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🗓️ Coming UP ! 【Event Information for Feb, Mar 2026】

## 01 FY2025 Prefectural Scholarship Exchange Students Column

Three Kagoshima Prefectural Scholarship exchange students from FY2025 were invited to reflect on their time living and studying in Kagoshima.

### ○Fukugava Gustavo (Brazil)

Hello everyone, my name is Gustavo Fukukawa, and I am a Kagoshima Prefectural Scholarship exchange student for FY2025.

I am currently studying in Kagoshima Prefecture, and since April 2025, I have been conducting research at Kagoshima University. I am from Brazil, but my maternal great-grandfather was originally from Kagoshima Prefecture. Before World War II, he left Kominato, Kaseda, in Minamisatsuma City and emigrated to the Guarara region of Brazil.



Photo taken at Kagoshima University

Because he passed away before I was born, I knew very little about Kagoshima's culture and history before coming here. On the other hand, I spent a great deal of time with my paternal grandparents and was able to hear many stories about my father's side of the family. As a result, I often felt that my connection to my maternal roots had somehow been lost.

With this as context, in 2024, a friend named Keigo (also a FY2025 Kagoshima Prefectural Scholarship Student from Brazil) introduced me to the Kagoshima Kenjinkai, and I began participating as a member. Through that connection, Alexandre, a former prefectural scholarship student who is a member of the Kenjinkai, recommended that I apply for the Prefectural Scholarship program.

After coming to Kagoshima, I learned a great deal about its culture and history. I also obtained a copy of the family registry of the Fukushima family on my mother's side and was able to visit the area where my ancestors once lived. Through these experiences, I feel that I was finally able to restore the bond connecting my family to Japan.

While exploring my roots, I also devoted myself to my studies at Kagoshima University and was able to deepen my knowledge in business administration, my field of specialization. By taking various courses in the Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities and advancing my research under the guidance of my professors, I feel that I gained a deeper understanding of business administration. For my research theme, I chose exchanges between Japanese companies and Nikkei organizations in Brazil.

Hoping that this theme would further strengthen Japan–Brazil relations, I conducted research using a wide range of materials and articles. The ties between Japan and Brazil have a very deep history, and I was able to find far more information and data than I had imagined.

I was also fortunate to have many opportunities to experience Kagoshima's traditions and history. The most memorable of these was participating in the Third Mikoshi (portable shrine) at the Ogionsa Matsuri. I was invited by Masato, a member of the Third Mikoshi group, and was able to take part not only in the main festival but in all three days of the Ogionsa Matsuri.

By carrying the mikoshi together with everyone rather than simply observing it, I was able to feel more deeply the culture and spirit embodied in the festival. Through that experience, I believe I gained a better understanding of the importance of cherishing Japanese culture and the meaning behind festivals.



My outfit at the Ogionsa  
Matsuri

Furthermore, through daily life in Kagoshima, my impression of this region changed significantly. Before studying here, I only knew that Kagoshima Prefecture was the southernmost prefecture of mainland Japan. However, through living here, I learned that Kagoshima played a critically important role in shaping modern Japan. Influential figures of the Meiji government, such as Toshimichi Okubo and Takamori Saigo, were from Kagoshima, and I came to understand that without them, Japan might have become a completely different country. Today, I feel genuine pride in having Kagoshima blood in my veins.

These ten months in Japan have truly been a blessing. Not only was I able to achieve my goal of exploring my roots, but I also met many friends, gained a deep understanding of Japanese culture, and fulfilled my dream of traveling throughout Japan. I feel that this has been one of the happiest periods of my life, and I am deeply grateful.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone at the Kagoshima Kenjinkai for providing me with this wonderful experience, as well as to my beloved family and friends who have always supported me. I would also like to sincerely thank the staff of the Kagoshima Prefectural Government and the Kagoshima International Association for their warm and constant support. I will never forget the connections I formed in Japan. Thank you all very much.

## OKodama Bruno Keigo (Brazil)

Hello everyone, my name is Bruno Keigo Kodama, and I am from Brazil. Both of my grandparents were born in Japan.



In 1932, my grandfather emigrated from Japan to Brazil. He is originally from Uchinoura in Kagoshima Prefecture and is a member of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai in Brazil. My other grandparents are from Kagawa Prefecture, Okayama Prefecture, and Fukuoka Prefecture respectively.

Since arriving in Kagoshima in April, I have been studying regional sociology for about ten months in the Regional Society Course (Department of Law, Economics and Sociology) of the Faculty of Law, Economics and Humanities at Kagoshima University. At the university, I attend both Japanese language classes and departmental courses. Through these, I have learned a great deal about the Japanese language, and by using it regularly, my Japanese has gradually improved. As part of my departmental studies, I conducted research regarding Japanese immigration from Japan to Brazil in order to learn about Nikkei communities in Brazil (Brazilians with Japanese roots).

I have been a member of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai in Brazil since 2017. Every year, I heard about the Kagoshima Prefecture Government Scholarship Program from former scholarship students. In addition, we prepare a variety of foods at the annual Brazil Japan Festival: Satsuma-age fishcakes, Shirokuma shaved ice, Kasha-mochi (mugwort rice cakes wrapped in kasha leaves, mainly made in the Amami region), Keihan chicken rice, and Karukan confectionery. Because of this, I had been having experiences in Kagoshima's traditions and culture even before coming to Japan.



Brazil Japan Festival at the Kagoshima Kenjinkai (2024)

As an overseas exchange student, I also searched for my roots in Kagoshima. I was able to find my grandfather's old house and even visit Uchinoura. I am truly grateful for having been given these opportunities.

I also had many experiences related to Kagoshima's traditions and culture. I participated in the Ohara Festival and learned about Takamori Saigo, the history of the Satsuma Domain, the Kagoshima dialect, and many other aspects. I also had the opportunity to meet Vice Governor Fujimoto of Kagoshima Prefecture and to meet members of Kagoshima Kenjinkai from other countries. In addition, I traveled to Tanegashima and Yakushima, two of Kagoshima's remote islands. And finally, I was able to attend a Tsuyoshi Nagabuchi concert! (In Brazil, only the songs *Tombo* and *Kanpai* are well known.) At the concert, I was also able to hear the song *Itsuka no Shonen*.



Courtesy Call on Vice Governor Fujimoto of  
Kagoshima Prefecture



Tsuyoshi Nagabuchi Memorial Monument on  
Sakurajima

After returning to Brazil, I look forward to once again supporting the activities of the Kagoshima Kenjinkai and continuing to share Kagoshima's culture and history in Brazil.

Through this visit to Japan, I was able to reconfirm something I had long felt. My relatives were born in Japan, and I myself carry Japanese blood, yet I was raised as a Brazilian. I believe that this, too, is one way of honoring our forefathers and carrying on their feelings.

The Kagoshima Kenjinkai in Brazil exists to preserve the place, Kagoshima, that was so important to my ancestors, and I intend to continue this legacy. I also sincerely look forward to the day when I can return again to this beautiful land, Kagoshima.

For me, Kagoshima is filled with countless memories of gratitude and is a place that I am very proud of.



Kevin from the Peru Kagoshima Kenjinkai and Ryuki  
from the Dominican Republic Kagoshima Kenjinkai



## ○Kawabata Ponce Kevin Miguel (Peru)

Hello everyone, my name is Kevin Kawabata, and I am from Peru.

I have been studying in Kagoshima Prefecture for ten months since April 2025.

On my father's side, I have Japanese roots. My grandparents were born in Kagoshima, where my grandfather was from Ibusuki and my grandmother from Makurazaki. My grandfather emigrated to Peru in 1929.



The reason I came to Kagoshima was to reconnect with my father's roots. I did not have many opportunities to talk with my paternal grandparents and therefore could not learn much about my Japanese heritage. Losing my father at the age of thirteen was a time of great sorrow for me. As time passed, even though my siblings and mother shared memories and stories about him, but even those gradually began to fade for me.

My father had visited Japan in the past, but he never had the chance to visit Kagoshima. I remember him often telling me that he wanted to.

Today, being here in Japan and walking on this land has a special meaning for me beyond that of a simple trip. It represents the realization of a dream passed down through generations, and I feel proud that I am fulfilling a dream my father once held. Remembering what kind of person my father was, learning about his life, the environment in which he grew up, and some of his habits has been an invaluable experience for me. I also wanted to make use of this opportunity to deepen my academic and professional knowledge.

In Peru, I work as a civil engineer specializing in geotechnical engineering. Kagoshima University has a department of ocean civil engineering with excellent laboratory facilities for soil testing, which is directly related to the field in which I wish to deepen my expertise.

My current research at Kagoshima University involves measuring soil deformation when specific loads are applied at fixed time intervals. The soil used in these tests is a distinctive type of sand containing crustacean remains. By mixing sand and biogenic materials in various proportions, I aim to identify the optimal mixing ratio.

In addition, I am also conducting experiments to clarify soil density and other important physical properties. The results obtained from these experiments will serve as essential



Kagoshima University Soil Science  
Laboratory

foundational data for future research when I return to Peru.

During my stay, I was also able to meet relatives living in Japan whom I had never met before. I contacted my aunt and other relatives living in Makurazaki and was able to meet my grandmother's younger sister and her daughter. Although they only spoke Japanese, but thanks to the daily Japanese language classes I take at the university, I was able to communicate without difficulty and build strong bonds with them.



Visit to my family in Makurazaki

I have also been able to gain a deeper understanding of various aspects of Japanese culture that I had not known before, such as festivals, temples, and traditional rituals. In Peru, my understanding of these cultural elements was very basic, but now I can appreciate them from a deeper perspective, understanding their meaning and cultural value.



With everyone from the futsal team

Building friendships with local residents and other international students was also a very important experience for me. In particular, through sports, I was able to meet many people. They not only became my friends but also provided great support for me to learn about Japanese culture.

Life in Kagoshima offers many fascinating experiences. Waking up every day and seeing Sakurajima from my window is especially moving. Witnessing an active volcano existing so close to a city feels like a clear example of how nature and humans can coexist in harmony.

One of my favorite activities is cycling around the city. Riding a bicycle allowed me to experience Kagoshima from a close, everyday perspective. As time passed and my life here continued, Kagoshima came to feel like a second home to me. Whenever I return to Kagoshima after traveling to other cities, I always feel a sense of calm when I encounter the quietness and serenity of its streets.

This study-abroad experience in Kagoshima has become a major turning point in my life, bringing about important changes in many aspects. I hope to make use of the habits and knowledge I learned in Japan in my future life while continuing to take on new challenges. I also plan to continue studying Japanese so that when I visit Japan again in the future, I can communicate more smoothly with the friends made here.



We also took part in the Ohara Festival

I want to apply what I have learned not only to my professional life but also to my personal life, using it to grow into a better person and become a more capable professional.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Kagoshima Prefecture and the Kagoshima–Peru Association for providing Nikkei youth each year with this valuable opportunity to reconnect with their roots. I am also deeply thankful to the friends, teachers, and family I met during this journey. Thanks to the support and guidance of everyone, this experience was able to be truly meaningful.

Thank you very much.

## 02 Activities of the Governor

### ○10 Dec: Visit by the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Japan

H.E. Mr. Lee Hyuk, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to Japan, paid a courtesy visit to the Kagoshima Prefectural Government Office.

Ambassador Lee remarked that it is encouraging to see the continued positive state of Japan–Korea relations in this milestone year marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He also expressed his intention to continue working to further boost exchanges in a wide range of fields, including regional cooperation, economic and people-to-people exchanges.

In response, the Governor noted that Kagoshima Prefecture has steadily deepened exchanges with North Jeolla Province to date, and taking the 60th anniversary as an opportunity, expressed his hopes that exchanges between Korea and Kagoshima will continue to develop further in the years ahead.



▲ Commemorative photo with Ambassador Lee and his wife



▲ With members of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Japan and the Consulate-General of the Republic of Korea in Fukuoka



## ○11 Dec: Visit by Irish Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Damien Cole

H.E. Mr. Damien Cole, Ambassador of Ireland to Japan, paid a courtesy visit to the Kagoshima Prefectural Government Office.

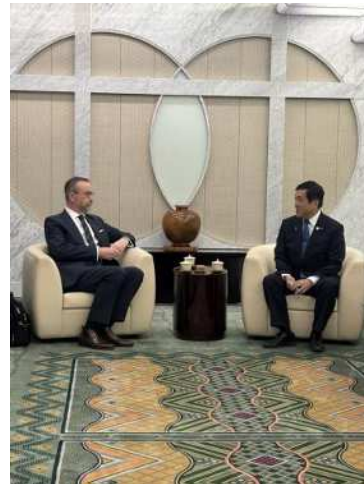
Ambassador Cole spoke about the concert held in October featuring a collaboration between the Irish harp and the Satsuma biwa (traditional Japanese lute), as well as his desire to further strengthen relations between Ireland and Kagoshima in areas such as agriculture and industry.

From the Governor, he introduced the many attractions of Kagoshima Prefecture, including its rich natural environment, food culture, and traditional culture.

It is our hope that this visit will lead to even further development of exchanges between Kagoshima Prefecture and Ireland.



▲ Commemorative photo with Ambassador Damien Cole



▲ Conversation with the Ambassador

### 03 Events Happening in Kagoshima

## ○7 Dec: Traditional Archery Rituals of *Hikime no Gi* and *Momote-shiki*

At the former Shimazu family residence in Sengan-en, the traditional Ogasawara-style archery rituals known as the Hikime-no-gi and the Momote-shiki were carried out.

The Hikime-no-gi is a ritual performed to ward off illness; when the arrow is released, the sound of the arrowhead cutting through the air resonates, and it is believed that this sound drives away evil spirits and disease. The Momote-shiki is also a Shinto ritual of prayer and protection against misfortune, in which arrows are shot in accordance with the etiquette of the samurai class. It was the first time in 17 years that this ritual was performed.

On that day, the elegant archery techniques and refined movements of Kamakura-period warriors, passed down for more than 800 years, were showcased.



▲ Traditional Archery Rituals of Hikime no Gi and Momote-shiki Photo: Sengan-en

## ○31 Dec: *Toshidon* of Koshikijima

Toshidon is a traditional New Year's Eve event passed down in the villages of Shimo-koshikijima Island. During this event, the Toshidon appears while wearing a full-body straw cloak and a large red or blue face, with a tall nose of about 30 cm high, a mouth split wide open to the ears, and is made from palm fibers, cycad leaves, paper, and other materials.

The Toshidon of the Koshikijima Island engages in dialogue with children, praising and encouraging their good qualities and strengths, while also mentioning their faults and shortcomings. The children are then made to promise that they will not repeat such behavior in the future. Finally, as a reward for the promise made to Toshidon, the children are given a *toshi-mochi* (New Year rice cake), and the Toshidon departs.

It is said that eating *toshi-mochi* received from the Toshidon, a deity of blessing, ensures that one will grow older safely and in good health.

This tradition has been designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan, and on 30 Sep 2009, it was also inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Furthermore, on 29 Nov 2018, nine additional rituals, including the Mendon of Satsuma Iojima Island and the Boze of Akusekijima Island, were added. As such, the tradition was expanded and registered with UNESCO under the collective title of Raiho-shin: Ritual Visits of Deities in Masks and Costumes.



◀Toshidon speaking with children of the village.

Photo: Official website of Kagoshima Prefecture

## 🎉 Coming UP ! 【Event Information for Feb, Mar 2026】

### ◇ Feb

16<sup>th</sup> Kagi-hiki Festival (Kanoya City)

22<sup>nd</sup> Shochu Tourism Kagoshima 2026

(Ichikikushikino City, Hioki City)

More information



### ◇ Mar

8<sup>th</sup> Hatsuuma Festival at Kagoshima Shrine

(Kagoshima City)

Please take a look at these events!



## Editor's note

(International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefecture, Tourism, Culture and Sports Department)

A new year has begun. How is everyone doing?

By the way, do you know what the zodiac sign for 2026 is?

This year is the Year of the Horse!

Among the twelve zodiac signs, the Horse is said to symbolize growth, success, and prosperity, making it a very auspicious sign.

Hearing that certainly makes us feel excited \ (^o^ ) /

Through this newsletter, we hope to deliver even more enjoyable updates on Kagoshima's seasonal highlights, and to continue discovering new things together with our readers.

We look forward to your continued support in the year ahead, and we wish you a year filled with happiness. 🌟

The Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings is accepting submissions on the following topics:

### ☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We are looking for photos that have a Kagoshima feel to them, or photos of Kagoshima you have found overseas.

Please send them with a brief description of the photo (e.g., Mountain of volcano ash collection bags).

We are also accepting any other information or stories you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽ Submissions • Inquiries ▼▲

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Discover Kagoshima- Official Travel Guide:

<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/>

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