

March 17, 2011

News Release

For Immediate Release

Sister Cities News Conference to Focus on Japanese Relief Efforts

The Springfield Sister Cities Association will hold a news conference at 11 a.m., Friday, March 18, in the first floor of the Busch Municipal Building, 840 Boonville Ave., to discuss how those in the Springfield area can donate money to aid earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan. The conference will also highlight local fundraising efforts by students at Drury University and Summit Preparatory School as well as the SSCA. Representatives from each group will be present to discuss those efforts.

The money will be sent to Springfield's sister city, Isesaki, Japan, for residents there to donate to relief efforts in their country as they see fit.

Isesaki residents raised and donated nearly \$17,000 and sent nine Master Gardeners to Springfield to help rebuild the Japanese Stroll Garden at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park following the 2007 ice storm. They also sent funds to Springfield following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina, entrusting their American counterparts to send the money to where they thought it would do the most good in each case.

SSCA raised \$1,400 at its annual meeting last Friday, just more than 24 hours after the earthquake in Sendai. However, SSCA hopes Ozarkers can do even more in the coming weeks.

"At the time of our event last week, there hadn't yet been much time to assess the extent of the damage," said Springfield City Councilmember Bob Stephens, a member of the Sister Cities Association Board. "Now we know the true severity of the situation, and we know that it's going to be a very long road to recovery for our friends in Japan."

The Community Foundation of the Ozarks has offered to set up a fund for tax-deductible local donations to Isesaki. The fund can serve as a clearing-house for local efforts, no matter how big or how small. More information will be made available at the news conference.

For more information, contact: Bob Stephens, Springfield Sister Cities Association Board, via the City Clerk's Office at (417) 864-1651 or (417) 864-1443.

Springfield Sister Cities Association (SSCA)

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