

Japanese Language
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The Fifth Annual Aurora Japanese Language Scholarship Foundation All-USA High School Japanese Speech Contest was held on Saturday, May 24, 2008

Japanese Language Scholarship Foundation (dba: Aurora Foundation, Dr. Akiko Agishi President & Founder) organized the contest, with support from the National Council of Japanese Language Teachers and the Consulate General of Japan, Los Angeles. The contest was held on the campus of the University of California, Irvine (UCI) at the Hitachi Chemical Research Center.

The purpose was to offer an opportunity to American students in the United States, who are studying the Japanese language, to present their Japanese language skills, study competitors' skills, encourage other Japanese language students, and most importantly to better understand Japan and its culture.

The fifteen finalists who participated in the event were selected from among the top finishers of regional Japanese language speech contests held around the United States from April 2007 through April 2008.

The contestants who traveled to Southern California for the contest from distant locations were housed with Japanese families residing in Orange County.

The evening before the contest, a welcome party was held at the Takagi-USA facility in Irvine for contestants, host families, and about sixty event supporters. The welcome party included introductions of the contestants, interaction and friendly exchanges among participants, as well as Karate Action Show performed by Hollywood Entertainment Academy.

For the contest, each speech was limited to five minutes, followed by a brief interview. The top three place finishers were decided by a panel of seven judges, headed by Dr. Hiroko Kataoka, California State University, Long Beach.

The judges based their decisions on the following criteria:

1. Content: including selection of theme, originality, creativity, and ability to touch the audience's heart.
2. Structure: how well the speech was organized and how logically and smoothly the argument or the content flowed.
3. Japanese language ability: especially appropriate use of sentence structure and vocabulary, and accuracy of pronunciation and accent-or comprehensibility.
4. Over-all impression: including attitude, posture; voice audibility; connection with the audience, including eye contact; and, fluency
5. Interview responses with clear and appropriate answers.

First place went to Summer Lovex of Puyallup High School, Puyallup, Washington. Summer received a trophy from the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles; commendations from the Mayor of the city of Irvine, and the Japan America Society of Southern California; and a scholarship of \$1000 from the Aurora Foundation. Her speech was entitled the "What the heck? My Adventure in Kyoto". Summer represented the U.S.A. at the 13th Japanese Speech Award (International High School Japanese Language Speech Contest) which was held in Tokyo on July 20, 2008, and we are proud to announce that she won the 1st prize in Japan as well.

Second place and a scholarship of \$500 went to Sohyoun Choi of La Guardia High School, New York, New York and third place and a scholarship of \$300 went to Minji Lee of Northern Valley High School, Old Tappan, New Jersey. Each received a plaque, commendations from the Mayor of the city of Irvine and the Japan America Society of Southern California.

The Special Audience Award, decided by audience vote, went to Andrew Daichi Wang. The VIP Award went to Nathan Bynum.

**The Fifth Annual Aurora Japanese Language Scholarship Foundation
All-USA High School Japanese Speech Contest
Result (Name of the winners, Name of the school, State, Speech title) :**

First place: Consulate General of Japan Award

Summer Lovex, Puyallup High School, Puyallup, WA

“What the heck? My Adventure in Kyoto”

Trophy from Consulate General of Japan, Scholarship from Aurora Foundation: \$1000, Commendations from the Mayor of city of Irvine

Will represent the U.S.A. at the 13th International High School Japanese Language Speech Contest which will be held in Tokyo on July 20, 2008.

Second place: American Airlines Award

Sohyoun Choi, La Guardia High School, New York, NY

“You Are Not Alone”

Plaque from American Airlines, Scholarship from Aurora Foundation: \$500, Commendations from the Mayor of city of Irvine

Third place: Union Bank of California Award

Minji Lee, Northern Valley High School, Old Tappan, NJ

“Unpredictable Teenagers – Are We Adults or Children?”

Plaque from Union Bank of California, Scholarship from Aurora Foundation: \$300, Commendations from the Mayor of city of Irvine

VIP Award: Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California Award

Nathan Bynum, Eisenhower High School, Shelby Township, Michigan

“Real Japanese Culture”

Plaque from Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California

Special Audience Award: Lighthouse Award

Andrew Daichi Wang, Harvard Westlake School, North Hollywood, CA

“The Life You Promised Yourself”

Plaque from Lighthouse

All of the contestants received commendations from Aurora Foundation and Japan America Society of Southern California. Plaques were generously designed and donated by Mario & Karen Ontiveros.



2008 Aurora Speech Contest: Contestants, Judges and Staff



(From left) Dr. Hiroshi Sumiyama Speech Contest Chair, 1st place winner, Summer Lovex, Dr. Akiko Agishi, Aurora Foundation President