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JETRO Chicago Midwest NEWSLETTER

Illinois • Indiana • Iowa • Kansas • Michigan • Minnesota • Missouri • Nebraska • North Dakota • Ohio • South Dakota • Wisconsin

Linton, Indiana Mayor visits Japan in GEN-J program

Prepared by Kelly Highland, JETRO Chicago

I had the pleasure of interviewing The Honorable John Wilkes, Mayor of Linton, Indiana, regarding his participation in the Japan Foundation's GEN-J Program which took place during the autumn of 2019.

Mayor Wilkes first became aware of JETRO when Chief Executive Director, Ralph Inforzato visited the City of French Lick, to speak to the members of a leading regional economic leadership organization; Radius Indiana. After this initial meeting, Mayor Wilkes decided to visit Chicago to meet with the JETRO Chicago team. His interest in Japan then led him to attend Japan related programs offered by the Japan America Society of Indiana. Mayor Wilkes' activities included an important opportunity to meet the Consul-General of Japan in Chicago, Naoki Ito and our new Consul-General Kenichi Okada. In summary, this is the manner in which Mayor Wilkes and the City of Linton, Indiana began their relationship with Japan. He and Linton's City Clerk-Treasurer, Jathan Wright, were then invited to apply for the GEN-J Program enabling them to make their initial visit to Japan. They both applied and to their surprise, according to Mayor Wilkes and Mr. Wright, "We were both accepted." They were grateful and proud to be representing the City of Linton, Greene County and Southern Indiana.



Mayor John Wilkes

Mayor Wilkes and Jathan Wright were extremely impressed by the infrastructure, architecture and the

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In the Days to Come

I hope my message finds all of our dear Midwest Newsletter readers in good health and safe.

Just a few weeks ago terms like social distancing, infection rates, and virus hot spots were not part of our vocabulary, now they are the lead items our evening news. How quickly things have changed and in the days to come I expect even more change.



From the Chief Executive Director

Ralph Inforzato
Chief Executive Director, JETRO Chicago

We were very active this winter. *Just a few weeks ago*, we successfully completed our Japan Meet and Greet programs at Trine University (Angola, Indiana) and The University of Toledo where human resource managers and top executive from Japanese production companies from across the Great Lakes region developed relationships with both of these schools' faculty members and students. It was the first time for JETRO Chicago to co-organize these industry-university collaboration and workforce career events in Indiana and Ohio. I was so pleased to receive many thank you notes from students for bringing our Japan Meet and Greet programs to their schools. The consensus we received from Japanese company representatives, the leadership of Trine University and The University of Toledo and importantly, their students confirmed that we at JETRO Chicago are on an important path to becoming a trusted Japan Career

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Japan Foundation's GEN-J Program Shows Impact of Japanese Investments in Illinois and the U.S.



Guest View

Lenora Fisher
Director of Business Attraction, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council

In the fall of 2019, I had the opportunity to visit Japan as part of the "Grassroots Exchange Network - Japan" (Gen-J) program organized by the Japan Foundation. Joining me were Chris Setti, CEO of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC), and Jeff Griffin, CEO of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as two dozen other American

participants. We enjoyed an experience we will not soon forget.

Before the Gen-J trip, my experience of Japanese culture was informed by my grade school days at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii where we studied Japanese language alongside the Pearl Harbor memorial and post war relations. Since childhood, much of my experience was informed by media portrayals. Man in the High Castle, a Prime television series, is a recent example that comes to mind.

I am new to my position at GPEDC and Japan and foreign investment have been top of mind. In September our CEO joined Governor Pritzker's delegation to the Midwest U.S. - Japan Association Conference in Tokyo. The Peoria area is no stranger to Japanese

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JETRO COVID-19 Quick Business Survey

Prepared by Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago

With the rising spread of the COVID-19 virus in the United States, all JETRO offices (New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Atlanta, Houston) conducted a survey from March 24 to 26, asking existing Japanese companies with operations in the U.S. about their business concerns and reactions to COVID-19. We received feedback from 905 respondents from throughout the United States.

Key Findings of Survey Results are below:

1. Challenges while Working from Home

- Overall, 90% of respondents have implemented working from home actions for employees. Among these companies, 10% stated there were “significant” challenges, with more than 80% stating there have been a slightly lesser “somewhat” challenges.
- These challenges include internal and external communications, handling on-site operations such as in manufacturing facilities and warehouses, processing accounting tasks, and an overall decline in productivity due to working remotely.
- As for Japanese companies with employees who are unable to initiate work from home policies, approximately 50% of them are providing full compensation, which is a significant burden for the companies.
- While two-thirds of companies do not plan to return their expatriates and their families temporarily to Japan, 13.9% stated the decision is under consideration.

2. Challenges: Production and Sales

- With the rising spread of COVID-19 in the United States, 70% of companies stated there has been a decline in sales.

- The reasons of decline in sales among manufacturers, 70% stated this decline is due to decrease in domestic demand (including reduction of their customers’ production). 20.8% of the respondents stated the suspension of factory operations due to the Stay-At-Home Order had an impact.
- Over 50% of Japanese manufacturers stated their level of productivity was less than normal or fully suspended due to a decline in orders and a shortage of workers.

3. Challenges Companies are Struggling to Address

- One of the major challenges has been issues with labor management.
- Especially for small to midsize enterprises, a majority have expressed the need for further understanding of federal and state guidelines. It is requested that they would like to read official points of guidance in Japanese.
- Some respondents also stated challenges concerning visas and severe financial situations.
- There is also a need for information on public aid and assistance measures.

In response to this situation, JETRO is further strengthening its provision of information services in the North American region by working closely with professionals to provide key information on federal, state, county and city-level assistance programs, regarding topics such as employment and financing.

Please access the full report in English here:

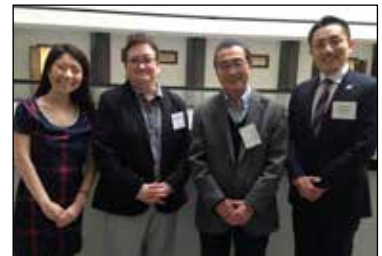
https://www5.jetro.go.jp/newsletter/ama/2020/covid-19_surveyresult_0327_en.pdf

Japan Currents Symposium in Indianapolis

The 2020 Japan Currents Symposium was held on February 26 in Indianapolis, IN, and organized by the Japan-America Society of Indiana.

Now in its ninth year, the Japan Currents Symposium has become a signature event in the Midwest, providing a business, economic and international relations outlook for the year with discussion of developments for Japan and Indiana, as well as key issues for the Japan-U.S. relationship in Asia. The program draws business, community, government, and economic development leaders from throughout the state and region.

From left: Mari Kubota, Public Relations Specialist, M&C Tech Indiana; Kelly Highland, JETRO Chicago; Yasuhiro Ito, President, M&C Tech Indiana; Tomofumi Nishizawa, JETRO Chicago.



A panel, moderated by: Larry Ingraham, President, Ingraham and Associates, featured Andrea Richter-Garry, Vice President-International Engagement, Indiana Economic Development Corporation; Tomofumi Nishizawa, Executive Director, JETRO Chicago; and Bernard Swiecki, Senior Automotive Director, Center for Automotive Research.



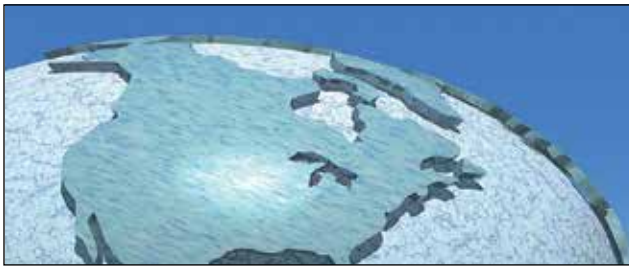
Tomofumi Nishizawa, Executive Director, JETRO Chicago.

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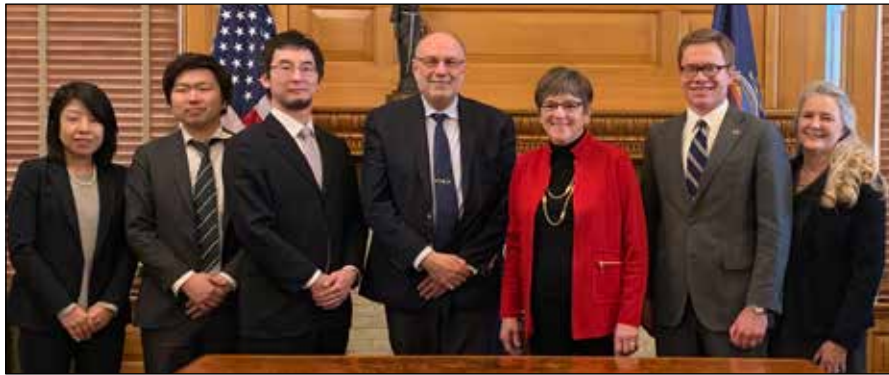
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JETRO Around the Midwest

Seminars, Meetings and Events



On February 19, JETRO Chicago visited the office of Governor Laura Kelly, State of Kansas. Above, from left: Yumeko Ogawa, Director, Industrial Machinery, JETRO Chicago; Kyobei Yabu, Researcher, JETRO New York and Visiting Fellow at Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies; Tsubasa Hashimoto and Ralph Inforzato, JETRO Chicago; Governor Kelly; David Toland, Secretary of Commerce, Kansas Department of Commerce; and Randi Tveitaraas Jack, Intl, Development Manager, Kansas Dept., of Commerce.



In Cleveland, Ohio, on February 12, JETRO met with Brian Ayers and John Ryan from Senator Sherrod Brown's office. From left, Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago; Brian Ayers; John Ryan; and JETRO Chicago's Kiko Hanashiro and Ralph Inforzato.



JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato and Kiko Hanashiro with Christina Muryn Mayor, City of Findlay, Ohio, on February 12.



Leaders from the City of Marysville, Ohio welcome JETRO Chicago to their office on February 14. From left: Kelly Highland, JETRO Chicago; Kiko Hanashiro, JETRO Chicago; Henk Berbee, City of Marysville, Mayor and President of Council; Ralph Inforzato; J.R Rausch, Council Member At Large and former Mayor; and Eric S. Phillips, CEO, Union County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Director, Union County and Marysville.

Ralph Inforzato visits with Mayor Ben Stabler of the City of Bellefontaine, Ohio and his wife Sara on February 28.



From left: Dr. William Dings, Executive Director, Lawrence Economic Development Corporation; Kiko Hanashiro, JETRO Chicago; Mayor Sam Cramblit, City of Ironton, Ohio; and JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato at the Mayors' Partnership for Progress Monthly Meeting in Athens, Ohio on February 13.



Ralph Inforzato with Mayor David J. Berger of the City of Lima, Ohio on February 28.



Ralph Inforzato and JETRO's Grassroots Outreach Coordinator in Ohio, Kiko Hanashiro, make a presentation at the Mayors' Partnership for Progress Monthly Meeting in Athens, Ohio on February 13.



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Trine University (Angola, IN) Hosts Japanese Companies at Career Fair

Prepared by Mari McHenry, Director of International Community Services, Trine University

Trine University hosted its first Japanese Company Career Fair in the Jim and Joan Bock Center for Innovation and Biomedical Engineering on February 26.

The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) attended and sponsored the event, along with Japanese-owned companies Enkei America, II Stanley, Kimura Foundry America, Michigan Automotive Compressor Incorporation (MACI), Oji Intertech, Omron, Right Way Fasteners, SEAVAC, Subaru, Sullair and TRIN – Tokai Rika Indiana.

“Global investment and international partnerships play an increasingly important role in the economic health of our region and our nation,” said Earl D. Brooks II, Ph.D., Trine University president. “This event gives Trine University students the opportunity to meet and perhaps work for companies they may not otherwise have been able to contact, and it exposes a wider range of corporations to Trine graduates who have been well-equipped with the skills to succeed, lead and serve.”

Targeted toward engineering and business majors, the event drew more than 50 Trine students. Students said they appreciated the smaller size of the fair, which allowed for better interactions with employers.

“We are thrilled to have hosted the first Japanese Company Career Fair not only at Trine, but in the State of Indiana (sponsored by JETRO),” said Mari McHenry. “Many people do not realize that there are over 100 companies in the state of Indiana alone that are owned by Japanese companies. We hope this opportunity will give students exposure to the idea of working for international companies in the future, and are pleased to know that the recruiters who participated in the event have met exceptional candidates.”

One company commented, “It was amazing. These were the best students of my career.” Another noted they enjoyed the format and said, “Campus is beautiful. We learned so much about Trine.”

“We at JETRO Chicago are honored to have partnered with Trine University to organize our first such program in the state of Indiana,” said Ralph Inforzato, JETRO Chief Executive Director. “Trine’s prowess from



Yoya Fukuda, Ph.D., President, Kimura Foundry America, Inc. and Executive Officer, Kimura Foundry Co., Ltd.



Ralph Inforzato introducing JETRO's objectives for the Japan Meet and Greet and Career Day at Trine University.

Japan Career Day at Trine University. At the exhibit table (left) is Yukiko Kikuchi, Administrative Assistant for Kimura Foundry America, Inc. (Shelbyville, IN)



Jason Blume, Executive Director, Trine Innovation 1, providing guidance as Japanese companies' representatives toured Trine University engineering labs and business school.

engineering and business faculty with deep industry experience, and its precious students form a strong foundation for the economic well-being of Northeast Indiana and the Tri-State region. JETRO Chicago and all Japanese companies are welcome at Trine University: It's a powerful message we very much respect from President Brooks, Dean Ryan Overton, Dean Cat Benson, Jason Blume, Executive Director, Trine Innovation 1, and Mari McHenry, Director of International Community Services.”

“We are always excited to connect the university and its students with new companies for potential partnerships, internships and employment opportunities,” said Blume. “We look forward to additional opportunities to work with JETRO Chicago to benefit its members, the university, and our region.”

The university plans to hold the Japanese Company Career Fair annually.

Japan Meet and Greet and Career Day at The University of Toledo



Pushpa Iype, Talent Acquisition Specialist, Omron Management Center of America, Hoffman Estates, IL.



Japan Meet and Greet, Career Day student interactions with Japanese company exhibitors.

A Japan Meet & Greet and Career Fair took place at the The University of Toledo, College of Engineering on March 3, featuring 20 Japanese companies from OH, MI, IN and IL.

Speakers at the program included Ralph Inforzato, JETRO Chicago (above left) Joseph Hara, Ph.D, Professor at the Dept. of World Languages and Cultures, The University of Toledo (above center); Matthew Franchetti, Ph.D, P.E., Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, College of Engineering, The University of Toledo (above right) and D. Paul Zito, Vice President of International Development, Toledo RGP Northwest Ohio (right).



Tour of the College of Engineering

Ralph Inforzato with Mitsubishi Electric Automotive Human Resource representatives, including Tracy Urti, Corporate Manager of Organizational Development, Human Resources Department (right).

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Leadership Interactions: Japanese Companies in Wayne County and Oakland County, Michigan

On February 10, Southeast Michigan was the focus of a robust JETRO Chicago grassroots program which brought local and state leadership to meet and tour AISIN Technical Center of America, Inc. and DENSO International America, Inc.



Local government leaders from Wayne County and Oakland County, Michigan visit AISIN Technical Center of America, Inc., in Northville, MI, February 10. Photo highlights: Local southeast Michigan governmental leaders with Consul-General of Japan in Detroit, Tsutomu Nakagawa (center L) and Masato Shimei, President, AISIN Technical Center of America, Inc. (center R)



At AISIN Technical Center of America, Inc., in Northville, Michigan.

Ralph Inforzato with Michigan State Senator Dayna Polebanki, Consul-General of Japan in Detroit, Tsutomu Nakagawa, and Masato Shimei, President, AISIN Technical Center of America, Inc.



At DENSO International America, Inc., in Southfield, Michigan.



Ralph Inforzato with Josh Hundt, Chief Business Development Officer & Executive Vice President, Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Hundt presented an official letter to celebrate JETRO Chicago's 60th anniversary and strengthening the relationship between MEDC and JETRO Chicago.

JETRO Grassroots Program with the Village of Lake Zurich, IL

JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato, along with Kenichi Okada, Consul-General of Japan in Chicago visited the City of Lake Zurich, IL on January 16. Officials from Lake Zurich, Lake County and the state gathered to hear about trade and economic development with Japan.



Ralph Inforzato presenting, "The Dynamic Growth of Japanese Companies in the Midwest."



Kenichi Okada, Consul-General of Japan in Chicago addressing the leadership with Mayor Thomas Poynton, Village of Lake Zurich on right.



Ralph Inforzato with Consul-General of Japan, Kenichi Okada, and Illinois State Senator Dan McConchie, (District 26).



Craig Taylor, Lake County Board Member (19th District), Mary Edly-Allen, Illinois House Representative (51st District) and Ralph Inforzato.

World Trade Council of Wichita Program

On February 20, JETRO Chicago presented, "Japan as a Trade & Investment Partner for Kansas," an event organized by the World Trade Council of Wichita.



Above left: Tsubasa Hashimoto, JETRO Chicago, at the World Trade Council of Wichita Program (Wichita, KS) on February 20.

Above right: Yasuhiro Uozumi, Executive Director, Keidanren USA, at the World Trade Council of Wichita Program.



Left: Yumeko Ogawa, JETRO Chicago, at the World Trade Council of Wichita Program.

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cleanliness of the cities they visited: Tokyo, Nagoya and Toyota City. They experienced taking the Shinkansen or bullet train and were taken aback by its speed, 186 MPH, however Mayor Wilkes indicated that, "We did not feel like we were moving fast." The Mayor added, "The Japanese were kind, friendly and polite, a true attribute to Japan."

There were 36 participants on this particular GEN-J Program and Mayor Wilkes was the only elected official in the delegation. Their itinerary included meetings with the Japan Foundation, JETRO and the Keidanren (Japan Business Federation.) These were educational meetings that focused on how very critical it is to develop long-term relationships with Japanese companies and the importance of Japanese investment in the United States. The delegates quickly learned the values of these meetings. Mayor Wilkes said, "Japanese companies are very committed to their employees and to the communities where they have invested." He also said, "These meetings opened my eyes," and he realizes, "That more needs to be done in the international scope ---- this is a global world and market and the U.S. needs to work with Japan and all countries."

There are 319 Japanese companies in the State of Indiana. The City of Linton is keenly interested in, "Attracting one Japanese company to begin with, making it 320 Japanese companies in the state," according to Mayor Wilkes.

Ms. Teruko Wada, Deputy Director, International Affairs Bureau, at the Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) had a message for the group, "Do not be afraid to seek the small fish (Japanese companies), because they always grow and expand and become big fish." This practical guidance really resonated with Mayor Wilkes.

Mayor Wilkes' message to the Japanese companies was, "Linton is a safe place to live, work, start a business and raise a family. The population is 5,200 and the quality of life is excellent." The City of Linton proudly owns and operates their own utilities, offering some of the most competitive utility rates in the state. There are two highways and a major railway running through the community and two interstates are within close proximity. The city motto is "You'll Like Linton," and

Mayor Wilkes presented "You'll Like Linton" t-shirts to those he met in Japan, including JETRO Executive Vice President, Ichiro Soné.

Some highlights that left a lasting impression for Mayor Wilkes and Jathan Wright were meeting with The Honorable Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City, which was such a singular honor for them. Visiting and touring the Toyota plant was "Truly eye-opening, as it was impeccably clean and everything was so methodical," according to Mayor Wilkes. They also visited Nagoya Castle and Tokyo Tower, and they were able to view a wedding at a Shinto shrine. Mayor Wilkes expressed, "I was extremely impressed with how the streets flow ... the engineers and architects did a fabulous job putting Tokyo together. It is so beautiful and there are gardens everywhere there aren't buildings."

The group also enjoyed traditional Japanese food and drink. At the opening dinner, Mayor Wilkes being the only elected official on the program, was asked to make the toast. Throughout the duration of the program, he was asked to speak on behalf of the group or make a toast at other functions.

They learned the important Japanese custom of pouring a drink for others and others will pour for you. According to Mayor Wilkes, "I loved the warm Sake and Jathan found the Japanese beer to be very good ... Jathan and I had a ball, in Japan."

Mayor Wilkes and Jathan said, "This program was most valuable for them and the City of Linton, and they are extremely grateful to the Japan Foundation, JETRO and the Keidanren."



Mayor John Wilkes and Jathan Wright with JETRO EVP Ichiro Soné during their GEN-J trip to Japan.



Mayor John Wilkes and Jathan Wright with JETRO Chicago's Ralph Inforzato and Kelly Highland in Chicago.



Welcome Tomofumi Nishizawa

JETRO Chicago would like to give a warm welcome to our new Executive Director, Tomofumi Nishizawa. Mr. Nishizawa arrived in Chicago in December 2019, to assume his new post. He is the successor to Takayuki Watanabe who was transferred to the JETRO New York Office.

Mr. Nishizawa joined JETRO in April 2004 and was first assigned to the Trade Fair Division where he spent two years. In 2006, he was transferred to JETRO Yamagata and then in March 2008, he was sent to JETRO Shizuoka. In 2010, Mr. Nishizawa was assigned to the International Economy Research Division of the Overseas Research Department at JETRO Tokyo. The following year he joined JETRO New Delhi as the Director of the Research Department, where he spent almost five years. In August of 2015, Mr. Nishizawa returned to JETRO Tokyo as the Research Manager of the Asia and Oceania Division of the Overseas Research Department and then in March 2019, he was promoted to Deputy Director.

Mr. Nishizawa is very much looking forward to visiting all 12 states in the JETRO Chicago Midwest region, but most of all he looks forward to meeting the people of America's heartland.

Contact JETRO Chicago • www.jetro.go.jp/usa/

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For general information, call the number above.

The JETRO Chicago team offers a wide variety of business support services for companies in the Midwest planning to initiate a business presence or seeking to add to their existing investment in Japan, and/or work with Japanese companies. Please feel free to contact us.

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JETRO Invest Japan Report

In late November 2019, JETRO published the “Invest Japan Report 2019,” a comprehensive look at recent trends in inward FDI to Japan. Here’s a summary of some of the main findings.

1. Inward FDI stock reaching 30-trillion-yen mark

- Inward FDI stock at the end of 2018 was 30.7 trillion yen, marking a record high for five consecutive years.
- The number of successful investment projects supported by JETRO was 241, the highest since JETRO started its support for foreign companies. Each of three major regions (Asia, Europe and North America) recorded the highest number of successful cases.
- Foreign-affiliated companies develop their business through addressing social issues or taking advantage of characteristics of local regions by introducing innovative technologies or services.

2. Improving investment climate in Japan

- According to “Survey on Japan’s Investment Climate”* by JETRO, a number of companies see improvement in “acceptance of Japanese companies and society toward foreign investment” and “ease of finding partners.”
- Under these circumstances, over 70% of the foreign-affiliated companies are eager to engage in open innovation with Japanese universities/research institutes as well as small and medium enterprises. There is high hope to observe further business collaboration between foreign-affiliated companies and Japanese companies/organizations.

3. JETRO’s support of foreign companies to invest in Japan (local regions) to enhance innovation

- With the trend of innovation created by foreign companies spreading across regions within Japan, JETRO has been putting further efforts into attracting startups that are capable of contributing to innovation creation since FY2019. At the Innovation Leaders Summit held in October 2019, 35 foreign startups participated under the recommendation of JETRO overseas offices. JETRO has signed agreements with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, Keidanren and Project Nippon regarding the providing of cooperation support between domestic companies and overseas startups.
- JETRO is also putting efforts into revitalizing the local economy through inward FDI. In coordination with 28 local governments/municipalities, JETRO is providing support by inviting foreign companies to Japan, attracting inward FDI and conducting overseas promotions through the “Support Program for Regional Foreign Direct Investment in Japan” that strengthens the invest promotion capacity of local governments.

The press release about the report can be found at <https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/news/releases/2019/c04884be153c0e49.html>.

A summary report is available as a PDF at https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/en/news/releases/2019/c04884be153c0e49/outline-en2019.pdf.

The full report can be downloaded as a PDF at https://www.jetro.go.jp/ext_images/invest/ijre/report2019/pdf/jetro_invest_japan_report_2019en.pdf

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companies: both Komatsu and Fuso Chemical have factories here. Recently, Yamashin USA opened an office in our service area spurring additional enthusiasm about Japanese investment.

On our trip, I learned the significance of Japanese investments in both Illinois and the United States. At our meeting with JETRO, they reported that Japanese manufacturing companies employed more than 400,000 Americans. We were also impressed that Japanese investment in the U.S. has grown close to \$477 billion, trailing only the United Kingdom and Canada in Foreign Direct Investment. I particularly appreciated the insight JETRO representatives expressed when they highlighted humbleness, hard work, and respect as cultural similarities between Midwestern and Japanese cultures.

Another highlight was our visit to the Kikkoman Corporation, the world’s most famous brand of soy sauce. We were given a tour of the facility and its new research and development center. During our visit, we watched a video of their first U.S. location and the company’s impact on the local community. The video highlighted several U.S. employees who spoke movingly about working for the Kikkoman Corporation. The stories about employee advancement opportunities and how the company gave back to the community were compelling.

I returned from the trip with renewed appreciation for Japanese culture and friendship with the United States. Since our return, I’ve visited the Japanese Consulate in Chicago and JETRO Chicago to thank them

again for their role in the opportunity to visit Japan. This year, I will be visiting our current Japanese companies in the Peoria area to further cultivate the relationship between Peoria and Japan. The Peoria area makes an excellent choice for Japanese companies looking to establish or expand their American footprint. The area boasts incredible logistical advantages with the ability to move product and people via road, rail, river and air. Our size and business-friendly approach makes discovering the right location and obtaining the proper resources much easier than larger metropolitan areas. Our quality workforce and low cost of doing business makes for a profitable investment. I would love to connect with any Japanese companies who would like to learn more about the great options in Greater Peoria.

JETRO EVP Ichiro Soné welcomes Lenora Fisher, along with Jeff Griffin, CEO of the Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce and CEO Council, and Chris Setti, CEO of the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council.



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connector for Midwest universities.

We also closely worked with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to bring local political leaders from Oakland and Wayne counties to tour and interact with the management leadership of the AISIN Technical Center of America Inc., Northville; and to DENSO International America, Inc., in Southfield. These meetings and interactions were informative and very well received. The key moment was Governor Gretchen Whitmer's thoughtful video appreciation to all Japanese companies in the State of Michigan with special mentions to AISIN and DENSO. It was an outstanding Michigan grassroots program.

We were also in the midst of planning our special Japan project with our core group of Ohio mayors. Top local leaders. Mayor Mike Barhorst, City of Sidney and Mayor Ben Stahler, City of Bellefontaine, are all working closely with us to initiate a project, which will enable them and additional Ohio mayors to develop closer relationships with Japanese companies. It us such an unprecedented effort from these mayors and their enthusiasm for Japan is just tremendous.

Meeting with Kansas Governor Laura Kelly in late February was an excellent experience for my team. Governor Kelly recognizes the importance of trade with and investment from Japan and we at JETRO will assist the Stater of Kansas to obtain more visibility and make more business relationships in Japan.

We received energized feedback in the form of articles on Japan-related programs from Mayor John Wilkes, City of Linton (IN), Lenora Fisher, Director of Business Attraction at the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council and Mari K. McHenry, Director of International Community Services at Trine University. As you can see, it was a very active winter for our office.

Currently, I am doing everything I can to make sure my colleagues and their families are safe and healthy. I'm working hard to keep my JETRO Chicago office relevant. *In the days to come*, I believe we must remain visible and useful to our deep network, especially businesses in the Midwest.

To be relevant, we are moving with speed in doing and supporting policy and business assistance webinars. Webinars are a way to proceed in conveying timely business assistance to our network. We tested the virtual format recently in mid-March and it worked well. We are also doing business sentiment surveys of Japanese companies having U.S. operations and publicly sharing the results.

In late March, we did a quick JETRO survey of just over 900 Japanese companies with operations in the United Sates, which focused on their business concerns, business conditions during the crisis and importantly, how they are reacting to COVID19. Japanese companies in the U.S. are now reporting a 70% sales decline due to the rising spread of COVID19.

In the Midwest, 240 companies responded to our survey, so you may



Above: In mid-March, the Chicago team quickly acquiring the technical skills to do business assistance webinars for Japanese companies.

obtain an idea of the challenges these companies are facing. It is a very detailed survey and in English. I urge you to read Tsubasa Hashimoto's summary points, which also contains a link to the entire JETRO business survey.

Our Chicago team, led by Tomofumi Nishizawa, Executive Director, skilled-up our technical capacity in organizing two global webinars (in Nihongo) on the current perspectives of the USMCA, the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement and U.S.-China trade negotiations. Originally, these programs were to be in Detroit and Chicago, however the

In-Shelter orders shut the events down, therefore we quickly went virtual.

Our webinars' presenters were in Tokyo and New York City, our attendees (well over 400) were from the United States, Japan, Europe and beyond. I had no hesitation whatsoever about postponing these webinars during the COVID19 crisis because the topics were of high interest to the Japanese business communities throughout the Midwest. I learned many years ago that anytime you obtain key Japanese government officials, trade policy researchers and/or analysts that are willing to speak to Japanese companies in the Midwest, quickly secure the opportunity, so we proceeded with these programs.

This experience also enables us to apply Kaizen to our practice of doing global webinars. *In the days to come*, we will schedule more and more webinars providing business guidance during this COVID19 crisis. I want you to know that for all Japanese companies, if you need business assistance please immediately contact us in Nihongo. Importantly, for all American companies that have a business presence in Japan, if you need business assistance, please contact us and we'll make every effort to utilize our comprehensive JETRO network in Japan to help you.

In the days to come, I want all of you to be very safe, cautious and alert and I want to know that I am thinking about you.

Recommend the JETRO Chicago Midwest Newsletter to a colleague, so they can keep up with the latest news, events and ideas that are helping Midwest companies develop businesses in Japan and with Japanese companies. For a FREE subscription delivered quarterly via e-mail, send name, title, company/organization name, address, phone number and e-mail address to Kelly_Highland@jetro.go.jp