

Contents**(1) Notices**

- Becoming an OFIX Volunteer!
- Seeking Short Notice Language Volunteers!

(2) Osaka International Club News

OFIX Scholarship Students Graduation Reports

- Shen Heyun (China)
- Ivy Ang (Malaysia)
- Estelle Thouverez (France)

(3) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

- Manner Mode

(4) OFIX Programme Reports

- Medical Interpreting Skills Improvement Training

(5) OFIX International Student Hall News

- Introduction to Sakai International Hall
Christoph Mittmann (Germany)
- Seeking Residents at the Sakai International Hall!

(6) OFIX Network

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
Recruiting JICA Volunteers

(1) Notices**Becoming an OFIX Volunteer!**

OFIX operates this system to enable citizens of Osaka to further international understanding and contribute to international cooperation. There are three types of volunteer:

1. Host Family

Foreigners are welcomed to the volunteers home, where they learn about Japanese culture and everyday life.

Most visits are either a one night stay, or a daytrip, making it easy for those new to this type of activity to take part.

2. Language Volunteers

Interpreting or translating services offered to assist foreign residents.

3. Culture Volunteers

Volunteers assist in cultural activities (kimono, tea

ceremony events etc), and at international exchange events at schools.

By becoming an OFIX volunteer you can learn about foreign cultures, and help to support foreign residents in Osaka. For information on registering see the OFIX homepage (details in Japanese only)

http://www.ofix.or.jp/boran/index3_1.html

**Seeking Short Notice Language Volunteers!**

Last August we recruited a group of language volunteers, to act as short notice interpreters and translators in times of urgency. We were delighted to have 36 people sign up, and they have since been involved in activities such as translating the Osaka Prefecture website, and interpreting at symposiums.

We are currently looking to recruit some extra volunteers

to assist with the following languages:

Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Thai, Filipino, and others as required.

Number of volunteers required: 3 ~ 5 people per language.

Further details (Japanese only):

<http://www.ofix.or.jp/news.html#sokuji>

Shen Heyun (China)

My name is Shen Heyun, from China. I came to Japan in October 2005, and began my masters course at Osaka University in April 2006. I am so grateful to OFIX for supporting me over the past two years.



Thanks to OFIX I was able to take part in lots of fun international exchange events, all of which have given me so many happy memories. I love children so much, which made the school visits a real highlight for me. The kids all took such an interest in my introduction to China, and I really felt I had contributed in some small way towards friendship relations between Japan and China. One thing I will never forget is the moment I received written feedback from one of the

Ivy Ang (Malaysia)

Hi everyone, my name is Ivy, from Malaysia. I have just graduated after two years of study. I could not have done so without the help and support of all at the Osaka Foundation of International Exchange. Looking back my time here has been full of laughter as well as the odd tear. I will treasure the memories I have of times spent with friends, supporting each other through good times and difficult ones. I could not have got to where I am without the kindness of the people of Osaka, and those that helped me over the last year with my research. Osaka has really become like a second home to me. Thanks to OFIX I also had the chance to take part in many fun and rewarding events. In particular taking part in the Tenjin Festival and meeting the Governor of

Estelle Thouverez (France)



My name is Estelle Thouverez, I'm French and my hometown is Paris. I just finished my masters course in chemistry at Osaka Prefecture University. I have spent almost three years in Japan.

I was very busy much of the time with lab work, but spent whatever free time I had travelling around Japan. I was able to visit many places such as Tokyo, Sapporo, Nara, Kobe, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Okinawa. One of the places I like the most is Osaka, because it is so close to other cultural cities, and to the sea. Osaka is a big city where I had lots of fun with my friends going shopping.

schools. I was so happy I nearly cried. The feedback was full of comments such as "I got all of the true/false questions right!", and "I looked up the cartoon Shen mentioned and found out it's name!", which made me so happy.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of OFIX for organizing so many great events. Whether it be taking part in the Tenjin Festival, a fish auction festival in Sakai, or trying my hand at bamboo cutting, all of the activities were such fun.

I was lucky enough to be accepted as a recipient of the Research Fellowship for Young Scientists for the coming year, but I very much hope to continue to take part in international exchange events, and contribute towards friendship between Japan and Japan. I also hope to use my 5 years experience of living in Osaka to assist newcomers here from abroad.

Osaka, and acting as a speaker at the International Student Forum organized by OFIX were great experiences. Taking part in events such as a disaster prevention training event for international students also gave me a further insight into life in Japan, and enabled me to lead a fulfilling life here. I intend to continue my studies here with a PhD course, and therefore hope to further my close friendship ties with the people of Osaka. Once again, thank you all so much.



Osaka is also full of culture, the centre of which is the castle.

I could never have spend these three years in Osaka without the financial support of OFIX. Thanks to OFIX I had the opportunity to meet a lot of different people, such as students with an interest in France. I was able to discuss things with them, and listen to their points of view. I also met people who were learning French, and had been to France in the past. For me the most interesting thing was discussing the differences between our two countries. It was a great opportunity to understand Japan better, and appreciate it even more. Although I haven't decided what to do in the future, I would to find a job which allows me to work with France and Japan.

(3) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

Manner Mode

Hi everyone, Richard here again.

Although I have been in Japan for a few years now, and do my best to blend in on a daily basis, I am sure there are things that I do which are considered weird, if not plain rude. Japan has a reputation as a society focused on politeness, and as such, I would say a large number of visitors to Japan come here with worries about not doing the 'right' things, and offending people.

So I thought that this month I would say a few words about manners in the UK and Japan. The first thing most visitors to Japan come across is the custom of taking off one's shoes when entering a house. After 6 years of living here I am proud to say I am just about used to this one! Although the looks of horror I received when I used to forget still keep me awake at night every now and then! In the UK many people take their shoes off and pop slippers on when in the house. However, a big difference with Japan is that it is considered rude to wear slippers or have no shoes on when guests are visiting your house.

Another thing I remember my mother being worried about when visiting Japan was not blowing her nose in public. I think she had read somewhere that it is considered the height of rudeness. Anyway, I certainly have never found this the case, but if it is true it makes the endless distribution of tissues here rather ironic! On a related topic, I still find it strange that if someone sneezes here no one says a word. In the UK it is rude not say "bless you".

Eating and drinking is the most fascinating area for differences in manners. Although I try and live by the phrase "When in Rome, do as the Romans", I still find it hard not to revert back to my western ways! For starters I still can't quite bring myself to make slurping noises when eating noodles. The noise of everyone around you slurping can be quite deafening sometimes, but I pride myself on never making a sound! Lifting plates and saucers to the mouth is also the norm here, but frowned upon in the UK. Eating and drinking in the streets and on public transport is very rarely seen in Japan, and something that the UK would do well to emulate!

Speaking of public transport one rather embarrassing thing the UK and Japan has in common is the lack of courtesies shown to the elderly and disabled. It always shocks me how everyone pretends to be asleep when someone quite obviously in need of a seat gets on the train here. I suppose the very fact that both countries require priority seating in the first place shows that levels of courtesies are not what they should be.

Of course cultural differences come into play with things such as slurping noodles, or taking shoes off, but I don't believe things such as the common courtesy of holding a door open for someone or offering a seat on a train can be so easily brushed aside. In both the UK and Japan keeping quiet is the social norm. Speaking up to offer someone a seat is for some people rather embarrassing. In my opinion not speaking up and doing the right thing is far more embarrassing.

(4) OFIX Programme Reports

Medical Interpreting Skills Improvement Training

This training was held as part of OFIX's drive to support foreign residents when receiving medical treatment in Osaka. The training took place on the Sunday 7th March, with 44 people taking part, many of whom are already active as medical interpreters. Matters discussed included current trends in medical interpreting, medical and welfare services, and general advice on interpreting.

There was also a group workshop during

which participants shared advice and know-how, as well as discussed matters to be aware of when interpreting.

The questionnaires that participants filled in after the training were full of comments such as "the training gave a real insight into how to go about solving problems that may arise", and "it was a great opportunity to share ideas and learn new things". All in all the training proved of great benefit to all that took part.



Seminar

Group Work

Group Work Presentation

(5) OFIX International Student Hall News

Introduction to Sakai International Hall

Christoph Mittmann (Germany)

Hello everyone, my name is Christoph Mittmann. I am a postgraduate student at Hamburg University in Germany. From October of last year I have been studying at Osaka City University, and am currently a resident at the Orion International House, which is run by OFIX.

There are many international students living in Orion International House, so I have managed to make many friends. We have lots of fun playing games, going to karaoke, and on daytrips together. For example, we recently went to the Hachimangu Shrine in Nakamozu, and watched a Sumo practice session. After watching the practice session in the morning, we then had lunch together with the wrestlers. It was a great once in a lifetime experience.

At Christmas time most residents at Orion were spending their first Christmas Eve abroad. In Germany most people spend Christmas Eve with their family and not with their friends. But at Orion

we had a great time eating and drinking.

Of course there have been some difficulties adjusting to life in Japan. However, thanks to the support of the caretaker at Orion, and the kindness of the staff of OFIX, all problems have been solved. I can highly recommend life at Orion for international students.



At a party at Sakai International Hall (Christoph, back row, left)

● Seeking Residents at Sakai International Hall!
Further Information

<http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/shien/index.html>

(5) OFIX Network

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Recruiting JICA Volunteers

This is a government run volunteer programme led by JICA. It gives volunteers a chance to utilize their skills to assist in developing countries, and promote mutual understanding. The programme lasts for 1 or 2 years.

■ Applicant Requirements

· Youth Volunteers: 20-39 years of age, with Japanese citizenship

<http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/jocv/>

· Senior Volunteers 40-69 years of age, with Japanese citizenship

<http://www.jica.go.jp/activities/sv/>

■ Application Period

1st April-17th May 2010

Information sessions to be held across Japan. Further details (Japanese only):

<http://www.jica.go.jp/osaka/enterprise/volunteer/>

Enquiries: JICA Osaka TEL 072-641-6904

JICA Homepage: <http://www.jica.go.jp/>

Osaka Prefectural Government E-Newsletter 『GEO (Global E-net Osaka)』

Full of information about events in Osaka, and fun facts about the area.

<http://www.pref.osaka.jp/kokusai/geo/index.html>

Other Notices

- Donations for Osaka exhibition at 2010 Shanghai Expo: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/news.html#syanghai>
- Information for foreign residents in Osaka <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/life/index.html>
- Japan Times (English language newspaper) now available to read at OFIX Plaza!

Comments and suggestions for OFIX News: info@ofix.or.jp

Osaka International Club Reports: clubnews@ofix.or.jp

Register to OFIX News: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/mail/index.html>

OFIX News Back Numbers: <http://www.ofix.or.jp/english/mail/backnumber.html>

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