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News Release

For Immediate Release

Japanese Softball Team to Visit Springfield

An all-star men's fast pitch softball team from Springfield's sister city, Isesaki, Japan, will visit Springfield later this month, playing several friendly games with local teams at Killian Sport Complex.

Fourteen players, ranging in age from 24 to 62, will be in Springfield June 27 through July 2. Cindy Jobe, coordinator of the Springfield Sister Cities Association, said this will be the ninth softball team exchange between Isesaki and Springfield since former Springfield-Greene County Park Board Director Dan Kinney prompted the first exchange in 1993.

"Dan Kinney, as a city department head, was invited to a reception with city officials from Isesaki," recalled Jobe. "When he was being introduced to the group, he tossed a softball to one of the Japanese guests and said, 'Challenge.' Later that year, a team from Springfield visited Isesaki for the first softball exchange. Softball is a common language in both Springfield and Isesaki."

Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens will officially welcome the team to Springfield at a brief ceremony Thursday, June 28, 9:30 a.m., at the Busch Municipal Building, 840Boonville Ave. The visiting team will present official greetings from Isesaki Mayor Igarashi.

The team plays its first game against Springfield-Greene County Park Board Men's Fast Pitch league all-stars Friday, June 29, 7 p.m., in Killian Stadium at Killian Softball Complex, 2141 E. Pythian. Opening ceremonies, including ceremonial first pitches, begin at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$1.50.

Games continue Saturday, June 30, with a doubleheader at Killian, coinciding with the 26th Annual Girls Youth Fast-Pitch Summer Classic. The Isesaki team plays at 10 a.m. against the Springfield Phoenix, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board Men's Fast Pitch league champions. At 1:30, the team will face the Tulsa Gray Sox Fast Pitch team. Admission is \$4, as part of the tournament.

Between the games, the exchange team will be honored guests at an induction ceremony for Springfield Softball Hall of Fame. Inductees to be honored include:

- Jerry Mallonee: Playing Ability- Fast Pitch
- Rick Blaine Hale: Playing Ability- Slow Pitch
- Mark Nelson: Meritorious Award
- Springfield Thunder Women's Slow Pitch: Team Award

The final game is a mix-and-match reunion game with players and umpires from previous Isesaki softball exchanges. It begins at 10 a.m. Sunday, July 1, at Killian. Admission is \$4, as part of the tournament.

The Isesaki softball exchange is coordinated through a partnership between the Sister Cities Association, the Springfield Amateur Softball Association (ASA) and the Springfield-Greene County Park Board. Players on this exchange and previous trips travel at their own expense.

For more information, visit PeaceThroughPeople.org. For media inquiries, call Cindy Jobe, Springfield Sister Cities Association coordinator, at 417-353-3464; or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Public Information Administrator for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, at 417-874-2176 or 417-224-5510.