May 9, 2011

The Honorable City Council
Palo Alto, California

Letter from Mayor Nakagawa of Tsuchuira City

ATTACHMENTS:

• Letter from Mayor Nakagawa of Tsuchiura City (PDF)

Department Head: Donna Grider, City Clerk
The Honorable Sid Espinoza  
Mayor of Palo Alto City  
250 Hamilton Ave,  
Palo Alto, CA94303

Dear Mayor Sid Espinoza

Thank you very much for your message for expressing your sympathy after this terrible disaster. As you know, we had the earthquake on March 11th and that gave us damage to our Tsuchiura city too. It has past about a month already since the earthquake occurred, and the life on the citizens are getting ordinary little by little as before. However, there are still damages of building and streets all over the city, I as the city mayor, will do the best for recover our city with our people.

By the way, I am very sorry for cancelling Students' Exchange Program by cause of this earthquake. I knew our students were looking forward to visiting Palo Alto very much, and when Ms. Nakajima visited our city on April 11th, told us about your students also waited them, and they were disappointed in sorrow when they knew this information. It was the kind of hurt for me too.

In such a situation we very impressed for having given your warmly donations by Palo Altans through Ms. Nakajima. We heard that the host family of the Students took the lead in raising money. We will make use of warm donation for recovery of our city. There is no word to express my appreciation for your kindness. Thank you very much.

Our exchange is surely growing through Students' Exchange Program and Japan/Tsuchiura Festival last October, the donation this time etc.
I deeply wish our exchange will grow and tight, and I would like to keep in touch more and more.
Again thank you very much.

Yours Sincerely,

[Signature]
Kiyoshi Nakagawa  
Mayor of Tsuchiura City
Konnichiwa,

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Neighbors Abroad members, school communities, friends and people in Palo Alto who have made a special donation to support Tsuchiura’s earthquake recovery effort. Yasuo Kishimoto and I visited Tsuchiura on April 11. You can read Yasuo’s report on our visit below. Prior to our visit Jim Newton, NA Treasurer, remitted $12,700 equivalent to 1,055,000 Yen to Tsuchiura. Mayor Nakagawa and Chairman of the City Council Mr. Orimoto showed their gratitude for our efforts.

Yasuo and I originally planned to go to Japan to support Tim Wong who was to run a marathon on April 17, but the the event was cancelled due to the damage suffered from the earthquake. Tsuchiura’s two main hotels were damaged and couldn’t accommodate the runners for this event. Although Tsuchiura was designated as earthquake-damaged area, they were hosting 650 evacuees from Fukushima region where the nuclear power plants are located.

Thank you again for your thoughts and prayers for Tsuchiura and for the people who lost a lot from the disaster in Northern Japan on March 11. Your continuous support would be greatly appreciated.

Arigato in gratitude,

Keiko Nakajima

It was 2:40 p.m. on March 11th, 2011 in Japan, when the Northeastern part of Japan was hit by an extraordinarily strong earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0. Indeed it was the biggest earthquake in its history. The epicenter of the quake was about 200 miles north of Tsuchiura, the sister city of Palo Alto. To make it worse, the region was also hit by a devastating tsunami. Even more, a nuclear plant sitting about 110 miles north of Tsuchiura was badly damaged and began leaking radioactivity. Although the City of Tsuchiura escaped the severe destruction of the tsunami, it suffered relatively strong damage to many homes, buildings, schools and roads. Some homes were uninhabitable.

For the past 18 years, middle school students have exchanged visits between Tsuchiura and Palo Alto. When the quake hit the area, 16 students, and a teacher and the city official from Tsuchiura were about to begin their visit to Palo Alto. This goodwill visit had to cancel 10 hours prior to their departure time due to the quake. To help the people of Tsuchiura, students and their parents who were about to be hosts to Tsuchiura students began a fund-raising effort with Neighbors Abroad, and raised more than $12,700 as of April 11. Keiko Nakajima, the Vice President of Neighbors Abroad, and I, Advisor of the Tsuchiura Committee, visited Tsuchiura on April 11th and presented our goodwill to the Mayor of Tsuchiura, Akira Orimoto, the Chairman of the City Council, Hiroshi Sekozawa, President of Tsuchiura International Association, and many other city officials at City Hall. Keiko officially presented the funds with a message from Neighbors Abroad Co-Presidents Joe and Barbara Evans.

The devastation in Tsuchiura was evidenced by the cracked wall of its castle building and the blue tarps wrapped on many house roofs. While we were in Tsuchiura, strong aftershocks hit the area several times, which halted railroad service and forced us to delay our return to Tokyo. The quakes became so frequent that the city officials told us that they are getting used to be shaken. Even with this devastating disaster, it was impressive to observe that cherry blossoms were in full bloom to cheer up the citizens. We left Tsuchiura on a delayed train wishing for the quick recovery of Tsuchiura.

Yasuo Kishimoto

Advisor of Tsuchiura Committee