



Youth Exchange Program to Memuro, Japan

Dear Parents and Students,

Thank you for your interest in the Tracy Sister City Youth Exchange Program to Memuro, Japan. Established over 25 years ago to promote friendship and cross-cultural understanding with our Sister City in Memuro, the Youth Exchange Program has proven to be a wonderful experience for over 200 Tracy-area 8th grade students. We sincerely hope your child will find it a rewarding and enriching experience, with memories and friendships to last a lifetime. A parent informational meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 17, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Lolly Hansen Senior Center. Listed below you will find an overview of the Exchange Program in addition to the application requirements and participation guidelines.

Introduction to Tracy's Sister City of Memuro, Japan: Memuro is a small, agricultural community of about 20,000 people located on the northern island of Hokkaido, Japan. It is a very safe and scenic town. We have found over the many years of friendship that the people are warm, genuine, and are wonderful host families.

Trip Details: Each year the program selects up to ten Tracy "Youth Ambassadors" and sends them with two chaperones to Memuro for a nine-day stay (including travel time). Six of those days are spent with a Japanese home stay family. In addition to the home stay experience, students will attend several schools as well as have the opportunity to tour local museums, shrines, and shopping areas. Students are selected through an application and interview process in December, and the trip (2017 dates TBD) usually occurs in June. Once selected, Youth Ambassadors participate in mandatory bi-weekly cultural classes in preparation for their visit.

Cultural Classes: Prior to the trip to Memuro, students will must attend bi-weekly cultural classes, each class lasting 1½ hours. The class schedule is determined at the first Youth Ambassador meeting. These classes are mandatory. Classes, emphasizing Japanese customs, culture and language are taught by members of Sister City. Youth Ambassadors also prepare a dance which is later performed at the Youth Ambassador's "Sayonara Party" in Japan. **We realize many students have various other athletic and school commitments, but it is imperative and mandatory that students attend these classes.**

Home Stay Experience and Exchange: Memuro is a small town, with many of their host families being well-known and respected members of the community. Most have children in the family, many of whom are participating in the 8th grade Memuro Youth Exchange to Tracy.

Every Spring, Tracy entertains a group of ten Memuro Youth Ambassadors for a nine-day stay. Their stay in Tracy mirrors our Youth Exchange trip to Memuro in many ways. Memuro Ambassadors visit for nine days total, six days spent with a Tracy host family. Memuro Ambassadors visit Tracy schools, museums, shops and city government buildings. The other time is spent with their tour guide in San Francisco. Because these Memuro students come to Tracy in Spring and the Tracy Ambassadors do not leave for Memuro until June, we strongly encourage our Tracy Ambassadors and their families to host a Memuro student. Not only is it a terrific and rewarding experience for the entire family, but in most cases it gives our Tracy Ambassadors the opportunity to get to know their future host 'brother' or 'sister'. (If the Memuro

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Ambassador's family is also willing to host, we do our best to "match and exchange" families. The Tracy Ambassador's family will host a Memuro student in Spring, then visits their Memuro student's family in June).

If your family is not able to host, Tracy Ambassadors will be placed with Memuro families based on hobbies, interests and family makeup (children of same sex/age, etc.). Any allergies or special medical needs are also taken into consideration.

Costs and Expenses: While Sister City reserves the group airline tickets for the trip, each family is responsible for the cost of the airline ticket, understanding that ticket prices vary each year and an exact price cannot be quoted until Spring. As such, we strongly encourage the parents and students to actively fundraise in the months proceeding. In addition to the tickets, other costs include the following: obtaining a US passport, inexpensive host family gifts, new shoes for visiting Memuro schools, spending money in Japan.

Fundraising: Parent participation is crucial to the success of the trip. While the students are attending cultural classes, we encourage the parents to meet and discuss fundraising opportunities. As a target goal, we ask that the parents raise at least \$5,000 to cover all group ground expenses for Ambassadors and chaperones (two hotel nights in Sapporo, group meals at airports and hotels, tour and museum entrance fees). The parent group is responsible for handling all fundraising money with a bank account provided by Sister City strictly for this purpose. If the parent group raises more than \$5,000, any leftover money is divided equally and dispersed back to the 10 Ambassadors and 2 chaperones. At the first Ambassador/parent meeting, the group will select a treasurer and administrator. While many parents have fundraising experience through schools and various organizations, we recognize that not all parents are familiar with the fundraising process. Sister City will provide at least one parent group mentor who can recommend and supply general support on where to fundraise and how to get started. In the past, parent groups have raised as little as \$3,500 and as much as \$20,000!

Application Process: The Sister City Educational Exchange committee is seeking qualified eighth grade students who demonstrate maturity, responsibility and leadership skills. A parent informational meeting will be held on Monday, October 17, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. at Lolly Hansen Senior Center. If, after reviewing the information contained in this application packet, your student wishes to apply, please complete the attached application and mail it to the address provided on the application (P.O. Box 428 Tracy, CA 95378) along with:

_____ recent photograph

_____ \$10 application fee (checks made out to Sister City Association of Tracy)

_____ one-page essay as to why they would like to be considered for selection

Additionally, the applicant must give the attached Teacher Recommendation form to two teachers along with a stamped and addressed envelope. Applicants must allow ample time for the teacher to complete their recommendation and mail it to Sister City Association by the deadline.

Sister City Association of Tracy offers student exchange opportunities to Tracy's sister city of Memuro, Japan. Tracy public schools promote these opportunities through the Sister City Student Educational Exchange Program. Tracy's public schools and Sister City Association of Tracy, Inc. assume no liability or sponsorship for the student program but endeavors to assist the program coordinators in finding qualified candidates.