



Sister City News Palmer, Alaska - Saroma, Japan

夏 Summer

2013

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おかえりなさいちひろさん/Okaerinasai Chihiro-san!

By Carla Swick

Chihiro Hatayama arrived in Palmer, July 27 and will be the third Saroma High School student to spend one academic year studying at Palmer High School. Her family grew up knowing about Palmer through the sister city program and got involved by hosting Palmer students during summer exchanges.

This is not Chihiro's first time in Palmer. As an 8th grader, three years ago, she was part of the Saroma Middle School Delegation and visited PJMS and Palmer for two weeks. Chihiro wrote in her application to study abroad: "Through these short-term exchanges, I had a lot of interests in English and American cultures. When I



went to Palmer, I felt it was too short. I thought I wanted to speak English better and communicate with a lot of American people."

Chihiro will be hosted by the Graham family, who already felt like family before her arrival. Noelle Graham, now a PHS senior, visited Saroma a year ago on the sister school exchange and stayed with Chihiro's family in

Saroma. The sisters are back together again. Parents Pricilla and Doug Graham's four daughters-- Noelle, Chihiro, Naomi, and Megan-- will all be PHS Moose this year. Chihiro also wrote, "After I go to Palmer, I would like to share a good time with my host family and many new friends through a lot of activities. I would like to challenge anything."

3rd Annual Noodle Chute at Palmer Pride Picnic

By Heather Kelley

In 2010, delegates to Saroma were introduced to a game in which folks try to catch noodles with chopsticks, as they race down a chute of running water. Upon his return, delegate Monte Goodrich built one for the citizens of Palmer.

Since 2011, Palmer Saroma Kai (an organization dedicated to encouraging and supporting the sister city relationship) has hosted the "Noodle Chute" at the Palmer Pride Picnic, which was held Wed, June 24th. Come out and try it next year!





Quarterly Calendar of Events

Sister City Community Event

A celebration the Sister City school exchange program will be held **September 12th** at 6pm the Presbyterian Church in Palmer. For more information see the top article on this page.

Japanese Language Classes

Mat-Su College continues to offer First & Second Year Japanese Classes this fall from 8/26/13 through 12/14/13.

First Year Classes (4CR)

Mon & Wed - 7 to 8:50pm

Second Year Classes (4CR)

Tues & Thurs - 7 to 8:50pm

For more info visit:

<http://matsu.alaska.edu/>

Saroma Visitors in Sept

Palmer will have visitors from Saroma this fall. Students Ryunosuke Sumiyoshi, Reo Gaman, Tsugumi Otani, Ruan Kooriyama, and Yuto Honda along with chaperones Keiji Gunji and Yuko Hirouchi will be staying with Palmer families from Sept 10th - Sept 18th.

Sister City Community Events

By Carla Swick & Heather Kelley

Sister City Community Event

Palmer Saroma Kai will be hosting a community event at the **Presbyterian Church in Palmer**

(713 S Denali St Palmer) on **Thursday, September 12.**

The event will start with a **potluck at 6:00pm** and include presentations and entertainment from Saroma and Palmer exchange students starting at 6:30pm.

If you would like to meet



Chihiro (see pg 1), visit with both Palmer and Saroma student delegations, and learn more about Saroma, please be sure to attend.

Everyone is welcome.



United Protestant Church
(Presbyterian) in Palmer

Second Saturday in September

Rumor has it that the Palmer Museum of History & Art's Second Saturday Art Walk in September is going to have a theme that revolves around the Palmer and Saroma Sister City relationship.

The Second Saturday Art Walk will be held on September 14th. "Like" the Palmer Museum of History & Art Facebook page to find out more details as the date gets closer.



Spring Comes Late to Saroma & Palmer

By Sean Holland & Heather Kelley

One of the things people in Saroma have in common with people in Palmer is the excitement of seeing a cold winter melt away into the green of spring. But spring took it's time in both Saroma & Palmer this year, with snowfall into mid-May for both towns. This resulted in many flowers blooming later than normal, including the Saroma cherry blossoms.



May snow in Saroma



May snow in Palmer

Language Corner

By Carla Swick

We welcome Chihiro Hatayama back with okaerinasai. These four common phrases are used both at home and work. Give it a try!

Tadaima	ただいま	I'm home. I'm back.
Okaerinasai	おかえりなさい	Welcome home. Welcome back.
Ittekimasu	いってきます	I'm leaving, but I'll be back (goodbye).
Itterasshai	いってらっしゃい	Farewell, but come back (goodbye).

Palmer to Saroma - Exchange Highlights

By Allyson Barker, Lily Hamacher, Margot Easter, & Kirsten Koivunen

In late June and early July of 2013, six students and two teachers visited Saroma. They spent twelve days attending school, participating in activities, and living with Japanese host families. Below are some of their highlights.

Allyson Barker PHS 10th Grade

While in Japan for the sister city exchange I learned, experienced, and enjoyed a different way of life. I found things that my host family and I could find common ground on, such as Othello (Japanese chess), music, and a shared interest in all things sweet. On the other hand, there were many things I had to learn through trial and error, like my American butchering of the Japanese language, and taking my shoes off in public places like the library, the school, and in some restaurants. Of course there was also the fact that I had to overcome my ineptness with chopsticks, but after the two weeks of non-stop use I can safely say that they are no longer an enemy of mine.

One of my fondest memories of the trip was when my host father took my 'brother' Yuto, Cassidy, Chihiro (CJ's 'sister'), and I to an international toy museum. It was like a flashback to early childhood seeing (and in some places even being able to play with) toys that were thick with nostalgia for everyone involved regardless of age or nationality. This is only one of the many memories I have to

treasure from this trip, and I know that if I could do it again I wouldn't change a thing.

Lily Hamacher PJMS 8th Grade

I had the chance to work at the Saroma 100km Ultra Marathon race in June. I must say it was one of my favorite memories. We gave out (and ate) lemons and oranges and got to pour ice water on tired and strong runners. It was one of my favorite experiences in Saroma, and I am missing the town more and more by the day. It showed how hard working the people of Japan are, and every single one of them stopped to say thank you.

Margot Easter PHS Teacher/Chaperone

When I first arrived in Saroma, Japan, I expected a culture shock but nothing of the sort happened. I actually felt like I had never left Palmer. I was welcomed to the beautiful little town just like I was welcomed to Palmer when I first moved there five years ago. Without a doubt Saroma is a sister to Palmer and Saroma's inhabitants' kindness and generosity will have a lifelong impact on our Palmer delegation.

On our way back to Alaska our last stop at was at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, which reminded us how important it is to cherish this valuable friendship. The Palmer-Saroma relationship reaches far beyond what we

would think and if only more countries could follow this example we would without a doubt have a lower rate of conflicts in between countries.

Kirsten Koivunen PJMS Teacher/Chaperone

The Palmer delegation received such a warm welcome from Saroma. Throughout our stay we were surrounded by smart, active students, friendly, dedicated staff and genuine, hard working host families and townspeople. When I was not engaged in well planned lessons at the schools with students, I was able to explore parts of beautiful Saroma and surrounding areas.

Some highlights were camping with the locals at Lake Kanayama, dipping my toes in remarkable Sunayo, and experiencing some delicacies for the first time, such as jellyfish and scallops right out of the shell. There are too many unique experiences to mention, but one thing is for sure, my gracious hosts, Sean and Yoshie Holland, made sure my time in Saroma was unforgettable.



Allyson & Yuto Honda



Lily volunteers at Saroma 100km



Kirsten, Margot, and Yoshie

*"...if I could do it again
I wouldn't change
a thing."*

Allyson Barker



Palmer Exchange Students at the Anchorage Airport - (l to r) Lily Hamacher (PJMS - 8th), Rowan Porter (PJMS - 8th), Allyson Barker (PHS - 10th), Cassidy Jeffers (PHS - 10th), Monica Scott (PJMS - 8th), and Chad Cunningham (PJMS - 8th).

Palmer to Saroma - Exchange Photos



News From Saroma

By Sean Holland

Saroma Facebook Page

Saroma Town has an official Facebook Page! Finally entering the age of social media, the town's public affairs department has started a Facebook page, which they update regularly with photos and other information about events in town. The ALT will be periodically translating some of the more pertinent posts into English, so please "like" the page and keep up to date with all of the daily news from Saroma!

Construction and Repairs

Saroma's population continues to decline, but the town itself is beginning to see a bit of revitalization and renewal in its facilities and infrastructure.

- The town gymnasium received a resurfacing of its outer wall and structural reinforcing for earthquake safety.

- The town hall is having the outer walls redone, with scaffolding covering most of the

exterior.

- A local izakaya, Nidaime received a complete remodel inside. To celebrate their grand re-opening back in April, they had half-priced beer for an entire week!

- A home improvement chain store, Yellow Glove, opened a brand-new store in Saroma. It's the first chain store other than 7-11 to move into Saroma.

- A solar power plant is currently being built at the site of the old Wakasa Elementary School. It will have a maximum capacity of 1.3 megawatts, enough to power 270 homes.

Health Care

Additionally, Saroma will also be losing all of its health care facilities next March, as both the Saroma Kosei Clinic (formerly a full hospital) and Oda Clinic will be closing their doors. In response, the town has made an agreement with a medical corporation based out

of Sendai, Keishoukai Medical, to operate a new clinic in town, to be called "Clinic Saroma." It will begin operations in the current building that houses Saroma Kosei clinic, but ground will be broken on a brand new facility as soon as possible after. It will employ two full time doctors and have 19 beds available for in-patient care.

I welcome this news - a state of the art facility will be better equipped to provide services to the population. Many people in Saroma are forced to use hospitals an hour away, in Engaru or Kitami. A few years ago when I was stung by a hornet and my head swelled up, we had to drive to Engaru just to get it looked at. In December, when my wife Yoshie came down with a violent and sudden bug, Saroma Kosei Clinic didn't have the proper testing equipment and couldn't tell us what it was - we had to drive to Engaru for them to tell us it was norovirus.



Solar Plant Ground Breaking



Saroma Facebook Page



Scaffolding at City Hall



Saroma High School won a Gold Award and Saroma Jr High won a Silver Award at the August brass band competition. Awesome! Saroma High School will be attending the all Hokkaido competition next. Good Luck!

"Music can change the world because it can change people."

Bono

Cultural Corner

By Sean Holland

Setsubun (節分, Bean-Throwing Festival or Bean-Throwing Ceremony)

This February 3rd holiday traditionally marks the beginning of spring in ancient Japan, similar to groundhog day in the US.

While February is still deep winter in Hokkaido, the day is still celebrated by throwing unshelled peanuts at people dressed up as **oni**, or demons.

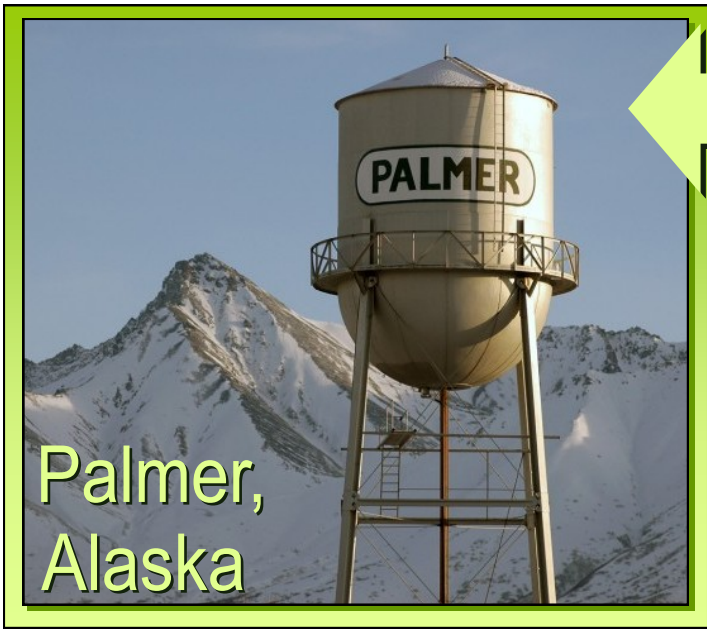
The name literally means "seasonal division", but usu-

ally the term refers to the Spring Setsubun.

This special "bean throwing" ritual cleanses away all the evil of the former year and drives away disease-bringing evil spirits for the year to come.



An oni at Saroma Preschool for Setsubun.



Palmer,
Alaska



Saroma,
Japan

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 or by phone 907-775-0807.

Your comments, suggestions, and constructive feedback are welcome!