Ohio State hosts 23 Japanese educators

Junior- and senior-high school teachers share culture, ideas

By Laurie Gnepper

Members of the Ohio State community have an opportunity to help improve international relations and to better understand the Japanese culture.

Twenty-three junior and senior high school Japanese teachers of English will study at Ohio State this summer as part of a program sponsored and funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education.

Volunteers are needed to be conversation partners, from the end of July to the end of August, and to participate in the homestay program, Aug. 7-9, says Diana Nasman, campus director. This program will give Ohio State faculty and staff the opportunity to get to know more about these teachers, she says.

Conversation partners will serve as friends, not teachers, and will meet with the Japanese teachers at least once a week in a place that is comfortable and convenient for both of them.

The homestay program gives them another kind of experience, says Nasman. Hosts will have one teacher staying with them for the weekend to give the Japanese teachers the opportunity of living in a home in the United States.

During their five-week stay at Ohio State, the teachers will be living in the dormitories and eating in North Commons. The teachers will participate in field trips, classroom activities and workshops on teaching techniques.

The purpose of the English-Japanese program is to increase the teachers' confidence in communicating English, and to help them better understand American culture and society.

Ohio State has been hosting groups since 1980, Nasman says. Other schools in the United States that will be hosting ministry-sponsored teachers this summer are the University of Minnesota, the University of Pennsylvania and Tulane University. Ohio State's program is considered a model program by the Council on International Educational Exchange, Nasman says.

When the teachers finish their studies, they will travel to Boston, Washington D.C., Philadelphia and New York.

"During this (traveling) part of the program, the teachers are free to pursue their own interests," Nasman says.

In the past, many of the teachers have taken the initiative to set up their own itineraries, so they have the opportunity to meet and to talk to new people, she adds.

For the final week of the program, the teachers will participate in a week-long homestay, possibly in Kentucky. This will allow them to go into classrooms of secondary schools to observe students, and to speak about Japan.

At the end of the program, Nasman will get together with the teachers in Los Angeles, before they leave for home, to give them the chance to express in English what they learned during their stay in the United States.

The teachers are recommended for the program by the prefectural boards of education and selected by the Japanese Ministry of Education. There will be 19 men and four women this year. Two members of the group have been appointed to boards of education in Japan.

Anyone interested in learning more about conversation partnerships or hosting the Aug. 7-9 homestay can contact Nasman at 292-4823.
Bashing worries Asian-Americans

By Andy Knight
Lantern staff writer

The current wave of anti-Japanese sentiment, coupled with a lagging American economy, has many people concerned about U.S.-Japan relations. These feelings have also raised concerns among the Japanese and Asian population at Ohio State.

Masanori Hashimoto, a professor of economics, attributes negative feelings toward Japan to many different factors.

"This is an election year, so with us being in a recession, these feelings are understandable," he said. "I don't feel too upset, but I do have concerns about this."

Hashimoto also cited the recent changes in the Soviet Union as a possible reason for "Japan bashing."

"Possibly with the Soviet Union being gone, we need another country to complain about," he said.

Hashimoto is concerned that these feelings could carry over and influence members of the U.S. government and, therefore, the decision-making process with regard to relations with Japan. He said that Japanese companies are losing business because of these ill feelings toward the country.

"What worries me most is that in Los Angeles County, they had a contract with a Japanese firm to build a railroad, but because of the recent upheaval, the committee decided to withdraw the contract," he said.

Hashimoto said this was a "knee-jerk reaction" to the negative feelings being expressed toward Japan.

"If Lee Iacocca bashes Japan, that's one thing. But when the government reneges on a contract, it's quite more serious," he said.

Hashimoto has not witnessed any blatant feelings of anti-Japanese sentiment on campus, he said.

"About a year and a half ago, there were anti-Japan posters in some of the parking garages, but I really haven't experienced anything like that here," Hashimoto said.

C.M. Chen, director of the East Asian Studies Center, said he has mixed feelings about Japanese leaders calling American workers "lazy."

"It has something to do with it, but I think there's more to it than that," he said.

Luong Ho, who graduated with a degree in math education last quarter, said he feels that the solution to the problem lies in America's need to prove itself in the international marketplace.

"We have to prove ourselves, because the Japanese have already proven their products," he said. "I think the Americans need a scapegoat because they are losing a lot of their customers to the Japanese.

"I think the Japanese are greedy and want to keep the upper hand on the market. Now Americans have to improve their service here."

Ho does not foresee any easy solution to the problem in the near future.

"I guess, because the economy is not doing well, we need somebody to blame," he said. "Just because we're Americans, we think we can walk all over anyone, but we have to prove ourselves."

"Right now, it's a hard time, and we've just got to tough it out," Ho said.