

Student Exchange Committee

Chad Tsuyoshi Okawa and Lauren Kana Suzuki represented the Hawaii Federation of BWA as participants in the BWA Student Exchange Program, which was hosted by the Buddhist Women's Federation of Japan from July 3-10, 2025.

During the first half of their trip, Chad and Kana participated in the same activities as YBICSE (Young Buddhist International Cultural Study Exchange). They stayed at Monbou Kaikan near Honzan, visited Honzan, attended the morning service, and explored some historical sites within the Hongwanji premises. They took a trip to Hiroshima to visit the Peace Memorial Museum and Hiroshima Betsuin. They listened to an atomic bomb survivor's testimony at Hiroshima Betsuin. They also toured Nara, Mt. Hiei, Otani Mausoleum, and Kyoto Women's University for fellowship with college students.

During the second half of their trip, Chad and Kana took part in the official BWA Student Exchange Program activities, which included a homestay in Toyama Prefecture. They stayed at the home of Ms. Momoyama, a member of the BWA Federation of Japan, in Toyama City. According to Kana's report, they participated in various cultural activities, including wearing a kimono, attending a tea ceremony, picking cucumbers and tomatoes, and enjoying Japanese barbecue. Four Fujinkai ladies also met with them to do a washi paper-making workshop, with some traveling hours by car, just to spend a few hours with the exchange students. Both Chad and Kana mentioned that their host family was very kind and welcoming.

Before the homestay portion, they had an official audience with Lady Ruzumi Ohtani at Honzan. Chad performed three Gatha pieces (Ondokusan, Asoka no Sono, and Seiya) while playing the Shinobue (Japanese flute) in front of her. Kana and Lady Ohtani discussed Jodo Shinshu teachings. She also talked about the preparations for the upcoming World BWA Convention in Hawaii in 2027.

They had a wonderful time in Japan and safely returned to Hawaii. We hope this experience will have a positive influence on their lives and encourage them to become more involved in BWA activities at their respective temples.



July 1, 2025, Daniel K. Inouye International Airport

Respectfully submitted
Karen Kikukawa and Yoshiko Umitani
Student Exchange Committee co-chair