

Remarks by Eiichi Kawahara Consul General of Japan in Miami  
at the Opening Reception for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Japan-Florida Summit Meeting  
Tampa, June 6, 2013

Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very grateful for all arrangements made by the organizers of this 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Florida-Japan Summit in Tampa, and I congratulate them for 10 years of success. I am also very pleased to recognize guest speakers, moderators, sponsors, leaders of the community, and senior officials of the USF.



Allow me to say how much of a pleasure it is for me to be back in Tampa. I have been here before, and one of the most memorable events involving Tampa and Japan was the visit of Japanese Maritime Self Defense Forces Training Squadron two years ago.

Mayors of the City of Tampa and Hillsborough County welcomed the squadron with very warm words of solidarity, as their visit took place just four months after the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011. Among the 700 crew members, 190 were newly commissioned young officers. They enjoyed their home-stay with families in Tampa very much, and the Open Ship was extremely popular among the people in the Tampa Bay area. I accompanied the Commander, Rear Admiral Otsuka, to pay a visit to U.S. CentCom, where senior Japanese SDF liaison officers were stationed.

Now, the agenda for this FL-Japan summit includes educational and cultural exchanges. Needless to say, education yields enormous dividends on relatively small down payments. International educational exchanges pay some of the best social dividends. Only by immersing ourselves in each other's languages and cultures can we truly understand each other and build partnerships.

Many exchange programs between Florida and Japan are available for young people. Just to mention a few, we have a youth exchange program implemented here in Florida and across the U.S. called KIZUNA, which can be translated as "bond of

friendship;” also, there are Monbusho scholarships for foreign students sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education; the JET program, which sends hundreds of American university graduates to the public schools in Japan as English teachers every year; these are good examples of exchange programs. These programs invest in the next generation of Japanese and American leaders.

Many universities and colleges in Florida, including USF and Eckerd College, have Japanese language and Japanese culture courses, a few of them even have Japanese departments. According to Dr. Maria Crummett, Associate Vice President of USF, the number of students who wish to study Japanese has been increasing steadily; this is a welcome trend here. These students have great interest in all things Japanese.

Mr. Ohtani has made dedicated efforts as an instructor to immerse USF students in Japanese language and culture; he has also been doing voluntary activities in the Tampa community for more than 11 years since 2002. Mr. Ohtani has been an advisor for the Japanese Club and a good friend to members of the Tampa Subchapter of Florida JET Alumni Association.



I recently heard that Mr. Ohtani is retiring at the end of the current semester, and will leave for North Carolina in the next month. Taking this occasion, I take great pleasure in presenting a Certificate of Commendation to Mr. Ohtani in recognition of his dedicated efforts to promote Japanese language and culture at the University of South Florida and for his valuable contributions to the community in the Tampa Bay area.

But Mr. Ohtani’s commitment and contributions throughout the years had not been possible without the understanding and valuable support of his wife Rachel, whom we are honored to have with us tonight. Rachel, we are grateful for your kind and gracious presence.

It is now my great honor and privilege to present Mr. Takeo Ohtani with a certificate of commendation. Thank you.

*(a photo with Mr. Ohtani & Mrs Rachel Ohtani and their friends →)*

