



## **Kanagawa Prefecture promotes local companies and its Zen culture to New Yorkers**

### **Support for Sales Expansion in NY**

Japan Society was established in New York in 1907 and is the only US-Japan cultural exchange organization of its size in the United States. For over 100 years, 200 plus programs have been hosted every year in the center of New York City, spanning a broad range of genres including world politics, the economy, arts and culture, and education. These programs promote mutual understanding and friendship between the United States and Japan.

The Japan Society hosted an event on January 23<sup>rd</sup> promoting Kanagawa Prefecture. Representatives from Kanagawa Prefecture presented products of participating companies at the presentation, which had over 250 attendees, including industry professionals, such as buyers. Ms. Nanako Sadasue of Kamakura Shirts (Managing Director) described tourism in Kamakura City, known for its Buddhist Zen Temples and Shinto

Shrines, and Mr. Kenichi Noda of Odakyu Electric Railway (Director of Tourism Development Division) presented tourist attractions at Hakone. Attendance was at max capacity with people standing and many of the attendees gathered around the presenters and enthusiastically asked them questions.

After the presentations, 11 companies from Kanagawa, with a goal of expanding sales channels in the United States, held booth tables to directly promote their products and services to visitors.

Two breweries from Kanagawa targeting increased exports to the United States set up a tasting corner for sake. There was also food samplings that included tuna from Misaki Megumi Suisan Co., Ltd. (Miura City) and sesame oil from Iwai Sesame Oil Co., Ltd. (Yokohama City), which was offered in a special tuna bowl. These were very popular among the attendees.

Masamitsu Ishibashi (CEO) of Misaki Megumi Suisan Co., Ltd. (Miura City) enthusiastically said "Our goal is to expand tuna exports to the United States and secure ultra-low-temperature refrigerators at minus 60 degrees Celsius at one location in the east part and one in the western part of the United States. We have set up a system for storing and distributing fresh tuna processed in Misaki in the United States. We will also be operating a Brooklyn sushi restaurant, so we are pursuing sales to restaurants as well to increase business in the United States."

The company is pursuing expansion of overseas sales channels and along with other activities, they are planning on placing employees in the United States. Several other companies in Kanagawa are also seeking to expand sales to the United States and considerable effort will be made to support these local businesses.

## Promoting Kamakura and Zen in NY

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) indicates that the number of foreign tourists visiting Japan from the United States in 2019 increased by 12.9% from the previous year to approximately 1.72 million, a record high, showing there is a continued high level of interest in traveling to Japan.

A lecture on Zen as practiced in Kamakura was held on January 27th of this year at the Japan Society of New York with a large presence of travel agencies in attendance.

Pamela D. Winfield, an associate professor of the Religious Studies Department at Elon University in the US, gave a speech to over 100 participants, based on her academic insights into the historical background and importance of Zen at Kamakura. Head Priest Eon Asahina of Engakuji School who works at Jochiji Temple, lec-



*Mr. Asahina of Jochiji Temple during his address*

tured in more detail on the characteristics of Zen as practiced in Kamakura, and demonstrated the actual Za-zen method using bells, wooden clappers and Zen rod.

There is a trend in New York of including meditation in one's daily life as a means of relieving stress. Proliferation of this trend has led to this becoming known as "Zen" in English. Audience members of the lecture asked questions about the characteristics of Zen as practiced in Kamakura, the differences between Kamakura and Kyoto, and why Zen spread from Kamakura, displaying considerable interest.

There was a booth on sightseeing in Kanagawa Prefecture set up after the lecture to provide participants with information on tourist destinations in Kanagawa. Yukiyo Matsuzaki, Managing Director of Kamakura Mind, a company that provides customized cultural experiences for foreign visitors to Kita-Kamakura, gave advice at the booth on travel needs at the individual level in Japan.

Kamakura Bori Hakkodo (Kamakura City), a company targeting expanding sales channels in the United States exhibited ceramics they produce along with Kita-Kamakura's Kichuyo Kiln (Kamakura City), thus promoting traditional crafts of Kamakura to attendees. Kumiko Jitsukawa, founder of Ki-Chu New York, a distributor of Kamakura sculptures in New York, passionately stated "There are many non-Japanese people in New York who are very knowledgeable about Japanese culture. By showing real culture, the charm of the work crosses boundaries of language and culture. Our proposal is to start including pottery, lacquerware that is resistant to drying, and sculptures from Kamakura as part of our daily lives. The hope is that through various opportunities people learn the true beauty of these items and acquire them as functional works of art."

JETRO will continue to promote tourism destinations to continue to show people what is available in Kanagawa.

JETRO New York