

Japanese visitors tour Dakota

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Dakota High School principal Paul Sibley led Japanese visitors from Yasu City on a tour of Dakota July 14.

Although school is out for the summer, Dakota High School in Macomb Township provided an education in U.S. culture to 12 visitors from Yasu City, Japan, on July 14.

“They went on a tour with principal Paul Sibley ... We demonstrated the technology in our classrooms. We showed them the SMART boards and the technology offered,” Chippewa Valley Director of School and Community Relations Diane Blain said. “They went through the CTE classrooms and saw things like the pool and the gym and the atrium.”

The visit to Dakota was part of a larger cultural exchange between Clinton Township and Yasu City that has been ongoing for 21 years, according to Debbie Staller, the administrative aide to the Clinton Township Board of Trustees. Staller said that this year local families hosted 12 Japanese visitors, and next year Clinton Township citizens will visit Japan.

The Japanese visitors arrived on July 11 and followed a lengthy schedule of events that included trips such as Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, Comerica Park, the Clinton Township Police Department, the Clinton Township Fire Department, the Clinton-Macomb Public Library Main Branch and Dakota High School. The visit concluded on July 19, Staller said.

Staller said that no Clinton Township money is used in the program, and that the exchanges are funded through fundraising and donations.

This year’s group from Japan included at least five 12-year-old students, according to Staller. This made the tour of Dakota High School particularly interesting to the visitors, Blain said.

“We had several young people on the tour, middle school students about 12 years old,” Blain said. “They liked being able to see the big high school.”

The Japanese visitors toured Dakota’s main campus from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

“I think they liked to view Dakota, it is the largest high school in Michigan from one of the biggest districts. It is very different from their schools and things, and their school experiences, so it is very interesting to them,”

Blain said. “They were explaining to us that their average high school or a high school in their area would be something like 1,000 students, where Dakota next year is going to be 2,800. They were just amazed by the size of it all and the different programs we offer.”

On July 15, the Japanese visitors put on a four-hour festival at the Clinton-Macomb Public Library Main Branch in Clinton Township. The festival included games, traditional Japanese food and other displays designed to highlight Japanese culture.

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