

KEEP In Touch Abroad



The Sister-City/Region Program between Berea, Richmond, Madison County and Hokuto City, Japan began as a sister city between Takane, Japan and Berea, Kentucky in 1988. This relationship grew to a regional program - what may be the only one of this type in the world! The program started from the workings of a Kentucky man - Dr. Paul Rusch. He committed himself to the Yatsugatake region and started the Kiyosato Educational Experiment Project (KEEP). Through this program, Dr. Rusch brought agricultural development, improvements in health care and hygiene and a Christian church to the area. Dr. Rusch's efforts made him a legend in Yamanashi, Japan.

In 1986, Dr. Martha Conaway (a professor at Eastern Kentucky University) was serving a fellowship at KEEP. Mayor Masatami Shimizu of Takane was interested in developing a sister-city exchange with a Kentucky city in honor of Dr. Rusch. Dr. Conaway suggested Berea because of the similarities shared by the cities. The two areas have a similar agricultural base, are both mountainous, and their size and populations compare. Dr. Conaway presented the sister-city exchange to Berea City Council on behalf of Takane. Council members J. Randolph Osborne and Violet Farmer were intrigued with the idea as was the President of Berea College Dr. John B. Stephenson. In 1988, this idea became a reality when a Japanese delegation visited Berea. The Sister City Agreement was formalized and signed by Mayor Clifford Kerby and Mayor Shimizu of Takane. In October of the same year, a delegation of fifty-six people visited KEEP in Kiyosato. The delegation included the Berea delegation and high school musicians from Louisville, KY.

The Sister-City exchange expanded to a regional program in 1990 when other towns in the Yatsugatake Region expressed interest in the exchange. Nagasaka, Kobuchisawa and Oizumi combined with Takane. And Richmond and Madison County were added to Berea. The Sister-Region Agreement was formed. In 2003, the Japanese territorial system changed. Many smaller towns and villages merged into bigger cities. As a result, three of the Sister-City/Region towns/villages Takane, Nagasaka and Oizumi were merged with four other towns/villages – Sutama, Hakushu, Akeno and Mukawa to form Hokuto City. The town Kobuchisawa did not initially join the new merged city but remained actively in the program. However, in March 2006 Kobuchisawa also merged into Hokuto City. To acknowledge this new configuration in May 2006, a new International Sister-Region Agreement between Berea, Richmond, Madison County and Hokuto City was formed.

Each year since 1988, a delegation from Japan visits Madison County in May and a delegation from Madison County visits Japan in October. Unfortunately, the 2009 Japanese delegation did not visit as scheduled in May due to the H1N1 Virus pandemic. We await their visit later this year. The Japanese Delegation visit lasts five days. They lodge at the Boone Tavern Hotel. Their stay is hosted by the Committee and is financed by donations, the two primary donors being Berea College and Eastern Kentucky University. The Madison County Delegation visit lasts seven days. Their meeting always coincides with the Paul Rusch Festival – Yatsugatake County Fair sponsored by KEEP. In addition to the delegation, five craftspeople from Berea also make the trip each year.

The Sister-City/Region Program's purpose is to "endeavor to deepen friendship and mutual understanding between the two regions through educational, cultural, industrial and commercial exchanges, and to promote the welfare of the citizens of both regions, while embracing the firm belief that such objectives will strengthen the ties between Japan and America and contribute toward the peace and prosperity of the world."

In Japan, the program is administered by Hokuto City's mayor and legislative body. KEEP is their official coordinating agency. In Madison County this Sister-City Region program is administered by the Madison County International Committee, Inc., a nonprofit corporation managed by an all volunteer board of directors. The program is funded entirely upon contributions. To learn more about the program or make a contribution, contact Roger M. Oliver at (859)986-8468.

Madison County International Committee, Inc.
Board of Directors

J. Randolph Osborne
Violet Farmer
Jan Tunnell
Roger M. Oliver
George Clark
Marianne McAdam
Harold Kenton Botner
Robin New
Connie Lawson
Doug Whitlock
Steven Connelly
Charles Hoffmen



Japan is made-up of 47 Prefectures. Prefectures are governmental bodies larger than cities, towns and villages. The chief executive of each prefecture is a directly-elected governor. Each prefecture is further subdivided into cities and districts. Each district is further subdivided into towns and villages. The current system was established by the Meiji government in 1871 with the abolition of the Han system and establishment of the prefecture system. Initially there were over 300 prefectures; this number was reduced to 72 in the latter part of 1871 and to 47 in 1888.





Dr. Paul Frederick Rusch (1897-1979) was born in Fairmaunt, Indiana and grew up in Louisville, KY. He was twenty-seven years old when he first visited Japan to rebuild the YMCA Halls in Tokyo and Yokohama. In 1927, Dr. Rusch established a branch of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew (BSA) in Japan. He left Japan the next year; in his absence he raised funds for the St. Luke's International Hospital which was destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake. Dr. Rudolf B. Teusler (director of the hospital) and Rusch collected about \$3 million in donations to complete the hospital. Teusler's words inspired Rusch – *Do your best, and it must be first class* – and these words became Rusch's motto throughout his life.

The BSA planned to construct a training campground for young missionary leaders in Japan. Dr. Rusch chose Kiyosato as the site because of the breathtaking mountainous view. He successfully negotiated with Yamanashi Prefecture for buying an area of public property and began collecting funds. He requested funds by handwritten letters to thousands that relayed his wish to construct a farm community in Kiyosato, Japan upon the foundation of the Christian philosophy of prayer and service. The training camp was named "sei-sen-ryo" taking a Chinese character from both "Kiyosato" and "Oizumi". Reading this we must remember that Rusch was seeking financial donors at the brink of war when there were antagonistic feelings toward Japan. Sei-sen-ryo was finally completed in July 1938 when Rusch was forty years old. Rusch was deported in 1941 when the Pacific War broke out. At the end of WWII (1945) Rusch returned to Japan. In 1949, he started the Kiyosato Farm Village Center now known as KEEP. He completed facilities one after another including a church and an experimental farm for cold highland weather. Rusch also introduced American Football and Jersey cattle to the area.

Rusch did so much for the Kiyosato region and was not forgotten. His legend lives on through KEEP and the county fair.

KEEP

Kiyosato Educational Experiment Project (KEEP) is a community and economic development project rooted in Christian faith. The project developed from a Christian youth retreat center dedicated to teaching leadership skills. KEEP was founded on four ideals: Food, Health, Faith and Hope for Youth. KEEP's mission is to offer program participants and visitors "a new perspective, a stronger spirituality, a deeper cultural understanding, a richer appreciation for the ties that bind all people, and an opportunity to learn valuable agricultural, environmental and community building skills." The youth programs today at KEEP encompass all forms of agricultural and environmental education. Year round programming is designed for all age levels. Students at the primary, secondary, and university levels take part in programs on farming, the environment, and the care of livestock. More than 32,000 people participated in KEEP's educational programming last year and more than 1,000,000 people visit the KEEP's facility annually.



2009 Arts Alive Concert Series

August

Memorial Park
Big Bands/Brass Bands

FREE

July 31st- Colonial's Choice

August 7th-Andy Blyth
Kids Night

August 14th-Dan Brock & Friends

August 21st-Bluegrass Area Jazz Association

August 28th-Jay Flippen and Gordon Towell
Jazz Duo

Showtime 7pm-8:30pm

Rain Site: Berea Tourism Welcome Center 3

Call 986-9402 for more info!