

Japanese First Lady Presents 115 Books to LaGuardia Community College

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Long Island City, NY— October 10, 2014—Japanese Ambassador and Consul-General Sumio Kusaka this week presented LaGuardia Community College President Dr. Gail O. Mellow with over one hundred books to be used in LaGuardia’s Japanese language learning classes. The books and plaque were gifts from Japanese First Lady Madame Akie Abe in appreciation of the reception she received when she visited LaGuardia in September 2013

The Consul-General also gave President Mellow a baked clay plaque signed by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and etched with the calligraphy character of the word “Dream.”

From relief efforts undertaken by the College community on behalf of Japanese earthquake victims to its growing Japanese language program, LaGuardia Community College’s ties to Japan have been growing steadily since Japanese was offered as a major in Spring 2014. The books were the latest exchange between LaGuardia and Japan. In May, Ambassador Kusaka gave LaGuardia a commendation for establishing strong ties to Japan and establishing a Japanese studies program.

View photos from the event on LaGuardia’s Flickr photostream:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/laguardiacollege/sets/72157648165578899/>

“It is hoped that both gifts will inspire students here at LaGuardia Community College to continue their Japanese studies and love of Japan, and by doing so, this will bring our countries closer together,” the Consul-General said. “These gifts are also in recognition of

LaGuardia's College's excellent and extensive teaching of Japanese language, culture and history."

The 115-book collection included books for Japanese language learners, dictionaries, novels and Manga comics. Ambassador Kusaka said the gifts "are meant as sincere thanks from the First Lady for the warm hospitality shown to her when she visited here last September. First Lady Abe was very impressed by LaGuardia students, faculty and staff members for their passion to learn and teach about Japan. She hopes her donation of books can further the Japanese studies you undertake here."

Noting that she keeps the commendation the Consul-General presented to LaGuardia earlier this year in her office, Dr. Mellow accepted the gifts, which she said affirms LaGuardia's connection to Madame Abe, "a brilliant and exciting part of a new Japan, and the visionary leadership of her husband."

Dr. Mellow noted that the "Dream" etching in the Prime Minister's own hand "is very special and very moving to us, because for the students we have here at LaGuardia, the dream of being able to have education make a difference in their lives, and to be very rooted in the America but not lose some of the Japanese they have, the language and the culture, is very powerful.

"So we will take the Prime Minister's words to heart, and, Ambassador, yours as well, and strive to have an ongoing friendship and continue our ability to highlight for our students the power and beauty of Japan."

LaGuardia Provost Paul Arcario joined Professor Tomonori Nagano, Dean Ann Feibel, and Luce Heritage Language Scholarship recipients Rachael Stuyvesant, William Tsuda and Kazuko Kobayashi in thanking the Consul-General for conveying the gift to LaGuardia.

"LaGuardia Community College is honored to have so many wonderfully enriching ties to Japan, two traditional Japanese cherry blossom trees, sakuras, were planted in our grass courtyard two years ago, thanks to the generosity and goodwill of the Japanese government. Our students' cultural horizons will continue to expand as they learn about Japan from this marvelous collection. Thank you," said Provost Arcario.

"Thank you so much for this lovely gift," said student William Tsuda, who, after teaching himself Japanese in an attempt to reconnect to his heritage culture and language. "Thanks to the Luce program my dream to speak fluent Japanese and learn more about my cultural heritage is becoming a reality. These books will help students like me and others who want to learn more about Japanese culture, history and language."

Speaking in Japanese, Kazuko Kobayashi, another Japanese heritage language student in the College's Luce program also offered heartfelt thanks.

"Our relationship with Japan is very strong. We're looking forward to meeting with students from Hosei University when they come to visit our campus next month. Last year we welcomed students from Chuo University, and our students have also visited Japan. "

In May 2013, 46 CUNY students took an all-expenses paid trip to Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan as part of the “Kakehashi – Bridge for Tomorrow” Youth Exchange Program.

The collection will be kept in LaGuardia’s Education and Language Acquisition Department.

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LaGuardia Community College located in Long Island City, Queens, was founded in 1971 as a bold experiment in opening the doors of higher education to all, and we proudly carry forward that legacy today. LaGuardia educates students through over 50 degree, certificate and continuing education programs, providing an inspiring place for students to achieve their dreams. Upon graduation, LaGuardia students’ lives are transformed as family income increases 17%, and students transfer to four-year colleges at three times the national average. Part of the City University of New York (CUNY), LaGuardia is a nationally recognized leader among community colleges for boundary-breaking success educating underserved students. At LaGuardia we imagine new ideas, create new curriculum and pioneer programs to make our community and our country stronger. Visit www.laguardia.edu to learn more.