

# MAEBASHI FOCUS

## Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

Howdy y'all!

This month, we had visitors from Maebashi's sister city, Birmingham, and I was assigned to work with them as an interpreter and translator. But these weren't just ordinary guests, but the Honorary Consul General of Japan in Alabama, his wife, and the descendant of the poet Samuel Ullman, who wrote the nationally famous poem "Youth!"

Nearly seven months have passed since I started working as a Coordinator for International Relations, and during that time, I've had multiple opportunities to do interpretation and reception work between foreign guests and the City of Maebashi. Thanks to that experience, I wasn't nearly as nervous this time as I had been in the past. In fact, I felt pretty confident while interpreting and guiding our guests around.

As for the visit itself, it lasted nearly two days, with the first day being the most intensive. Day one began with us picking up the guests from their hotel at 10 a.m. and then heading straight to the Maebashi Literature Museum for a guided tour of the permanent exhibition on Hagiwara Sakutarō. I had done this tour once before, so I felt fairly comfortable this time around.



Consul General and I

It consisted of a summary of Sakutarō's history and background, with a photoshoot outside his house and the "Youth" monument afterwards. Transitioning from the tour, we ate lunch at a very upscale restaurant on the 31st floor of the Prefectural Government building.

As for our time at the restaurant, the food was superb, and the view of the city from the large windows somehow made it taste even better. Finishing our delicious meals, we moved on to the main event of the day: the Samuel Ullman Lecture. My role was to interpret the lecture for our guests and guide them through the proceedings. I only found out afterward, but the event was actually broadcast on the local news!

After the lecture, we brought the guests back to their hotel for a short break—though it turned out to be more of a pause than a rest. I realized I had forgotten my clipboard, which had the translated scripts for the speeches later that evening. Therefore, after I rushed to reprint the documents, we hurried back to the hotel to pick up the guests and head to the final event of the day: dinner.



Samuel Ullman Lecture

Though we might normally go somewhere like Torihei (no disrespect—I love their karaage), this time we dined at the famous Rinkokaku, as it was a much more formal affair, with the mayor and several other distinguished guests in attendance.

The meal was served in courses, each more delicious than the last. That said, like many interpreters before me, I found myself unable to properly enjoy most of the dishes, despite my best efforts to multitask as both interpreter and diner.

The dinner wrapped up after about an hour, but the day wasn't quite over yet. Since we were already there, we gave the guests a tour of Rinkokaku. The tour was led by a master builder who used a lot of technical terminology I wasn't entirely familiar with, but I think I managed to interpret it well enough (emphasis on think).

Finally, the day came to an end around 9:30 p.m. It was a long and demanding day, but I still had one more day of interpreting ahead of me.



Meeting w/Mayor

The last day started early. After picking up the guests at around 10 a.m., we brought them to City Hall to meet with the mayor. The visit felt more like a casual conversation than a formal meeting, which made things easier for me. After exchanging remarks and gifts, we took some photos before leaving City Hall to drive our guests to Takasaki Station, where we said our goodbyes, bringing their visit to a close.

Overall, the visit went very smoothly, and it was truly a privilege to meet and interpret for Honorary Consul General and his wife as well as Samuel Ullman's descendant. I'm already looking forward to their next visit—or maybe even the chance to visit Birmingham myself.