

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

This past weekend, I had the pleasure of being part of a group that entertained some out of town guests. I drove a family of four on a sightseeing trip of Eureka and Humboldt County for three days. The family of four consisted of an elderly grandfather who lives in Kamisu, Japan, his daughter and son-in-law and his eleven year old granddaughter who live in Tokyo, Japan. Mr. Nishijima had dreamed for a number of years of making a trip to our area and found that he could make it a reality this year although he is in ill health. Being involved in such a visitation was an honor and a privilege for me. In Two Thousand Eight I had been the driver for a delegation of officials from Kamisu, Japan who came here on an official visit as members of the Kamisu International Friendship Association (KIFA), the driving force behind the Kamisu - Eureka Sister City program. Although Mr. Nishijima is a retired director of KIFA, his visit was not in an official capacity but as a family pleasure trip. Mr. Nishijima had been in touch with a friend and associate whom I had become acquainted with at the time of the Two Thousand Eight KIFA official visits to Eureka. She had given him my name as a possible contact. With the family's permission, I set up a three day itinerary which had to be changed a number of times. Unexpected flight delays and our local McKinleyville fog saw to that. The big disappointment was the cancelation of a one hour tour of Humboldt State University. The family was able to meet two of the people who were responsible for arranging the tour, but only for a brief period. During the three day stay the family was able to enjoy Eureka's Sequoia Park and Zoo, our Redwoods to the North and South of us along with our amazing scenery plus they were able to taste some of our local cuisine. One of the challenges that faced all parties during the stay was the language barrier. I must say that the Japanese try much harder to understand the English language that we do the Japanese. Did I find the language barrier a bit much? Not really! Naturally it does slow down the conversation somewhat but it does make you pay closer attention to the subject matter that is being conveyed. Hosting a Japanese family is most rewarding and helps build our Japanese/United States relations. Those locals that have visited Japan over the past number of years have been very warmly received. This should be a 'two way street'. I would ask you that the next time a Japanese visitor is announced locally, feel free to contact the City of Eureka and volunteer your services even though they might be limited to a friendly "welcome and hello".

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