On March 23rd, JSA hosted the annual Midwestern Universities Undokai at Saline Middle School. Undōkai, or sports festival, is a field-day event celebrated at schools nationwide in Japan every year. Kimi Sugiura, an exchange student from Japan, commented the event felt nostalgic to him as it was the “first time [he] had been to an undōkai since graduating high school.”

Designed to create inter-school relationships between students in the surrounding area, even the staunchest of enemies competed alongside each other in the field-day challenges. Attendants from Purdue, Michigan State, Eastern and others set aside their rivalries for the sake of victory.

Participants were divided into four different teams and competed in several activities throughout the day, including those traditionally conducted at undōkai events in Japan. This year’s undōkai featured a relay race, tug of war, obstacle course and another more unusual game called kibasen, in which groups from each team carry their teammates on their shoulders to knock hats off of the opposing teams’ heads.

Shiko Chin, president of the Japan Club at Michigan State University, said he was impressed at the event’s success. “I hate to say it but it’s better than last year’s Undokai hosted at MSU,” he said. “It’s the greatest undōkai I’ve ever participated in.”

Editor’s Note
Many of you attended Undokai and I hope you all enjoyed it. I became sick the day of and had to direct logistics from bed, but several sophomores and freshmen stepped up to volunteer to run the event in my place. Hearing of how they successfully pulled it off, I was extremely proud and felt confident about passing on JSA onto the next generation. These guys will do great. -IM
JCF PREPARATION

JSA members volunteered tirelessly for almost eight weeks in preparation for this year’s Japan Culture Festival. This year’s theme was Japanese art, so volunteers chose from four different categories of Japanese art forms that they wanted to help showcase – literary, culinary, audio, and visual art. Volunteers worked hard to create banners, activities and interactive booths. Having worked in the audio media group, my personal favorite activity at JCF was creating the Music Jukebox – playing samples of Japanese music from nine different categories including anime, city pop and traditional.

JSA members also practiced Soran Bushi, a modern rendition of a traditional fisherman’s dance from Hokkaido, to perform at JCF. This year, two groups performed Soran Bushi due to the high number of JSA members who signed up to learn the dance. Coached by experienced JSA board members, all dancers trained weekly on Tuesdays starting in February until the day of JCF. Because there is so much intense leg movement in the dance, dancers often jokingly referred to practice sessions as JSA “leg days.” This was my very first time performing Soran Bushi, and I found it energizing to repeat the chants “DOKKOISHO! DOKKOISHO!” and “SORAN! SORAN!” after Ishi and Fumi during the dance. However, I’m no master at this dance, as is evidenced by the number of times Sandra and Maki have called me out during practice; maybe next year I’ll have the moves like Jagger. Δ

HUMANS OF JSA with Sabrina Tsoi & Max Segawa

The Go Blue interviews members of JSA so we can learn more in depth about each other. This month features LSA freshman Sabrina Tsoi and Eastern Michigan University sophomore Max Segawa.

Ellie: Thank you for meeting with me. So tell me a little bit about how it was choreographing the boys’ dance for JCF (Sabrina directed a performance by a group of JSA guys dancing to songs by Japanese girl group AKB48 for this year’s JCF).

Sabrina: So I had three weeks to teach the boys the choreography because I procrastinated on them a little and I didn’t think that it would go so smoothly but it did! The very first practice we got about halfway through the choreography and we only needed one extra rehearsal. I was really lucky because I got people who picked up the dance pretty well.

Ellie: How did rehearsals go with those guys?
Sabrina: It was really fun, we definitely grinded but it usually went over an hour because we’d all talk together and get to know each other. A lot of times we’d go to the library to study together after practice. We got to know each other really well and we have a group chat that’s still pretty active.

Ellie: You must’ve been so proud of them, seeing them dance so gracefully.
Sabrina: I was! I didn’t expect it to go that well, it kinda took me by surprise.

Ellie: It looked really good on stage. So what’s in store in terms of the future for you?
Sabrina: [laughing] So being the Koreaboo that I am, I’m going to try out for both Female Gayo and K-Motion. I really hope I make it, I’ve done ballet for eight years but they’re a hip hop group so we’ll see how that goes. Δ

Max: Initially, I was pretty nervous. I didn’t tell anyone I was from EMU for a while since I was afraid I’ll get kicked out or something. But once I figured out no one really cared, it became my secret power. I think what I learned the most is that it doesn’t matter where you’re from, what you do, if you’re just true to yourself and enjoy what you do, you’re always gonna find the right people.

Ishi: You are from Eastern. How does that affect your experience with JSA?

Max: You are known as JSA’s unofficial ‘social chair’ for your outgoing personality. Do you have any advice for people who maybe didn’t come to too many events this year but have interest in getting more involved in the future?

Max: I guess the most important thing is figuring out where you feel comfortable. Even if you think JSA isn’t for you, I always would say give it a shot, just come to one event, get to know people—I was nervous as hell my first Mass Meeting. I didn’t know anyone there. And to think how many people there were at that first Mass Meeting I went to are compared to how many people I’m close to now, there’s definitely a lot of people I’ve never seen since that day. But then, the people that I have seen at every event, I’ve just become closer and closer. So I guess to put it shortly, figure out what’s best for you.

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