18. He expressed joy in seeing the trees he had donated in 1990 now mature and blossoming. "At the time, I didn't realized how beautiful these trees would grow," he said during his speech to the crowd that gathered under gray but rainless clouds.

Other dignitaries who spoke during the ceremony included Clark College President Bob Knight; Vancouver Mayor Tim Leavitt; Tatsuo Ito, Executive Vice President of SEH America Inc.; and Toshiharu Okuda of the Kyoto Prefecture Assembly. Joyo, Vancouver's sister city in Japan, is located within Kyoto Prefecture.



Maho Muto, *in red kimono*, was the first recipient of the Dr. Kanagawa scholarship.

The ceremony took place next to the Royce E. Pollard Japanese Friendship Garden, yet another gift of friendship cementing the ties between Vancouver and Japan. The garden was a gift to

the city of Vancouver from Dr. Chihiro Kanagawa. During its dedication at the 2012 Sakura Festival, President Knight announced the Dr. Kanagawa Scholarship providing full tuition and fees to Clark College for one academic year to an international student from Japan.

Maho Muto, the first recipient of the scholarship, also spoke during the ceremony. Clad in a traditional kimono, she expressed her thanks for the opportunity to study at Clark. "I feel like I have a big, big family in Vancouver, Washington," she said. "You have made me so happy to have the opportunity to study here and I am thankful for so many people's support."

Before the ceremony, Yukiko Vossen performed on the *koto*, the national instrument of Japan, with flute accompaniment. The ceremony ended with a performance by the Clark College Women's Choral Ensemble under the direction of music professor April Duvic. President Knight concluded his remarks by saying, "As we celebrate the beauty of our flowering cherry trees, let us also take a moment to celebrate the friendships that have brought us here today. May they too continue to bloom and flourish for years to come."

After the formal ceremony, guests walked to Gaiser Student Center to enjoy cultural displays and activities hosted by Vancouver Rotary, the Clark College Japanese Club, International Programs, and the Anime and Manga Club. Onstage entertainment included a demonstration of a formal Japanese tea ceremony and a lively performance by the Portland Taiko drummers.



Michiyo Okuhara, Japanese professor, *second from the left*, with her students.

Newly tenured Japanese professor Michiyo Okuhara, who serves on the Sakura Committee, circulated among her students and among the children from Child & Family Studies who were attending the festival. “For our program, it’s a wonderful way to have community members come to Clark and get to appreciate the friendship we have with Japan,” she said. “I’m from Japan, and so when people understand Japanese culture, it’s wonderful for me both on a personal level and as a Japanese teacher.”

See more photos from the event on Clark’s Flickr site.

Photos: Clark College/Jenny Shadley