

Tenth Anniversary Celebration for the Japanese House

This year marks the tenth anniversary of an important event in the history of The Children's Museum. A decade ago, Boston's sister city, Kyoto, Japan, donated a unique and lasting gift to The Children's Museum, an 80-year-old *kyo no machiya* (Kyoto-style townhouse and silk weaving shop).

The authentic Japanese-style house has provided a "trip to Japan" for many Children's Museum visitors. Adults and children alike have enjoyed learning about daily life in Japan through their exploration of this full size two-story house. Donated by a 14th generation silk weaving family, the house was disassembled in Kyoto and shipped to Boston piece by piece. A team of five Japanese craftsmen from the Yasui Wood Construction Company, a firm that has been in business for 15 generations, reassembled the house on the third floor of TCM. The Japanese house was given to Boston in honor of a longstanding and strong sister city relationship.

Museum visitors abreast of how today's Japanese people live as they move into the 20th century, a complementary exhibit is being planned. "Teenage Tokyo" will explore the modern day life of youths living in Japan. Located near the *kyo no machiya*, the new exhibit coupled with the existing display will encourage a study of the differences and similarities between Japanese and American life, as well as explore issues of tradition versus modernity.

In addition to the generous donation of the actual Japanese House, the city of Kyoto, through many individuals and family businesses, contributed architectural planning, materials for restoration and travel expenses for the five craftsmen who reconstructed the house. In Boston, The Boston-Kyoto Sister City Foundation and The Children's Museum raised matching funds to prepare the Museum for the receipt of the house, cover expenses of the Japanese craftsmen while in Boston and develop exhibition and program materials. Also, the Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission covered all expenses during the first three years of program development.

Leslie Bedford, Director of the Japan program, says, "The Japanese House was donated to The Children's Museum in hopes that it would provide a unique medium for encouraging international understanding and good will. Through guided and unguided tours and special programs, the Japanese House has provided hundreds of thousands of children and adults with a genuine view of the work and home activities of the townspeople of Kyoto."

Programs taking place in and around the *kyo no machiya* include participatory crafts, special activities, and an annual series of traditional Japanese festivals such as New Year's Day and Children's Day. In connection with the Japanese House, the Museum has an extensive collection of artifacts, educational materials and circulating curriculum kits. The Museum also offers special training sessions for American business executives and tourists who are planning trips to Japan.

A great deal of time and effort has been put into keeping the Japanese House in good condition and preserving its authenticity. However, efforts to maintain the house in its original condition have caused the House to become outdated. In Japan, many of the Kyoto-style town houses are being remodeled or, in some cases, destroyed. As a result, Boston's Japanese House is becoming a rare model of 19th century Japan. In an effort to keep

The installation of the *kyo no machiya* was an amazing event. It could not have happened without the many foundations, corporations and individuals who support TCM. On December 3, in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Japanese House, The Children's Museum is holding a celebration to thank all those involved in the Japanese program.

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