

*Originally published in Greenwich Time 10/19/2005*

Japanese School reputation is wrongly impugned

To the editor:

Regarding the Oct. 7 Greenwich Time story, "Bias accusations dog Japanese School sale": I am writing in response to the allegations of anti-Semitism made against the Japanese school.

I moved to this country 20 years ago from Japan, where anti-Semitism is an unknown concept. We settled in Greenwich in summer of 1991, and my daughter spent all her school years from kindergarten to high school in the Greenwich Public Schools. During our stay here in Greenwich, I have observed and often helped with various community and cultural activities organized by the Japanese School, which relocated from New York around the same time our family came here. To me, the abovementioned article raises groundless accusations for Japanese people living in this town who are continuously trying to be good citizens in the community.

Let me explain some of the activities devoted by the Japanese School Parent-Teacher Association to the community. From the time of the opening of the Japanese School, the school has been participating the semi-annual townwide clean-ups organized by Greenwich Green & Clean. During the annual SeptemberFest organized by the United Way, it has been actively involved as a member of the Japanese volunteer group. Parents and teachers run a bazaar and other activities such as introducing traditional Japanese games. Children of the Japanese School spend their recess time to practice traditional Japanese dances in order to perform the same at the SeptemberFest. These activities have been widely appreciated by people in the community. (Each year, all profits from the bazaar are donated to the United Way of Greenwich and the Board of Education).

In addition, the wives of Japanese School teachers and the mothers of the students engage in the activities including "Adopt-A-Shelf" (organizing books in the Greenwich Library), "Sakura" (the group regularly visits nursing homes in the town) and operation of the Japan Education Center, whose purpose is introducing Japanese culture.

The term for the teachers of the Japanese School is about three years. During such a short period, and despite their important roles to educate children under the environment much different from home, they gladly contribute their time and effort to the community. By the same token, Japanese families, mostly expatriates who do not know when they are going back to Japan, do the same in order to return the benefits they receive from the community, because they truly appreciate the privileges that the town of Greenwich

provides. I simply wish more people in the community would become aware of their sincere efforts.

As a fellow Japanese citizen living in this community, I am proud of these volunteer activities of the teachers and families of the Japanese School.

Although Japanese are generally known to be modest, and it is often difficult for us to speak up, the allegation of anti-Semitism is completely unfounded, and I felt that it is necessary to make sure that the people in the community hear our voice this time.

Keiko A. Kato

Liaison