

Fifty-Eight Partners come together for High School Japanese Language Students

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If it takes a village to create success, then this year's Pacific Northwest Japan Bowl, owned and operated by the Japan-America Society of Oregon, is a guaranteed winner.

The program takes place this Saturday March 9th at Clark College in Vancouver, and the sheer number of partner organizations is astounding - outlining the wide-ranging details that need to be finalized in order to host such an event, and the broad community-wide commitment up and down Oregon and Washington that make it happen.

It also shows the importance that both states place on developing the next generation of leaders in the US-Japan relationship.

Education is of course key, and over 25 institutions will gather, including 13 high schools taking part, 9 colleges with booths showcasing their language programs, 2 statewide teachers associations, and volunteers from other regional college programs.

Alongside these institutions stand over 20 businesses that give financial and in-kind support – tech companies such as Vancouver's largest employer SEH America, Hitachi High Tech, Wacom and Fujimi; food sector company support such as United Grain, Yamasa, and Kuze Fuku; and also local companies including Perkins, Live Your Colour, and Uwajimaya.

Fifteen key volunteers from JASO's education committee operate the day of the event – marshalling 30 teams through different rounds of questions on Japanese language and cultural knowledge. A further 30 student volunteers lead all participants around the host campus at Clark College, make sure breakfasts and lunches are consumed, and support cultural activities that take place between the actual competition. And the Consul General of Japan in Seattle will be there to cheer on the students through the day.

Eighty-four students are signed up, and JASO flies the top two winning teams to Washington DC for the 2-day National Japan Bowl Championships in April. Teams there have the chance to win a free trip to Japan.

“Our relationship with Japan continues to be the single most important international relationship that Oregon has,” stated Graham Morris, Executive Director at JASO. “From tourism to international trade, sister cities to community cultural groups, foreign investment to school exchange programs, there's no other relationship that spans such a broad spectrum of influence locally. If we want to additionally talk about sushi, Ghibli, emojis, Toyota, or cosplay – then we start to realize just how the thread of Japan is entwined in our lives.”