

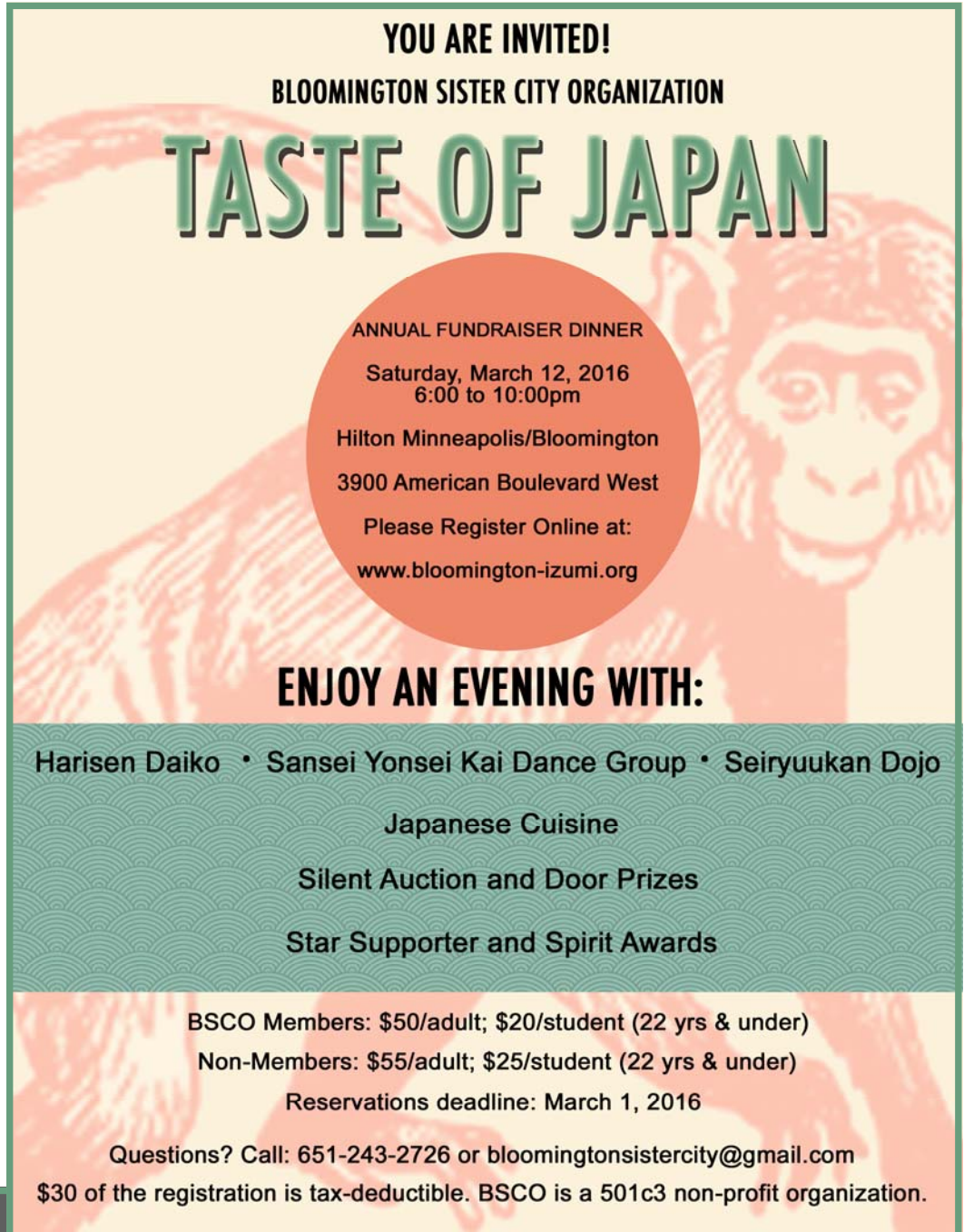
Since 1993, promoting international understanding through the exchange of people, information and ideas.

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**YOU ARE INVITED!**

**BLOOMINGTON SISTER CITY ORGANIZATION**

# TASTE OF JAPAN

**ANNUAL FUNDRAISER DINNER**

Saturday, March 12, 2016  
6:00 to 10:00pm

Hilton Minneapolis/Bloomington  
3900 American Boulevard West

Please Register Online at:  
[www.bloomington-izumi.org](http://www.bloomington-izumi.org)

**ENJOY AN EVENING WITH:**

**Harisen Daiko • Sansei Yonsei Kai Dance Group • Seiryuukan Dojo**

**Japanese Cuisine**

**Silent Auction and Door Prizes**

**Star Supporter and Spirit Awards**

**BSCO Members: \$50/adult; \$20/student (22 yrs & under)**  
**Non-Members: \$55/adult; \$25/student (22 yrs & under)**

**Reservations deadline: March 1, 2016**

**Questions? Call: 651-243-2726 or [bloomingtonsistercity@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingtonsistercity@gmail.com)**

**\$30 of the registration is tax-deductible. BSCO is a 501c3 non-profit organization.**

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on Facebook to view more photos!



**Joe Waldoch**  
**President, BSCO**

Joe is a life-long Bloomington resident. He has been involved in the Normandale Japanese Garden since he was a youth following in the footsteps of his parents and uncle. The Normandale Japanese Garden Committee is one of the founding members of BSCO. Joe is employed by Normandale Community College. He serves on the Normandale Foundation Board. He has directed the BAA soccer program for six years and has been a Boy Scout leader for 11 years. Joe joined BSCO in 2009. He has served as a host family and chaperoned a student delegation to Izumi City in 2013.

#### Board Members

- Rod England, *Treasurer*
- Abdullahi Isse, *Student Representative*
- Ben Jourdan, *Student Representative*
- Mike Migliacio, *Vice President*
- Billy Secord
- Nora Smith
- TJ Souphaphone
- Luminita Vollmer
- Kyle Wagner, *Vice President*
- Joe Waldoch - *Normandale College & Japanese Garden Committee Representative, President*

## Calendar of Events

Saturday, January 17, 2016, 4 - 8 pm: JASM's Shinnenkai event  
Saturday, February 21, 2016: Senshu International Marathon  
Saturday, March 12, 2016, 6 - 10 pm: Taste of Japan Fundraiser

#### BSCO Board Meetings

*Bloomington Civic Plaza*  
*1800 W. Old Shakopee Road*  
*5:30 - 7 pm, Dakota Conference Room*  
Tuesday, January 5  
Tuesday, February 2  
Tuesday, March 1  
Tuesday, April 5  
Tuesday, May 3  
Tuesday, June 7

#### BSCO Executive Meetings

*Bloomington Civic Plaza*  
*1800 W. Old Shakopee Road*  
*6 - 7 pm, Baillif Conference Room*  
Tuesday, January 19  
Tuesday, February 16  
Tuesday, March 22  
Tuesday, April 19  
Tuesday, May 17  
Tuesday, June 21

## New Board Member: Nora Smith



Nora Smith is a Bloomington native, who currently works at Bloomington-based Cuneo Advertising as an Account Coordinator. She has had a long-standing interest in Japanese language and culture, which led her to study Japanese in college for two and a half years. This June, Nora was a part of the 2015 Bloomington-Izumi City delegation. The opportunity to immerse herself in Japanese culture by living with a host family and visiting different historical sites drove her to become a member of the Bloomington Sister City Organization. She is excited to help delegates from both Bloomington and Izumi City experience the truly unique opportunities that delegation trips have to offer.

## Returning Board Member: Luminita Vollmer



Luminita Vollmer has been Bloomington resident since 1982. She has served on the BSCO Board in the past and is returning once again to lend her skills and expertise to the organization. Luminita currently works for Thrivent Financial in Minneapolis as an Enterprise Architect. Her interests include Japanese culture, taiko drums, gardening, and the community. Luminita has traveled to Izumi with an adult delegation and maintained friendships overseas. She will be a great asset to the Bloomington Sister City Organization.

## Departing Board Member: Jon Oleson



Jon Oleson joined the BSCO Board as the Bloomington City Council liaison in January, 2014. He told the Board at the November meeting that he's discovered he overcommitted himself to committee type assignments and reluctantly needed to withdraw as a BSCO Board member at the end of 2015. Jon said "I have really appreciated getting involved in BSCO activities. I went from not knowing any details to becoming immersed in a very valuable organization. I plan to bring grandchildren to events like the Taste of Japan and Kite Day and can now be a citywide "ambassador" for the good, important work a dedicated (and fun!) group of Board members do."



**BLOOMINGTON SISTER CITY ORGANIZATION  
TASTE OF JAPAN  
ANNUAL DINNER FUNDRAISER**

**SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2016**

**6 - 10 P.M.**

**HILTON MINNEAPOLIS/BLOOMINGTON  
3900 AMERICAN BOULEVARD WEST**

~ Support community programs ~  
with a  
**Silent Auction Donation**

BSCO is a non-profit 501(c)3 volunteer group committed to building international understanding on behalf of our Sister City partnership with Izumi City, Japan. Please consider supporting your community by donating to this worthy cause. As our way of saying thank you, donors are recognized in the event program and quarterly newsletter. Donations are tax deductible.

Please call 651-243-2726 or email [bloomingtonsistercity@gmail.com](mailto:bloomingtonsistercity@gmail.com) to receive a benefit auction response form by March 7, 2016.



**YOUTH EXCHANGES**



**ADULT EXCHANGES**



**COMMUNITY EVENTS**



**ART EXCHANGES**

**MARATHON EXCHANGES**



BSCO works to promote understanding, prosperity & goodwill through the exchange of education, commerce and culture.

# Perspectives: Marathon Runner Host Family



*Keith & Kathy Sullivan & Joe Waldoch with the MTCM runners in Stillwater*

**M**y wife Kathy and I were excited to host a marathon runner from Izumi. Our son, Sean was one of the student delegates to Izumi City in 2013. We had been hoping to pay back the generous care he received from his host family. Sean recently left for Marine Corps boot camp, so we are “empty nesters.” Our adventure started when Joe Waldoch and I picked up the runners at the airport late Thursday night. Mr. Norio Inoue and Mr. Takayuki Kuroda arrived tired but excited for their trip. Norio-san would be staying with us, and Takayuki –san with the Waldochs. Friday was a busy day touring Bloomington’s landmarks. We had a great tour on Normandale College and the Japanese Garden. Joe gave us a lot of background information and history. Mrs. Fusako Muro, a faculty member also provided much information. We were joined by Ms. Kiko Higuchi who served as a translator for us that first day. Kiko-san is working as a native speaking teacher intern for the Japanese language classes at Kennedy High School. We toured Bloomington Civic Plaza including the City offices and Police Department. Our guests got to experience sitting in the back of a squad car. Lunch was enjoyed at 98 Pounds, followed by a nature hike/tour of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Center. The day was

capped off by a visit to the Mall of America and some souvenir shopping. My wife and I commented that there were things even we had not seen before even though we’ve lived in Bloomington over 23 years. Saturday was an orientation day - getting signed in and ready for the Twin Cities Marathon. Sister City member and past Senshu marathon runner Darrell Christensen gave us a tour of the marathon route, with helpful hints for both the runners and for us spectators. Wanting to provide our runners with an opportunity to “Carbo Load” , we had dinner at Red Rossa’s Italian restaurant. It was interesting to get to know about the runner’s jobs, families and interests. Norio-san works for AIG, managing a life insurance call center. Takayuki-san works as an associate professor in social work and sociology. I was amused by some of their questions. They were curious to know how old you can be and still drive in America. They would ask: “How old do you think she is?” regarding our waitresses, etc. Kathy explained it is considered impolite to ask an American woman her age. The morning of the race started early. I told them it was only 45 degrees and offered them caps and gloves for the race. They both said that it would be ok without them. Then I switched the outside temperature monitor in my truck to read Celcius—it was only 8 degrees: “Oh!” they both exclaimed. This was my first marathon experience, so I was eager to “leap frog” with Joe and try to find our runners along the route. We found out too late that “there’s an app for that”—you can now track them on your i-phone. Still we were able to find each of them at least once along the route and cheer them on. It’s really quite an event with lots of people cheering, bands and street musicians playing, etc. The runners

finished, with Norio-san having a new personal best time. It was fun to help celebrate their achievement with other BSCO members that night at Pinstripes in Edina. Monday was our last full day with our new friends. We had hoped to take them to Duluth, but we all decided that would be too long of a drive for marathon legs. We decided to go to Stillwater instead. We wanted them to see a little more of Minnesota than just the Mall of America. We did some more souvenir shopping and had lunch at an Irish Pub. Both Norio-san and Takayuki-san “crashed” on the ride home—getting in a well deserved nap. The rest of the day was just for relaxing and packing for an early Tuesday am flight. I think overall we made a good first impression. We invited them both to come back with their families—especially in the summer—when we can show them more of our beautiful state. I would highly recommend hosting for anyone interested in meeting new people from our sister city. Kathy and I had so much fun we are now hosting Kiko-san for the rest of the school year.

*–Keith Sullivan*



*MTCM runners with Darrell Christensen*

# Perspectives: Senshu Marathon Runners

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Since 1997, BSCO has selected runners to participate in the Senshu International Marathon. The runners are hosted by our sister city, Izumi. Izumi staff treat the runners to cultural events and activities and visits to historic sites. The runners will stay with host families.

The Senshu Marathon will take place on February 21, 2016. The beautiful course goes through several cities along Osaka Bay including Izumi. The course is mostly flat but past routes have included 2 steep and challenging bridges.

BSCO sponsored runners are honored to begin the race at the front of the pack with the Elite Runners. Our gracious Izumi hosts provide the runners with everything they need to have a successful race and memorable event.



“Thank you for granting me this honor! Running and travel are passions in my life, making the Senshu International Marathon the ultimate combination of both. I look forward to the challenge as well as learning more about Izumi, Japan’s community and culture.” - Anne Erickson

Anne Erickson is a member of ClubRun Minneapolis. She has participated in the Twin Cities Marathon and Grandma’s Marathon. Her personal record is 3:37:08. She has volunteered with Hammer, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and at her church. Anne has traveled extensively including Peru, Mexico and Europe and lived in the Netherlands for a year.



“I have long admired the Japanese culture; the food, the architecture and the history. When I discovered that I could integrate two of my favorite hobbies, running and traveling, into an opportunity to visit my sister city, I knew I had to do it. I am very fortunate and excited.” - Tim Murphy

Tim Murphy’s personal record is 3:53. He is training to run a 3:40 at the Senshu Marathon. He has traveled to Europe and Mexico. He participated in a study abroad program in Spain where he roomed with two students from Japan. Tim looks forward to representing Bloomington and connecting with the international running community.

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## Vollmer and Thrivent make Donations

BSCO board member Luminita Vollmer learned that her employer Thrivent Financial in Minneapolis had a corporate match giving program. Vollmer recently donated \$1,000 to BSCO. Thrivent not only matched the donation...they doubled the match! Thank you Luminita Vollmer for the generous \$1,000 contribution and thank you to Thrivent for the additional \$2,000 donation to support BSCO programs!



Luminita Vollmer embraces the Japanese culture and is an accomplished taiko drummer. In this photo, she is drumming during a delegation visit to Izumi City in 2007.

### Are you interested in supporting BSCO programs and exchanges?

Bloomington Sister City Organization’s mission is to promote global understanding through the exchange of people, information, and ideas.

BSCO is a non-profit entity and relies on the support of individuals and businesses through donations and grants.

See the back page of this newsletter for information on how you can become a Friend of Bloomington Sister City Org.



# The Next Level: Doing Business In Japan



Mike Migliacio (BSCO Board Vice President)  
& Lisa Walkosz-Migliacio

**A**utumn, the year 2000. I found myself sitting awkwardly in a small teacher's lounge, sipping chilled, bitter tea and munching on wasabi peas as I strained to keep up with the barrage of questions fired at me in a language that I had been drawn to since childhood, but couldn't yet understand.

It was my freshman year of college at Purdue University, and I was still adjusting to campus life. During the first week of Japanese 101, my professor, Akiko Ohashi-sensei, informed the class of a weekly conversation social held over tea on Tuesday afternoons. She encouraged us all to come and practice.

And, despite my better judgment, I showed up right away. I was intrigued. Of course, sitting there with a confused look on my face probably wasn't doing me any favors as far as communication was concerned. Ohashi-sensei picked up on that, and the questions switched to English.

"Why do you want to learn Japanese?" That question was easy. I already knew. I knew for years. I wanted to work with the game industry in Japan. My heroes were people like Shigeru Miyamoto,

Hideki Kamiya, and Hironobu Sakaguchi -- the legendary game creators responsible for characters like Mario, and amazing adventure series like Final Fantasy. I wanted to follow in their footsteps. I wanted to work with Japan. I wanted to be the bridge between East and West. I wanted to change the world.

Yeah...

Typical Millennial answers, right there. And I tried to say it in horribly broken Japanese, too, which probably didn't help my case either. She laughed and wished me luck. Over the next four years I grew to understand many more conversations held during those weekly tea sessions, but my dreams remained the same.

It's been a long time since then. The Japanese gaming industry imploded, and much of the marketing focus shifted from fantasy-focused Japanese brands like Nintendo, Squaresoft, and Konami towards realism-focused Western brands like Activision and Bethesda. As the gap widened between heavily marketed, multimillion-dollar productions and small startups, something interesting happened: it became a lot easier to make -- and release -- games to a global market.

Now, while there are still many things I do not understand about the Japanese language and culture, I'm proud to say that I've learned enough to fulfill at least one of my childhood dreams.

Just a few short weeks ago, the game created by my wife and I was chosen for exhibition at Tokyo Game Show's Indie Game Corner -- an area showcasing



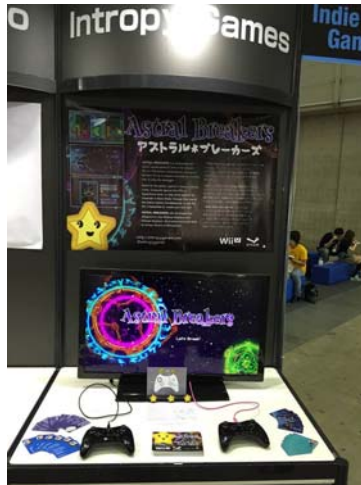
games built by small teams around the world.

TGS is one of the world's largest gaming events that is open to the public, allowing game fans from all over Japan (and the world) to test drive some of the country's newest software. While most of the big names at the expo are familiar, several of the country's biggest software makers have recently put a lot of time, effort, and money into boosting the profile of smaller teams.

Our game chosen for exhibition, Astral Breakers, was one such game. Conceived during a snowstorm in 2013 and built as a joint effort with my wife, Lisa, out of the mutual desire to have something that the two of us could enjoy playing together, Astral Breakers was a game built with a non-traditional gamer in mind. Lisa and I both grew up on games built in Japan and found ourselves drawn to puzzle action games like PuyoPuyo (localized as Puyo Pop! for a small, failed release overseas). We wanted to create a puzzle game that would allow players to play together or against each other, and provide enough interesting ways to customize the game to keep players coming back.

It was a long journey to TGS. Astral Breakers was built in several months, but porting it to the Wii U took time, and figuring out when and how to market the game to an audience that doesn't

# The Next Level: Doing Business In Japan (Continued)



following traditional gaming media presented its own set of challenges. We were both extremely surprised following our acceptance into the show following the release of Astral Breakers on the North American Wii U eShop in August, but immediately got to work on preparations for Tokyo.

One thing I did know from my time living in Japan (both as a chaperone for 2015's Bloomington-Izumi delegation as well as two several-week-long study-abroad sessions in 2010 and 2012) is that few people use English in daily life. I don't know the mindset of those who study English in Japan, but I do know my own mindset when playing video games in Japanese language, and it takes a lot more mental power than one would expect to overcome the language barriers present, even for simplistic speech and dialogue. My goal was to make it as easy as possible for companies, press, and players to visit our booth and have a good time playing our game without stressing out over perceived communication problems. Communication problems are not fun. Trust me. I've had plenty.

For us, that meant preparation: we translated our game's tutorial into Japanese, built a dual-language booth sign in both Japanese and English, and

created an information pamphlet (which I effectively deem the 'hot sheet') which contained facts and figures that would help visitors get to know us and the story behind our game.

It wouldn't even take one full day of TGS before that preparation would pay off. I was finishing up a conversation with a show-goer when an older, bearded Japanese gentleman with a long trenchcoat and fancy looking camera showed up at our booth. It was fairly unlikely that this person belonged to gaming media, he looked like an old-fashioned newspaper guy. In Japan, lots of folks still read the newspaper. He introduces himself and mentioned he writes for a newspaper, but I didn't catch the name and proceeded to ask some questions about what we were doing in Japan, our inspiration for the game, and so-on. I handed him a copy of the hot sheet, answered his questions, and sent him on his way. Several hours later I got an e-mail from the Nikkei Shimbun confirming that an article about our game was posted. The Nikkei is the Japanese equivalent of the New York Times, and our presence on the Nikkei's website provided an interesting talking point

when meeting with potential partners during the show.

Japanese consumers loved our game, reacting far better than we could have expected. The cute aesthetic, simple gameplay, and relatable Zodiac theme appeared to resonate well within the market, and we received plenty of positive reactions at TGS and at offsite events as well. And, while we can't discuss details, our hard work and preparation paid off -- Astral Breakers will release on the Japanese market next year.

While we didn't have time to visit the Osaka area during our whirlwind tour of TGS, Izumi visited us instead! My host family from the delegation earlier this year, Eiji and Yuko Murata, actually came to Tokyo to visit us (as well as some other family friends) during Silver Week. For me, it's been a long journey from that awkward day in the teacher's lounge to presenter at Tokyo Game Show, but I wouldn't change it for the world. And while I may never have the opportunity to work with Shigeru Miyamoto, I have a new dream: to continue building and nurturing relationships in Japan -- and that's another dream I should have no trouble achieving. - Michael Migliacio

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**Bloomington, MN 55431-3027**

Non-profit 501(c)3 Corporation

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Sister City News is published

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supporters of the

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