



FIRST STEPS

In 1995, Mayor Richard Stark and City Manager Randy Humphrey of St. Johns were approached with the idea of forming an informal sister city relationship with Kosei-cho, in Shiga Japan. This proposal was made by

Susumu Ninagawa, an exchange teacher from Shiga, who was in Clinton County for a year. He knew of the thriving sister city relationship between DeWitt and Konan-cho, and he thought St. Johns might like a similar opportunity. Jenny McCampbell, who worked closely with Ninagawa, said that she would be willing to form a committee to support the concept if the city wanted to pursue the idea.



The city commissioners agreed to pursue the idea with no commitments made. In July 1995, Jenny traveled to Shiga Prefecture as a chaperone for twenty high school students in the Michigan-Shiga Student Exchange Program. She met with the mayor and other city officials of Kosei-cho, who welcomed her very graciously and showed her all around their beautiful city. They also sent gifts back with her presented by Kosei's mayor and school superintendent to the mayor and school superintendent of St. Johns.

The following spring two officials from Kosei visited St. Johns, along with their interpreter; gifts were exchanged with the mayor and city manager, and they met with members of the city council for a breakfast meeting at the Oakland Place. Both sides agreed at that time that an informal sister city relationship would be nice to have. Following that, a group of two teachers and an interpreter came, staying with St. Johns educators Gerry and Patty Congleton, Gretchen Baarman and Jenny McCampbell. The following fall 13 teachers from Kosei-cho came for about 5 days to observe our school system.



EXCHANGING ART

As a result of those visits, an art exchange program between elementary and middle schools was started and continues to operate each year. St. Johns sends 75 elementary student works and 25 middle school works to Kosei-cho in December.



Kosei displays these along with student works by their students in the town library. Both sets of pictures then come to St. Johns in February to be displayed at the Briggs Library.

VISITORS FROM KOSEI-CHO

St. Johns has received Kosei-cho citizens for three different Goodwill Missions. In 1996 the Japanese were hosted by Ben and Bette Munger, Jon and Elaine Rise, and Jenny and Gary McCampbell. In 1998 the citizens were hosted by Peg and Dave Lehnen, Gerry and Patty Congleton and Arlene and Al Lounds.



In 2000 the host families were Pam & Pat Walsh, Rita & Bill Miller and Leann & Bill Smith. Each time the Kosei citizens spent about 5 days in St. Johns with their host families. During each of those stays, the citizens were given a tour of the city by the city manager; a tour of the schools by the assistant superintendent; and were invited to the Rotary Club for lunch.

Gifts were exchanged between the citizens and the mayor/city council, with the city manager and with the superintendent of schools. Additionally for the past two Goodwill Missions, the city of St. Johns has sponsored a reception for the delegates and their host families at the library; this has included a tree-planting ceremony in an area behind the library.



ST. JOHNS CITIZENS VISIT KOSEI-CHO

There are fewer St. Johns citizens who have visited Kosei-cho. Jenny McCampbell made a return visit in 1997, again when she was chaperoning the statewide high school student exchange program. In

1999 Leanna Rosekrans, an area teacher from St. Johns, visited Kosei-cho as part of the Goodwill Mission. Unfortunately within a few months after her trip Leanna moved away from St. Johns to be married.

During the school year 1999-2000 Gerry Congleton, a teacher at St. Johns Middle School, was selected to be one of four teachers the state of Michigan sent to Shiga for four months as exchange teachers. Gerry spent that time in Kosei-cho because of the sister city relationship. One other visitor from St. Johns to Kosei was Guven Witteveen, who grew up in St. Johns and has spent several years in Japan as an adult with his wife and children. He speaks Japanese well, and works for the Asian Studies Center at MSU. He made a special visit to Kosei-cho while in the prefecture next-door on a project.



国際

in'tar-nāsh'ə-nəl
exchange

交流

CURRENT STATUS

The committee of St. Johns citizens promoting the sister city relationship is made up of Kathleen Beagle, Gerry Congleton, Jenny McCampbell, Larry Proctor, Jim Schultheiss, Pam Walsh, Guven Witteveen, with city manager Michael Cain ex-officio.



WHAT'S AHEAD?

- Continue the student art exchange.
- Continue the city reception of summer Goodwill Mission delegates.
- Explore the idea of a middle school student exchange program, like Dewitt.
- Promote a Japanese-style garden to include the city trees planted for the 1998 & 2000 visitors.
- Send a representative from the city on the 2003 Goodwill Mission, possibly through support by area service clubs and business associations.
- Expansion of the Sister City Committee.

CONTACTS

<http://www.msu.edu/~wittevee/kosei.htm> gives background & monthly feature from Kosei.

Shiga official in Lansing: shigaken@msu.edu or phone 517-373-2831

St. Johns committee members are available by phone.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We ask Area Service Clubs to consider a small (\$250) annual donation to support a representative of the City of St. Johns going to Kosei-cho every other year as part of the state's Goodwill Mission. The representative may be from city government, from community business or services. *Donations are tax deductible through the 501(c)3 "Clinton County Arts Council," 224-2429, at 102 N. Clinton Ave.* The sister city committee will award the grant.

LINKING ST. JOHNS INTERNATIONALLY

~ OUR SISTER CITY IN JAPAN, KOSEI-CHO ~

For over 30 years the state of Michigan and the prefecture of Shiga, Japan have had an active sister state relationship. Governor Engler has been especially keen. In March 2002 he established a commissioner on *Asia Education in Michigan schools*, since future prosperity lies across the Pacific.



A popular form that the sister state arrangement takes is the Goodwill Mission. Late in July each year a group of citizens travels across the ocean: about 100 Shiga citizens come to Michigan for two weeks on the even numbered years, with about 60 Michigan going to Shiga on odd numbered years. So far there are around 20 places in Michigan that have sister cities in Shiga. Goodwill Mission delegates come from these places, although people can apply from anywhere in the state.

Homestay hosts in 2002 will be for July 28-31.