

Two Floridians awarded 2016 Japan Foreign Minister's Commendations



From left: Mayor Regalado, City of Miami; Mr. Fuentes, Chairman of Miami-Kagoshima Sister City Committee; Ms. Carlton, Koto Player and Member of Miami-Kagoshima Sister City Committee; Mayor Mori, City of Kagoshima; Consul General Okaniwa, Consulate General of Japan in Miami

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan has announced its list of 2016 Foreign Minister's Commendations and the prestigious honor was bestowed upon Jose Keichi Fuentes and Yoshiko Tokuda Carlton of South Florida.

The Foreign Minister's Commendations are awarded to individuals and groups with outstanding achievements in international fields to acknowledge their contributions to the promotion of friendship between Japan and other countries and areas.

A senior government relations consultant with Becker & Poliakoff, Fuentes is being recognized for facilitating mutual understanding between Japan and the United States by vigorously participating in developing the sister cities relationship between the City of Miami and Kagoshima. A Miami resident, Fuentes is of Cuban and Japanese descent and has served as the Chairman of the Miami Kagoshima Sister Cities Committee since 2002, improving the lines of communication between Miami and Kagoshima, and facilitating youth exchange visits for high school students from both cities.

A resident of Plantation, Carlton is being recognized for her efforts to promote a mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S. through music. Over many years, Mrs.

Carlton has assisted the Consulate General of Japan with events, giving lively lectures and demonstrations at local schools, art galleries and museums in order to promote understanding of koto, a Japanese traditional musical instrument. She is a member of Fushu Daiko which, since 1990, has been training musicians and performing Taiko, a musical art form that builds on a 2600-year old tradition of Japanese drumming. Additionally, as a longtime member of the Miami Kagoshima Sister Cities Committee, she has welcomed visiting delegations from Kagoshima and has in turn volunteered as a member of the Miami delegation to Kagoshima.

In November, both Fuentes and Carlton accompanied Miami City Mayor Tomas Regalado on his visit to Kagoshima City in November 2015 to commemorate of the 25th anniversary of the sister cities relationship. To return the courtesy, Kagoshima City Mayor Hiroyuki Mori and his delegation is currently visiting Miami.

At the reception to welcome the Kagoshima Mayor's delegation on July 26, Consul General of Japan Ken Okaniwa presented the Foreign Minister's Commendations to Fuentes and Carlton a reception at his residence. Consul General Okainwa commended the recipients for supporting the very active and longstanding sister city relationship between Miami and Kagoshima. Mayor Mori and Mayor Regalado were both present and offered their heartfelt congratulations to the recipients.