



College Women's Association of Japan

Presents

40 YEARS OF VVI

Volunteers for the Visually Impaired
40th Anniversary
1975 ~ 2015





Mock Interview /Interviewers Meeting
at Special Needs School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba



English conversation classes and
Christmas Party at the Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind



Introduction

Volunteers for the Visually Impaired (VVI) is a committee within the College Women's Association of Japan (CWAJ) dedicated to supporting a variety of activities for the visually impaired community in Japan. This year 2015 marks the 40th anniversary of VVI.

Founded in 1949, CWAJ is a non-profit volunteer organization committed to education and cross-cultural exchange. The organization was founded by a small group of Japanese and American women with the aim of raising travel grants for Japanese scholars wishing to study in the US. It has expanded into an organization with a membership of 450 women representing 30 countries. The travel grants have evolved into a respected scholarship and education program which offers several different types of scholarships, among which is the Scholarship for the Visually Impaired (SVI) open to both men and women.

These scholarships are funded by donations and CWAJ's renowned "Print Show" – an exhibition of Japanese *hanga* or modern prints, held yearly in October.

Established in 1975, VVI is a unique committee within the CWAJ Education programs that supports many English activities aimed at encouraging friendship and cultural exchange with the visually impaired (VI). The name of the group has changed through the years beginning with '*Blind Students Friendship Group*', then '*Volunteers for Blind Students*' and now '*Volunteers for the Visually Impaired*'. This shows how we modify our role and philosophy over the years in response to the changing needs of the VI community.

Under VVI's education mandate we have the following activities today:

- Provide English teaching at Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind
- Assist with mock examinations at the Special Needs Education School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba to prepare for Eiken Tests.
- Coordinate with the Print Show for Hands-on Art (HOA)
 - Transform selected prints into raised images which are exhibited at the Print Show for the VIs to touch and appreciate. This is a first in Japan.
 - Act as art guides for the VI visitors.
- Offer Braille service upon request
 - Have produced several songbooks and a children's picture book "*Guri and Gura*".

- Provide a Newsletter 3 times a year where we inform the VI of events within CWAJ and provide VIs with interesting articles
- Hold English Conversation Gatherings 3 times a year -- A relaxed and friendly forum where friendship and exchange of ideas is encouraged
- Provide guides for VI students who wish to apply for CWAJ scholarships, foreign VI visitors and for conferences and meetings for the VIs.

During the past 40 years, VVI has witnessed its VI friends mature into fine men and women leading active, productive lives, traveling the world and contributing to society. VVI is not only proud of its long association and friendship with the VIs, but is also grateful to the dedicated members for their ongoing dedication and service.

History of VVI

- 1974 Michiko Mitarai, a CWAJ member, recruited volunteers to read English textbooks and to teach English to VI university students with a notice in the CWAJ newsletter
- 1975 A group to help VI students was formed. Volunteers were sent to international seminars organized by the National Council of Social Welfare Institute for the Blind.
- 1976 Blind Students Friendship Group (BSFG) was formed as an interest group to provide services like translation, tape recording, reading and Braille transcription to VI university students, in English and other languages.
- 1978 CWAJ Scholarship for Visually Handicapped Graduate Students was inaugurated, a first for Japan. BSFG translated and distributed scholarship information. Other programs which were initiated were book ordering service, making it possible for English Braille books to be ordered from the US Library of Congress; Tape rental service, "Blind Students Tape Bank" .
- 1979 BSFG became a special committee of the CWAJ Scholarship Committee and was renamed Volunteers for Blind Students (VBS). Native English speaking volunteers began assisting English classes at the School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba. The book "If You Could See What I Hear" written by Tom Sullivan, a blind singer-songwriter was translated into Japanese by VBS members. Nine thousand copies were sold.

- 1980 Scholarship Committee expanded VI Scholarship criteria to include 3rd and 4th year university students.
- 1981 VBS became a standing committee of CWAJ.
- 1984 VBS Committee became a part of the Education area of CWAJ following organizational restructuring.
First “Barbecue Party” (later known as Picnic and subsequently Annual Party) ~~which is now discontinued~~ was held at CWAJ member Mineko Imamura’s house.
- 1985 VBS began assisting at international conferences: The Optacon Seminar, The Asia-Pacific Workshop of Dependent Persons International, The Japan-US Conference on the Handicapped, etc.
VBS received an award from The Japan Optacon Committee for assisting at the Optacon Seminar.
English Braille transcription service was started.
- 1986 VBS English Songbook in Braille – the first English song book in Braille in Japan was published.
- 1987 A fundraising concert featuring world famous violinist Mr. Takayoshi Wanami was held at the New Zealand Embassy.
VBS was awarded by the Japan Council of Social Welfare Institution for the Blind for its contribution to the VI community.
The first VBS Employment Information Workshop was held for VI students.
- 1988 VBS English Songbook in Braille Vol. 2 was published.
"VBS Student Newsletter" in Japanese Braille was started.
The first Table Manners Workshop for VI students was held.
- 1990 15th Anniversary of VBS was celebrated
CWAJ/VBS 15th Anniversary Award: A special award of VBS was given to Mr. Akiyoshi Takamura, a mathematics teacher at the School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba, for his pioneering work in computerizing Braille.
A celebration concert was held at the Turkish Embassy with Mr. Genzo Takehisa (1981 CWAJ Scholar for Visually Impaired) performing on the harpsichord and Mr. Yoshiharu Horikoshi (1982 CWAJ Scholar for Visually Impaired) acting as narrator.
"VBS English Songbook in Braille Vol. 3" was published.
“A New World Which I Found in California - with Yuria, My Guide Dog” written by Seiko Kodama, was translated into English by a VBS member.

- 1991 VBS Student Newsletter was published in Japanese large print and Japanese Braille.
CWAJ Scholarship for the Visually Challenged was offered for the first time to students pursuing graduate studies abroad.
- 1992 English Conversation Gathering began.
"Voice Letter" (later called "Essays on Tape"), recorded essays in English written and narrated by VBS members, was started.
- 1994 In collaboration with Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind, VBS translated the script of a Japanese video entitled, "The Twenty Year Course of the Optacon" into English. A team of native English speakers records a "voice-over" at Canon, Inc.
- 1995 20th Anniversary of VBS was celebrated.
CWAJ / VBS 20th Anniversary Award: Ms Julia Cassim was selected for her exceptional work on increasing access for the VI to museum collections in Japan.
VBS 20th anniversary concert was held at Taisei Kensetsu Hall with three visually impaired musicians – Mr. Fujihiro Tanabe (violin), Haruhiro Nagasawa (piano) and Toru Amano (vocalist).
VBS history book "Passage of 20 Years as CWAJ's Volunteer for Blind Students" was compiled.
"VBS English Songbook in Braille, Vol. 4" was published in collaboration with NHK.
Weekly English classes began at the Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind.
- 1996 Hands-on Art – a special display of raised image art for the visually impaired – began at the 41st CWAJ Print Show.
VBS received an award from the School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba for its continuous contribution to English education.
- 1999 The last "VBS Picnic" was held at Mineko Imamura's house.
- 2000 25th Anniversary of VBS was celebrated.
VBS 25th anniversary concert was held at the Canadian Embassy, featuring violinist Mr. Hajime Minamisawa (1999 CWAJ Scholar for the Visually Impaired), Special Needs School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba Alumnae Hand Bell Choir, and The Sleepy Head Beans Gospel Choir.
"English Songbook in Braille, Vol. 5" was published.
"Voice Letter" was re-named "Essays on Tape."
VBS Annual Party was held at a new venue - Tokyo Tomin Church.

- 2001 VBS changed its name to Volunteers for the Visually Impaired (VVI)
- 2003 Hands-on Art was mounted again at the CWAJ Print Show after a year's hiatus.
A new logo for VVI was adopted.
The last "*Essays on Tape*" was produced on tape & CD. With technological advances, demand of this program was decreasing. Recording was still offered on request.
- 2004 Hands-on Art formally became a subcommittee of the Print Show.
Scholarship Committee expands the criteria for the Scholarship for the Visually Challenged to include 2nd year university students.
- 2005 30th Anniversary of VVI was celebrated.
"*Guri and Gura*", an English children's picture book, was published in Braille with raised images for the first time in Japan.
Anniversary English Conversation Gathering was held at Amway at the end of the year.
VVI History booklet "*30 Years of VVI*" was compiled.
Scholarship for the Visually Challenged was renamed Scholarship for the Visually Impaired.
English Conversation Gathering and Foreign Students' Circle held joint events for the first time in March and May.
- 2006 Began paired teaching system at JVDCB.
Uploaded English Conversation Gathering information on CWAJ website in both Japanese and English.
First joint event held with Friends of Music.
- 2007 English Conversation Gathering Staff was created: Program, VI, Volunteer and Food Coordinators.
2nd joint event with Friends of Music was held.
VVI discontinued English classes at Tsukuba High School and began a new program, Mock Interviews for the Eiken English Proficiency Test.
- 2008 On Jan. 25th, an Italian Charity Concert was organized by the Italian Women's Association at the Italian Cultural Institute, which raised 800,000 yen for CWAJ. Special performance by the Kimura sisters.
- 2009 Blind Soccer Event was held with Children's English Circle and Foreign Students' Circle.
Began sending voice messages to VIs.
- 2010 Blind Bowling Event was held.
VVI celebrated its 35th Anniversary.
JVDCB donation was raised from 3,000yen to 4,000 yen per lesson.

- 2011 VVI began teaching a half-year course in addition to the full-year course at JVDCB.
 Due to the March 11 disaster, the first English Conversation Gathering was held on the morning of April 9th at a new venue, the Iris Josei Center in Shibuya.
 The second English Conversation Gathering was held at the Embassy of South Africa.
 A Charity Concert was held at Pasona Hall to raise funds for visually impaired victims in Fukushima.
- 2012 There were a record number of VIs participating in the English Conversation Gatherings this year as it was held at several embassies and also due to voice mail.
 JVDCB teachers' meeting was held for the first time in VVI history.
- 2013 A guided tour at the Yokohama Museum of Art was held as one of the English Conversation Gatherings.
 A music outing was held as a joint English Conversation Gathering-Friends of Music event at St. Alban's Church.
- 2014 Programs on the Philippines and Christmas in Austria were held at English Conversation Gathering. Three Tsukuba Mock Interviews were held.
- 2015 The first English Conversation Gathering was held at the Austrian Ambassador's Residence. The Kimura sisters performed. The second English Conversation Gathering was a joint Blind Bowling event with Foreign Students' Circle.
 The Braille Committee made Braille "Thank You" cards for Hands-on Art, CWAJ Print Show as well as for the 40th Anniversary Celebration.
 The number of subscribers for the VVI News Letter hit 200 nationwide.
 Three Mock Interviews for the Eiken English Proficiency Test were held at Special Needs School for the Visually Impaired, Tsukuba University.
 The 40th Anniversary Celebration was held at the 100th Anniversary Memorial Hall of Gakushuin University on Dec. 12th. Performers were Yusuke Anazawa and Hajime Minamisawa accompanied by the Kimura Sisters. Speakers were Rie Yasuhara, CWAJ VI Scholar and current CWAJ member, and Fumikazu Sato, former JVDCB student who is currently studying at Tokyo University for a doctorate degree.

Current Activities

- 1) Transcribe CWAJ material into Braille when necessary.
- 2) Volunteer to assist with Eiken mock interviews at the Special Needs Education School for the Visually Impaired, University of Tsukuba.
- 3) Volunteer as English teachers at the Japan Vocational Development Center for the Blind.
- 4) Hold informal English Conversation Gatherings (ECG) to promote cultural exchange in English.
- 5) Publish the VVI Newsletter in Braille, large print and e-mail 3 times a year with articles by VIs and on CWAJ/VVI activities.
- 6) Collaborate with the Print Show and Scholarship Committees:
 - (a) Assist with the Hands-on Art Exhibit at the Annual Print Show
 - (b) Select prints with the Print Show committee for raised images and organize workshops for guides and volunteers.
- 7) Assist with the Scholarships for the Visually Impaired, Domestic and Study Abroad Programs.
- 8) Two scholarships to visually impaired Japanese or permanent resident students (male or female) for undergraduate or graduate study in Japan or overseas are awarded yearly. VVI works closely with the Scholarship Committee and offers support with publicity and providing guides.

**CWAJ Scholarship for the Visually Impaired
1978 – 2015 Recipients**

1978	Ryoichi Namai	Tokyo Institute of Technology	Physics
	Akiko Shibata	Okayama University	Literature
1979	Mamoru Fujiyoshi	University of Tsukuba	Math
	Mitsuto Tanaka	Doshisha University	Literature
1980	Fumio Obara	Kansei Gakuin University	Sociology
1981	Genzo Takehisa	Tokyo Nat'l Univ. of Fine Arts	Musicology
1982	Seok-yun Choe	Wako University	Psychology
	Yoshiharu Horikoshi	University of Tsukuba	Linguistics
1983	Akiyoshi Takamura	Rikkyo University	Math
	Yachiyo Murakami	Takeshita Kansei Gakuin University	Social Welfare
1984	Jun Ishikawa	Tokyo University	Sociology
	Katsuhiro Mori	Kyoto Foreign Language Univ.	Literature
1985	Takuji Murata	Tokyo Municipal University	Civil Law
	Yuichiro Yamashita	Miyagi Kyoiku University	Math
1986	Satoshi Fukushima	Tokyo Municipal University	Education
	Yoshiharu Horikoshi	University of Tsukuba	Linguistics
1987	Fumihito Tanaka	Wako University	Humanities
1988	Kiyohide Ito	Wako University	Psychology
1989	Yoshinori Shimazu	Chuo University	Law
1990	Reiko Takahashi	International Christian Univ.	Psychology
1991	Manabu Aoki (Study Abroad)	Central Washington Univ.	TESL

	Masao Murai	Chuo University	German Literature
1992	Toshiaki Aomatsu	International Christian Univ.	Int'l Law
	Yasuhiko Takeda	Doshisha University	Sociology
	Mayuko Baba	Sophia University	Literature
1993	Miyuki Kaji	Japan Welfare University	Social Welfare
	Aya Matsukata	Obirin University	Literature
1994	Norihito Watanabe	Aichi University	Psychology
	Koujiro Hisabe	Kyoto University	Linguistics
1995	Eiichi Emi	Japan Lutheran College	Social Welfare
	Mayumi Aoyagi	University of Tsukuba	Social Welfare
1996	Eriko Watanabe (Study Abroad)	Univ. of British Columbia	Library Science
	Kunihide Maruyama	Hokkaido University	Math
1997	Megumi Iguchi	Taisho University	Social Welfare
	Yoshiyuki Tsuda	University of Tsukuba	Math
1998	Tomoaki Kuramoto	Osaka Prefectural Univ.	Social Welfare
	Takayuki Taniuchi	Toyo University	Social Welfare
1999	Takashi Kikuchi (Study Abroad)	Royal Academy of Music, London	Musicology
	Hajime Minamisawa	Musashino Music College	Musicology
	Koji Yoshimoto	Tokyo Institute of Technology	Physics
2001	Yuka Fujita (Study Abroad)	Boston University	Rehabilitation Counseling
	Hironobu Miyake	Toyo University	Law
2002	Takehito Ito	Aoyamagakuin Univ.	Int'l. Relations
2004	Eri Sakaki	International Christian Univ.	Int'l. Relations
2005	Makoto Ohgoda	Keio Univ. Law School	Judicial Law
	Morimitsu Urano	Tokyo University	Applied Chemistry
2006	Miyuki Shirai	University of Tsukuba	Special Support

2007	Kozue Handa	Tsukuba University	Disability Science
	Akiko Tabuchi	Kwassui Women's College	Music
	Rie Yasuhara	ICU	Western History
2008	Yukiko Abe	Japan Lutheran College	Social Welfare
	Tomomi Ishiura	Keisen University	English Communication
2009	Risa Nara	Tsukuba University	Special Support Education
	Takanori Sato	Osaka University	Human Science
2010	Daisuke Aiba	Univ. of Tsukuba	Disability Science
	Yuri Tanaka	Kansai University	Psychology
2011	Kentaro Fukuchi	Univ. of Sussex	International Education & Development
	Masamitsu Misono	Tokyo Women's Christian Univ.	Humanities
2012	Shingo Morii	University of Toyama	Biological Information System
	Ayumi Ohyama	Tsukuba University	Special Support Education
2013	Hiroki Hatano	Chuo University	Law
	Haruo Kamijo	Univ. of Toyama	Advanced Nano and Bio Sciences
2014	Shotaro Iwata	Osaka University	Chemistry
	Masaya Nakamura	Ritsumeikan	Educational Sociology
2015	Masayuki Izumi	Tohoku University	Dentistry
	Makoto Tokumitsu	Kyoto Univ. of Education	Social Welfare



“Guri and Gura” The very first English Braille picture book produced in Japan. A special technique was used which enabled the visually impaired to feel a variety of textures in each raised image.



Hands-on Art at Print Show



English Conversation Gathering



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