THE MICHITOSHI SOGA JAPAN CENTER

NEWS

COVELL

Update from Stephen Covell

Associate Professor of Japanese Religion, and Director of the Soga Japan Center

The Michitoshi Soga Japan Center motto "Building Bridges and Creating Opportunities" has been the guiding statement for the Center since its beginning in 2006. Our organizational objectives are:

1. **PROMOTE** and disseminate faculty and student research on Japan.

2. **STIMULATE** creative curricular development, as well as extra-curricular activities that enrich student and area residents' understanding of Japan.

3. **SUPPORT** students pursuing Japanese Studies, those interested in study in Japan, and recruitment of students from Japan.

4. **SERVE** as the nexus between WMU and the Japan-related business, arts and civic communities in western Michigan.

5. **FACILITATE** ties between WMU, the Kalamazoo community, and our partner institutions and alumni groups in Japan.

6. **COLLABORATE** with faculty and university administration to put in place effective and efficient learning experiences, instructional strategies and scholarly inquiries.

The generous support of our alumni and university community has "activated" these objectives in the lives of alumni, faculty, students, and the community. I would like to share how each one has enriched our experiences during the 2010/2011 academic year.

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

PROMOTING Research:

Dr. Jeffrey Angles, a WMU associate professor of Japanese literature and translation studies, was featured in the Kalamazoo Gazette for his translation work. In 2010, Angles received the prestigious Japan-U.S. Friendship Prize for the Translation of Japanese Literature. The award was given for "Forest of Eyes," a translation of works by the late Japanese poet Chimako Tada, published in 2010 by the University of California Press.

STIMULATING Creative Curricular Development:

Michiko Yoshimoto, the Soga Japan Center Outreach Coordinator, gave numerous talks and performances at libraries, schools, art museums, festivals and other events in the greater Kalamazoo area and across Michigan.

On March 8, two world famous manga artists arrived at WMU. On the following day they began a week-long series of workshops at various sites including: Spring Valley Elementary, WMU, Ann Arbor District Library, Woods Lake Elementary, Kalamazoo Public Library, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Boy Scouts from Angling Road Elementary, and MSU. A dinner was hosted for the artists and WMU Japan-Club students, who greatly enjoyed the chance to learn from the artists in a relaxed and personal setting. This was a great success and the artists are interested in expanding their relationship with WMU.

SUPPORTING Students Pursuing Japanese Studies and Collaborating to provide learning experiences, instructional strategies and scholarly inquiries:

Soga Japan Center staff members and volunteers have been active in bringing conferences to WMU. This April SJC hosted the Japan Midwest Seminar. Twenty-seven Japan scholars from around the Midwest region attended. This conference provided networking opportunities for WMU faculty and students interested in Japan, and set the foundation for future collaborative efforts. This spring the Soga Japan Center was selected to host the 2012 Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs. The MCAA is a large conference of over 150 participants. Planning for hosting the conference will begin this summer.

SERVING Japan-related business, arts and civic communities in Western Michigan:

On September 27, the Soga Japan Center hosted three artists who

performed and lectured on rakugo, traditional Japanese stand- up comedy, and katsuben, the art of voice-over acting for silent films.

On November 3rd, Kenny Endo, one of the leading artists

in contemporary percussion and rhythm performed Taiko Drumming at Dalton Theatre Two hundred students, faculty and Kalamazoo residents attended the performance. Mr. Endo also gave a workshop for students and area residents on the following day.

The Soga Japan Center cosponsored a film series with the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and hosted an information session for the JET program, an English teaching program run by the Japanese government. The SJC lecture series continued this year with talks by visiting scholars and WMU faculty.

FACILITATING Community, Partner and Alumni Ties:

On March 11th a powerful earthquake struck Japan. The quake was rapidly followed by a devastating tsunami and later a nuclear disaster. WMU students quickly organized to fund raise for the victims. WMU has had exchange programs with Japan dating back over 50 years and today has a robust Japanese studies program, a Japan Club and an Anime Club. With a little help from WMU Soga Japan Center outreach coordinator Michiko Yoshimoto, students put together three fund raising events. Over 3,000 dollars were raised for earthquake relief, and over 300 people attended the events.

On March 20, students collected donations at the International Festival and raised $1,130. On March 24, the Soga Japan Center and Japanese exchange students organized a Charity Bazaar at which they sold goods they had brought with them from Japan and goods donated by faculty and staff. Over 100 people stopped by the bazaar and the students were able to raise $676.55. On the evening of March 24 WMU students including WMU's Japan Club, with the help of the Japan Center, organized a "Sushi for Tsunami" charity event. The Japan-America Society of West Michigan Japanese Women's Group helped to make and donate 450 pieces of sushi. Together with Soga Japan Center staff they also made 200 cups of chirashi-zushi. Mr. Aung Min donated 500 pieces of sushi as did Hardings Market. Over 300 people attended the event where they ate sushi, watched a dance performance, talked about Japan and watched a heart-wrenching slide show on the disaster prepared by the students. $2,257.25 was raised. All proceeds were donated to the Red Cross Japan relief efforts. A link to the Red Cross has also been posted on the SJC site.

Soga Japan Center outreach coordinator Michiko Yoshimoto together with four WMU Japan Club members also visited a local church on March 27 where she taught them how to fold paper cranes – a symbol of peace and recovery. They plan on making the traditional 1000 cranes and will send them to Japan as an expression of support and sympathy.

Thank you to our alumni, students, staff, contributing artists, Japan scholars, and university and Kalamazoo community members.

Our goals could not be met without your participation and support. We look forward to learning, collaborating, and creating new opportunities to strengthen our ties in the 2011/2012 academic year.

Yes, I want to be a part of the success of the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center!

I would like to support:

__Cultural exchange and study abroad with a gift of _____

__ WMU-Japan Speaker Series with a gift of _____

__Cultural Events and Film Series with a gift of _____

__Faculty Research with a gift of _____

__Support all of the Soga Japan Center programs with a gift of _____

Please contact me about my giving plans, a matching gift, or to discuss a gift to the Michitoshi Soga Japan Center Endowment Funds.

NAME PHONE NUMBER

PLEASE E-MAIL THE SOGA JAPAN CENTER NEWSLETTER TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS

Tax-deductible contributions in support of the WMU Soga Japan Center may be mailed to the WMU Foundation.

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