Young Professional Community Advocates from Japan
Sharing Knowledge and Promoting Dialogue about Local Revitalization

KAKEHASHI Project
– The Bridge for Tomorrow –
Friday June 13, 2014, 6:30-8:30pm
Embassy Suites – Arboretum 9505 Stonelake Boulevard, Austin, TX 78759

Akira Okabe / Hokkaido
Ms. Okabe is a member of the research and development team at the Tanaka Saké Brewing Company in Otaru, Hokkaido. She is involved in the development of liqueurs made from fruit grown in Hokkaido as a member of the “Untapped Fruits Project,” organized by the Otaru Chamber of Commerce. She works with other companies in Otaru to produce the Otaru Bijin liqueurs made with 100% Hokkaido ingredients. The company was awarded the Excellent Development Award by Otaru Grant for New Technology and Product Development Program in 2011.

Kosuke Saito / Niigata
Mr. Saito is a member of the planning division of the NSG Group, an administrator of educational institutions in Niigata Prefecture. He works to promote computer programming education at the elementary and junior high level. His goal is to use computer programming education as a tool to encourage a sense of entrepreneurship and self-efficacy among the students. He hopes young people in rural areas reinvigorate communities through the creation of businesses. He is also working on the Old Houses and Closed Schools Regeneration Project, converting homes into a multifunction complex.

Koyuru Saito / Chiba
Mr. Saito is a farmer in Chiba prefecture. After working in the food industry, he questioned the system of food distribution. Realizing that the face-to-face sales method used by his parents was best, he returned home and began farming at age 23. He now grows organic chemical-free soybeans and rice as well as producing miso with no food additives, which is used as part of a school lunch program. Since biodiversity levels are high in his chemical-free farm, he offers the area around his farm to Chiba Prefecture for school biotope observation. He is an active member of the volunteer group No Trash Gallery, taking part in beach cleaning. He organizes agricultural events throughout the year with participants mainly from Chiba and Tokyo.

Tatsuki Toda / Yamanashi
Mr. Toda founded Synaptech in 2008 in Yamanashi prefecture. The firm provides IT services, supports entrepreneurs, and offers consultation in various areas. He also established the “Yamanashi Wings Project,” collaborating with businesses to create regional development models and offer solutions to various issues. He also engages in activities to create places where various people can work together and solve problems in the community.

Shoji Akimoto / Gifu
Mr. Akimoto is the Representative Director of the NPO G-net in Gifu city, Gifu prefecture. G-net supports small to mid-sized businesses and local governments and encourages young people to enter the job market by partnering them with companies for internships. They also act as a recruitment firm and offer seminars geared towards young people who are entering the job market. Additionally, he is the Chief Business Coordinator at Oka-Biz, the Okazaki City Business Support Center. He has won numerous awards for his work supporting entrepreneurs starting small and mid-sized businesses.

Yuki Nakagawa / Mie
Mr. Nakagawa is the president of the Misugi Resort in Tsu city, Mie prefecture. The Misugi area has a rapidly declining population. Misugi Resort hopes to serve as a new role model of area revitalization. The resort works to attract tourists from abroad and has succeeded in attracting the most foreign visitors in the prefecture. They offer tours for visitors to experience mountains, onsen hot springs, and ninja activities in cooperation with the Iga area and Mie Prefecture. Mr. Nakagawa also runs a brewery where locally grown rice is blended in two brands of beer. Both brands have been selected as part of “Mie Selection,” fine items chosen by the prefecture.
Kotaro Nishihara / Ehime
Mr. Nishihara is the president of Daiichi Printing Company in Imabari city, Ehime prefecture. For the last five years, the company has been overseeing the Imabari city mascot, Bary-san. Bary-san won the grand prize in the Yuru-kyara (local mascot) Grand Prix in 2012. Bary-san travels around Japan promoting Imabari. In an aim to revitalize the city center of Imabari, in 2014 Bary-san joined in the Imabari ABC Festival, where he attracted some 8,500 visitors in two days. Since becoming president of Daiichi Printing last year, Mr. Nishihara has been hard at work promoting the attractions of Imabari and promoting Bary-san to the world as an embodiment of Japan’s pop culture.

Daisaku Tokushima / Saga
Mr. Tokushima established DockyarD share house, a shared living and office space in Saga city, Saga prefecture. He works to create a community that is friendly to independent workers and promotes international exchange. In the two years since he launched the business, people from 27 countries have used his services and he has supported three Japanese nationals to study abroad. The facility plans English classes and other events and tries to engage the local community.

Kazunori Sakai / Kagoshima
Mr. Sakai is an architect and founder of the architectural office Shall We Design, based in his hometown of Amami island in Kagoshima prefecture. Shall We Design promotes design locally to help draw tourists to Amami. The company designed new packaging for local products such as doughnuts and honey. His organization collaborated with other companies and the local government to make a guidebook, which helped to dramatically increase the number of visitors to the area. Mr. Sakai received his masters in Architecture from the University of Florida.

This program is part of the “KAKEHASHI Project – The Bridge for Tomorrow –” within the Youth Exchange Program with North America promoted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA). The Japan Foundation KAKEHASHI website: