

## **Report on the high school essay & shodo competition – Taste of Japan 2008**

The high school essay & shodo competition was run as part of Taste of Japan 2008 organized by the NZ Japan Society of Auckland Inc. with the support of the Consulate General of Japan and the Auckland City Council. This is the second year that we have run this competition, and like last year we hoped to encourage students learning Japanese at secondary schools to experience the traditional Japanese art of calligraphy, and to provide an opportunity for them to express their experiences in a Japanese essay. Entry was open to high school students between year 11 and 13 studying Japanese at schools in Auckland. Participants were required to choose their favorite word in Japanese and write it on *hanshi* (Japanese paper for calligraphy) with a writing brush and ink, and to write an essay on the word they had chosen in Japanese, explaining reasons for choosing the word and telling personal experiences relating to the word. The competition was advertised through the following websites and mailing lists.

- website for NZAJLT (New Zealand Association of Japanese Language Teachers)
- mailing list for teachers of Japanese in Auckland (by Mr. Taylor, a language advisor in Auckland)
- NZJNET posted by Ms. Naomi Collins
- website for the NZ Japan Society of Auckland Inc. ([www.nzjapan.net](http://www.nzjapan.net))

National Adviser of Japanese at ILANZ (International Languages Aotearoa New Zealand), Ms. Junko Tomooka also helped us advertise this event among secondary schools and came to attend the prize-giving ceremony at Taste of Japan to support this event.

We received a total of 53 entries from seven schools, four of which entered the competition for the first time this year. Four judges from our society short-listed 11 entries, which were passed to the Japanese language teachers at School of Languages, AUT who selected the winners. Essays were judged on the use of the Japanese language (range of vocabulary and grammar, accuracy), content (relevance, interest, originality) and logicity. An emphasis was placed on content so that students at a lower level would not be disadvantaged because of their limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Shodo characters were judged on the beginning and ending of each line, correctness of the character and overall balance. An equal weight was given to the essay and shodo works.

The following students were selected as winners.

1st prize: Jennifer Liu, Kristin School  
2nd prize: Choonghwan Kim, Massey High School  
3rd prize: Kaitlyn Crabb, Kristin School

No school prize was awarded this year. Instead, we presented each school which entered the competition some calligraphy paper (*hanshi*).

The results of the competition were sent either by letters or email to each school a week before Taste of Japan, which was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August at Freemans Bay Community

Hall. All works of calligraphy and essays were displayed at the venue and the prize giving ceremony was held during Taste of Japan. We had Mr. Tsuzuki, a representative from the Japan Airlines, and Ms. Yvonne Pakenham from AUT to present the winners the following prizes together with certificates.

1<sup>st</sup> prize: a return economy air ticket to Japan

2<sup>nd</sup> prize: an electronic dictionary

3<sup>rd</sup> prize: \$100 book voucher sponsored by AUT

The teachers of Kristin School and Massey High School, whose students won the prizes, were also awarded with massage vouchers sponsored by Kokoro Massage. Consolation prizes for all the entrants were mailed to each school.

Prior to Taste of Japan we invited Mr. Kohara, a shodo teacher at Chiba Municipal Chiba High School, from Japan to conduct calligraphy workshops at five high schools in Auckland from 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> July. Mr. Kohara gave one 50 minute lesson on calligraphy at each school and taught the students some basic use of calligraphy brush (*hude*) and gave some instructions on how to write a particular letter to individual students. He and his wife came to Taste of Japan 07 last year, demonstrated his wonderful art of calligraphy, and also helped us in the calligraphy workshop during the event. Mr. Kohara and his wife hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> prize winner of the competition last year, together with Ms. Saneyoshi, a president of the NZ Society in Japan. They will also be hosting the winner during her one-week stay in Japan in January next year.

The aim of the NZ Japan Society is to build the bridge between New Zealand and Japan by organizing culture exchange events such as Taste of Japan, and I believe that the participants of the calligraphy workshops and the High School Essay & Shodo competition were able to “taste” Japanese traditional arts of calligraphy and deepen their understanding of Japanese culture and language. I would like to encourage more schools to participate in this event next year by publicizing our event more widely and at much earlier date than this year.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to Sasakawa Fellowship for your sponsorship in the two consecutive years, making it possible for us to provide the winners with a valuable opportunity to stay in Japan on a one-week home stay programme. We would appreciate your continued support for our language related events in the future.

Michiyo Mori  
Vice-President  
The NZ Japan Society of Auckland Inc.