

Contents

(1) Activity Report

- 1-Day Information Service for Foreigners
- The 3rd anniversary of Air Pusan Kansai International Airport service (Japan-Korea High School Exchange)
- Kansai International Volunteer Network (KIV-Net)

(2) Intern Report

- The Nationwide Latvian Song and the Dance Festival

(3) Foreigner Support from the Local Community

- Making Difference the Community's Wealth-Creation of a Global -Aged Community in Mino City-

(4) Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents

- Foreigners Starting a Business (2)

(5) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

- English Study in the Philippines

(1) Activity Report

■ 1-Day Information Service for Foreigners

On June 9, 2013 (Sunday) from 11:00 AM-5:00 PM, the 22nd "1-Day Information Service" for Foreigners was held at Osaka International House Foundation.

At the event, consultation on the subjects of law, human rights, immigration and visas, labor, work, pension and health insurance, daily life, city administration, taxes, medical and dental topics, medicines, education, child rearing, and other topics were provided with the Chief Counselor of OFIX providing consultation and information on other general life concerns.

21 interpreter volunteers were dispatched and languages included English, Chinese, Korean,



Spanish, Portuguese, Indonesian, Thai, Filipino, and Vietnamese

123 people from 24 countries came and asked for

consultation. We would continue to deliver these kinds of services.

■ The 3rd anniversary of Air Pusan Kansai International Airport service (Japan-Korea High School Exchange)

OFIX, together with Air Pusan, supported by the New Kansai International Airport Co. Ltd. and Osaka Tourism Bureau held the "Japan-Korea High School Exchange Program" from June 10 (Monday) to June 13 (Thursday) inviting 10 high school students from Incheon, and a television crew and newspaper company from Pusan to Osaka for 4 days and 3 nights.

The high school students arrived at Kansai International Airport on June 10 (Monday) and participated in the Kansai International Airport Tour Plan. They gave a presentation about their career plan and after their class, they went around observing high school clubs.

On June 11 (Tue.), in the morning, the students paid a courtesy visit to the Mr. Ooshita, Director General of the Osaka Promotion Bureau, and later listened to an English presentation about the attractions of Osaka given by the Osaka Promotion Bureau staff. At lunch, there was a reception to welcome Consul-General Lee of the Consulate General of South Korea. After the reception, the students were escorted by OFIX Home stay Volunteers and enjoyed a 2-day 1 night home stay. On June 12 (Wed.) they returned to the hotel and experienced eating at a "conveyor belt" sushi bar for dinner.



(Courtesy visit with Director-General Ooshita)

On June 13 (Thurs.), the students went on a tour of Osaka going to Kaiyukan, Santa Maria Cruise and eating Kushikatsu for lunch.

Everyone fully enjoyed the culture and food of Osaka and were very satisfied. Each one had hopes of becoming a future bridge between Japan and Korea and vowing to come back to Osaka and study in Osaka in the future as they returned home on their Air Pusan flight.

■ Kansai International Volunteer Network (KIV-NET) General Assembly

The 18th General Assembly of the Kansai International Volunteer Network (KIVE NET) was held last May 29 (Wednesday) at the Kyoto Prefectural International Center Meeting Room.

After the report on last year's activities and discussion on this year's plan of activities, the Japan-Asian Friendship Society (JAFS) and Kyoto Prefectural International Center gave a report of activities, after which, a discussion about the

mailing list and discussed how information can be shared through the mailing list and how activities could be more invigorated.

KIV-NET is a network established with the holding of the APEC Osaka, which has given support to international events in Kansai through language volunteers. For organizations that wish to join the network, please contact OFIX.

(2) Intern Report

■ The Nationwide Latvian Song and the Dance Festival

Hello! My name is Signe Zaharka and I am an intern at OFIX from June to August under the internship program of Kansai University of Foreign Studies.



I would like to take the chance to introduce a cultural phenomenon that plays a significant role in the history of my home country Latvia. Before that, a few words about Latvia as this may probably be the first time for many people to hear about this small state in Northern Europe. Latvia is located in the heart of the Baltic States between Estonia in the North and Lithuania in the South. It is most famous for its beautiful untouched beaches on the shore of the Baltic Sea and vast forests, which takes up more than half of the country's territory, giving Latvia the nickname "the green country". Once in every five years a Nationwide Song and Dance Festival is held in Latvia and attracts the attention of the international community. It just so happens that the festival will be this summer in the week between June 30 and July 7.

The tradition originated in 1873 when the Latvian Association based in Riga, now the capital of Latvia, organized the first Latvian Song Festival in order to give the Latvians a feeling of unity and popularize the idea of an independent Latvian state. The festival gained momentum and was celebrated throughout the whole country even during the times of Latvia's subjugation to the Russian Empire, the short-lived German Baltic Duchy and the period of Soviet rule, except during the time of World War II. In 1948, for the first time in the history of the festival, the members of the choirs were joined by Latvian folk dance troupes and the celebration got its current name. Even though the goal of creating a sovereign state set out by the Latvian Association had long been achieved, the tradition has become so deeply embedded in Latvian culture that it continues to retain a special place in the hearts of the people. The

importance of the festival has also been acknowledged by its inclusion in the list of intangible culture heritage masterpieces by UNESCO in 2003. Since its birth 140 years ago, the summer festival has become a tradition without which the existence of a Latvian nation would be unimaginable.

The special meaning of the festival is illustrated by the enthusiasm with which Latvian people still participate in traditional dance troupes and choirs. Many consider it an honor to take part in and train fiercely for the tryouts of an event as big as the Nationwide Song and Dance Festival. However, it is not that easy to be chosen as a participant in the festival. The candidates have to compete against one another and undergo a long process of evaluation, which is why many parents choose to enroll their children into folk dance groups or choirs from an early age. Furthermore, the competitions do not stop when the candidates are chosen to participate in the event. The tournaments go on and at the end of the festival the best dancers and singers in the country receive awards. It is estimated that this year's festival will have a record high number of 40,000 participants.

Aside from the members of choirs and dancers, musicians, masters of folk art, brass bands, players of kokle, a traditional Latvian musical instrument, and troupes of amateur actors will also be making an appearance in the festival. This year as many as 60 different events have been planned. Most notable are the choir concerts, where more than 360 traditional folk songs will be performed a cappella, exhibitions and fairs of Latvian decorative art, and open-air dance performances, where the dancers will be recreating elaborate geometric ornaments used by tribal Latvians in the weaving of their clothes. The celebration traditionally culminates with a parade of native Latvian costumes and an open-air concert rumored to have the biggest number of singers in the world ending with the song "The Castle of Light", which even seen on television, is guaranteed not to leave a single dry eye.

For one week, the usually quiet historical streets of old town Riga will be bustling with activity due to all the performers flooding into the capital from every region of the country. No matter where one might be staying, one cannot help but be affected by the general feeling of excitement in the air, as the sound of the festival's participants singing and dancing can be heard everywhere in the city. The festival will definitely become a once in a lifetime experience for both the participants and its spectators,

so, if you are in the region, please visit Latvia. Although, it might not be possible to make it for this year's festival, there is more than enough time to get the tickets for the next festival which will take place in 2018 – the same year when the 100 year anniversary of the establishment of Latvia as an independent state will be celebrated. The festival of 2018 will most likely attract the biggest number of

participants and viewers yet, so do not miss out. If, by any chance, I have managed to peak your interest, please visit the official website of the festival: <http://www.dziesmusvetki.tv/>

(3) Foreigner Support from the Local Community

■ Making Difference the Community's Wealth-Creation of a Global -Aged Community in Mino City- Minoh Association for Global Awareness Project Chief Daisuke Kawai

If you go northward from Osaka City along Highway 423 (Midosuji), you will reach a beautiful green mountain range. The population is about 130,000. Since its development in the 1970's, it has developed into a commuter town for those working in central Osaka. In May 2013, the Multicultural Center of Minoh City opened at the Eastern part of the city. The Minoh Association for Global Awareness (hereinafter, the Association) believes that this center should be a base for community internationalization and has been active conducting activities to achieve this.



Opening Event
Dragon dance by Vietnam students

There are 2,220 residents of foreign nationalities living in the city. Although the population ratio is 1.7% and is almost the same as the national average, the number of nationalities goes up to 89 countries and regions (as of April 2013). A big factor for this is that there are many international students of the 3 campuses of Osaka University within and nearby the city, who are living there with their families. On the other hand, the resident background is also diverse with the so-called special permanent residents and general permanent residents making up 40 percent of the entire population, and those with working visas and other residence status account for about twenty percent.

The Association sees two aspects of this diversity. One aspect is the difficulty of this diversity. Even though there are foreigners who are in the same situation, it is difficult for them to meet with each other within the community. Another aspect is the possibility of producing a special feature and abundance not found in other communities where people of different cultural backgrounds can meet. Based on these two aspects, "Creation of a support system which can respond to every individual" and "Creation of a project which produces abundance from diversity" are the two big missions of the

Association's activities.

One project for "Creating a support system" is the Daily Living Consultation Project. Every Tuesday from 11:30 to 2:30 in the afternoon, the Association provides consultation services regarding daily living in three languages: Japanese, English and Korean. On the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, consultations in Bahasa Indonesia and Filipino are also conducted in addition to the 3 languages. However, there is a difficulty of people coming to the Center as it is a community where you need a car to get around. In that sense, it is important to collaborate with schools and other institutions in the area. Especially these few years, by cooperating with the personal support projects, which is conducted by NPO's in the city as a model project of the Cabinet Office, and conducting close quarter and cross-system support, we were able to continuously provide support until a solution was achieved for some cases. This project ended in 2012 as a national model project, but we are thinking of presenting a project that would have to be considered in the future as a model for areas where there are few foreign residents.

Next, for the "Producing abundance from diversity" project, we have conducted projects, such as "Let's learn about the world through games and language", where foreign residents become teachers and teach children of the community about their country's culture and language, and the community café project, where international exchange is promoted by having foreigners, who cannot work or participate in society because of their poor Japanese proficiency, as chefs and they introduce cuisines from their countries. In these projects, Association personnel need to have planning skills for matching the experience and skills of the foreign residents with the needs of the local residents, and coordination skills to facilitate community participation and mutual understanding and not let the project end as a mere consumption of culture. However, it can be said that the participation of the foreign resident in the projects is much more needed.

Since 2008, the Association has been promoting the creation of a group of foreign residents who would give lectures and talk about their experience at the local schools. Even in the Community Café Project, the Association is trying to produce a group of foreigners independent from the Association who would lead and collaborate with the Association in implementing the project. This group creation promotes the aggressive participation of the foreign residents, and has also produced the naive sympathy and support among the participating

foreigners, something which cannot be covered by the association personnel.

Unfortunately, tasks do not end there. The Association does not meet eye to eye with groups who have a different stand and there is the difficulty of creating a group due to having members of various

cultural and social backgrounds. We still have a big hurdle ahead of us, but we believe that “the product of the project is not in the outcome, but in the process” and with the power of the personnel of the Association and the volunteers, we will continue our activities by trial and error.

(4) Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents

■ Foreigners Starting a Business (2)

In last month’s issue, we talked about the types of businesses, business activities and permits. These are related to starting a business and it is the same for both the Japanese and the foreigner. This month, we will be talking about residential status and it is an important topic for foreigners who are going to start a business. This is because the residential status limits the activities a foreigner can do in Japan. If you will be investing and opening a new business in Japan or you will be investing in an existing company and be managing it, an “Investor/Business Manager” visa is the right visa. In the case of an overseas company opening a subsidiary or branch office in Japan, or a foreigner who has a working visa and would want to be independent and start a business of his own, or an international student who would put up a new business would need to get this visa. The standard

for approval is “Reservation of a place of business” and “Business continuity”. More specifically, it would be required to have a facility that will be used as the office, to employ more than 2 full time staff and to continually maintain a 5 million yen investment.

©Osaka Information Service for Foreign Residents
(Mon-Fri, not open on weekends and national holidays) (Hours 9:00-17:30)
Tel (direct line) 06-6941-2297
E-mail: jouhou-c@ofix.or.jp
Languages: English, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Vietnamese, Filipino, Thai, Japanese

(5) OFIX Coordinator for International Relations Report

■ English Study in the Philippines

Hello, everyone! This is your International Relations Coordinator Alvin. Summer is almost here. Are you all looking forward to it? You’re probably already making plans for summer. Where would you be spending it? Maybe some people would like to study while they enjoy summer. For this issue, I will talk about English study in the Philippines.

For those who say, “I’d like to study English, but the classes are expensive”, why don’t you study English overseas? There are probably some people who would say, “What? But won’t it cost more if you study overseas?” However, if it’s the Philippines, studying overseas is cheap. Recently, the Philippines has gained the reputation of being a country to offer the cheapest English education. Because of that, people from many countries who come to the Philippines to study English are increasing. Though of course prices differ according to the school, a 72-hour 1-month course would cost about 30,000 yen. It’s almost the same amount for online courses. Nowadays, you can learn English through skype and 1 hour costs about 500 yen.

What about living in the Philippines? If you’re going to rent a room, that would cost about 12,000-15,000 yen. If you

are not luxurious with food, you can have a day’s meal for about 1,000 yen. (In Japan, a day’s meal would probably be around 2,000 yen.)If you will include other expenses, everything would be about 90,000 yen for 1 month. If you are flying from Kansai International Airport, you can use Cebu Pacific or Jet Star and a round trip ticket would only cost from about 20,000-30,000 yen.

Studying in the Philippines is not only cheap. You can actually use the English that you have studied and you can enjoy yourself in-between classes. English schools are not only in Manila. There are also many English schools in Cebu, which is a tourist spot. So on days when you have no classes, you can go to the beach or go diving. If you are concerned about safety, there are Japanese companies that take care of the necessary services from picking you up from the airport to providing accommodation (The fees would be slightly higher, though).

For 110,000 yen, you can study English + go on an overseas vacation for 1 month. And the wonderful Filipino people that you will meet and memories that you will make: Priceless!! How about going to study English in the Philippines this summer?

- © 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>

Distributed by Osaka Foundation of International Exchange
5th Floor, My Dome Osaka, 2-5 Hommachi-bashi, Chuo-ku, Osaka-shi, 540-0029
TEL:06-6966-2400 FAX:06-6966-2401 Homepage: <http://www.ofix.or.jp>

