

Japan Immersion Day 2015 (Bunka no Hi) at Florida International University



On December 14, 2015, Florida International University hosted “Bunka no Hi” Japan Immersion Day, an event sponsored by the Association of Florida Teachers of Japanese (AFTJ). The event ran from 9:30 in the morning to 1:30 in the afternoon.

At the opening ceremony that took place in the Green Library, Dr. Steven Heine (Director of the Asian Studies Program at FIU), Deputy Consul General Masahiro Ogino (Consulate General of Japan in Miami), and Dr. Pascale Becel (Chair of the Department of Modern Languages at FIU) gave remarks to an auditorium full of about 150 high school and college students. Deputy Consul General Ogino’s address was particularly nostalgic in what he announced would be his last speech at FIU as Deputy Consul General. Mr. Ogino, who will be finishing his term at our offices this December, recalled his first visit to the United States fondly, and expressed his wish to see everyone again in Japan someday.

Following the speeches, two members of the South Florida Kendo Club gave a lively demonstration of *iaido*, a martial art related to *kenjitsu* that focuses on the drawing of the sword. They continued to provide kendo demonstrations throughout the day in front of the FIU Graham Center, where the audience was encouraged to participate and practice with bamboo kendo swords.

Once the ceremony concluded, the audience moved to the nearby Graham Center where nine additional workshops were offered during two 55-minute periods. Participants of Japan Immersion Day pre-registered for two of the 9 workshops, and attended one per period. The workshops, run by volunteers from the AFTJ, were *sumie*, calligraphy, chopstick decoration/hachimaki (headband) making, bracelet making, *origami*, kimono try on, anime, video games, and sushi making. The Consulate General of Japan in Miami was glad for the invitation to participate, and provided the class on *shodo* (Japanese calligraphy) run by Mrs. Patton from the Culture and Education department.

A Japanese bento lunch was included with the registration fee for this event, and held after the workshops in the auditorium, where clips from popular anime were screened. It was followed by an award ceremony, a trivia contest, and a performance of a *Yosakoi Soran* dance by students from Miami Palmetto Senior High School.

Overall, it was a very successful event, and the students were visibly excited by this opportunity. The Consulate General of Japan in Miami looks forward to many more events like Immersion Day, which help people learn about Japanese culture hands-on.