

Murray Language Academy- On April 15, 2011 Murray Language Academy held a press conference to celebrate their donation to the JCCC Foundation's Japan Earthquake/Tsunami Relief Fundraiser. Students from several grades were in attendance as Murray's Principal, Mr. Greg Mason, marked the occasion with a speech showing the strong relationship Murray Language Academy shares with Japan.

Two years ago, in the summer of 2009, Principal Mason was selected as a participant in the JCCC's annual JEEP exchange trip to Japan. "Going to Japan was an amazing experience. I have connected with our Japanese program here at Murray now and I am always looking for new ways to stay connected" Principal Murray said after the press conference. After returning from his trip to Japan, Principal Murray has been in regular contact with the JCCC in order to strengthen the Japanese program at his school and to better his students' lives. "I'm in it, I'm connected. Since my trip I have been searching for new ways to expand our students' opportunities." said Principal Mason. Principal Mason hopes to further expand the number of opportunities for Murray students by reaching out to other Japanese organizations such as the Futabakai School. Murray students used to participate in an annual exchange trip to Japan but have not for a number of years now and after his experience in Japan, Principal Mason hopes to be able to begin the program once again.

Murray Language Academy's fundraising drive raised a surprisingly large amount of money. "This is not a one time effort for Murray, we have done other fundraisers for disasters in the past. Last year we donated to the relief efforts after the Haiti earthquake." Principal Mason said in his speech. The Murray Language Academy Student Council presented a check for \$17,604.84 to the President of the JCCC Foundation, Mr. Kentaro Tsuchiya during the press conference. "Murray is a small school but they managed to raise a considerable amount of money" said Andrew St. John of the JCCC. Murray received many donations from parents of students, friends of Murray, and other people throughout the Hyde Park community. One donor, Chopper Trading, donated \$15,000 to the Murray Japan Relief Fundraiser. "Chopper Trading was proud to help support our friends in Japan and we as a firm are very active in many philanthropic efforts." said the owner of Chopper Trading.

Consul Yukiko Menda of the Consulate General of Japan of Chicago, told the students how much their efforts to raise funds will mean to the victims in Japan. "Someday, I hope it never happens, but someday if Chicago has a problem, the people of Japan will not forget what you have done for them and they will do the same for people here" Menda said in her speech.

The press conference was very successful. It was the students last day of school before spring break and they were very excited. "We thought today would be a good day for the press conference because it would send the students off with very positive feelings and allow for a good start to Spring Break." said Principal Murray. The donation from Murray means the Japanese Chamber of Commerce's matching efforts, which end today, April 15, come to a close on a very positive note. Mr. Kentaro Tsuchiya, President of the JCCC Foundation, summed up the feeling of the day in his speech, "I was in Japan last week and things are still very difficult. But with the amazing effort of Murray Language Academy, there is still hope things will get better."

By: Andrew St. John
JCCC