

Ms. Reiko Nishioka's Award Reception & 2015 JET Program Returnee Reception



On November 19, 2015, an award ceremony was held at the Official Residence of the Consul General of Japan in honor of Ms. Reiko Nishioka, who received the Foreign Minister's Commendation earlier this year.

Ms. Nishioka, who worked for 20 years as the Director of Education at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens (the only public museum in the United States dedicated solely to Japanese arts and culture), has aided the Consulate General of Japan in Miami with its diplomatic mission, sharing Japanese culture in Florida. Following her retirement from the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens, Ms. Nishioka has continued to help spread Japanese culture as a museum consultant. For many years, her efforts in South Florida have contributed to the friendship between the U.S. and Japan, and she has made large steps in promoting mutual understanding between both nations.

In her remarks at the award ceremony, Ms. Nishioka mentioned her late mother, who passed away just this summer, recounting when she informed her about receiving the commendation. She also addressed the attending Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program alumni from the Florida JET Alumni Association (JETAA), many of whom she had interviewed for the program.

As Ms. Nishioka has lent our consulate her expertise as a guest interviewer on the JET Program interview panels since 2003, the 2015 JET Program Returnee Reception was held the same evening, just prior to Ms. Nishoka's award reception.

At the reception, Consul General Okaniwa touched upon the JET Program's history, and praised it as one of the most successful programs created by the Japanese government. Since its inception in 1987, over 60,000 people have participated on the JET Program, over 30,000 of those being Americans. This year alone, 46 participants departed from Florida.

Ms. Romeu, one of this year's returning JET Program participants, spoke fondly of her life in a small Okinawan village, where she worked as an English teacher in elementary schools and learned to play the sanshin (a three-stringed instrument from Okinawa).

Mr. Romero, another returnee who attended the reception, recalled in his remarks the time that his mother visited his school in Kyoto Prefecture, and the unprecedented welcome she received from the students and the school band.

The Award Ceremony and the Returnee Reception were attended by members of the Florida JETAA and the Japanese educational community, as well as Ms. Nishioka's personal guests. Together, they helped celebrate Ms. Nishioka on this auspicious occasion, and welcome the returning JET participants back to Florida.

At the Consulate General of Japan in Miami, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Nishioka on receiving the 2015 Foreign Minister's Commendation, and warmly welcome home Ms. Romeu and Mr. Romero. We hope that you will continue to foster your friendships with Japan, here and abroad.