Around April to May, buds of cherry blossoms start to bloom and their beautiful pinkish leaves change the color of the entire Japanese islands from South to North. During this time, Japanese people enjoy feeling the fresh spring breeze, smelling the beauty of Japanese nature, and watching whole bunches of flower petals swirl about in the wind like huge particles of snow falling; some people even take pleasure from drinking alcohol under the cherry blossom tree. These activities celebrating the transition from spring to summer usually bring smiles to Japanese people. However, on March 11th, the biggest earthquake in history took away smiles from Japan.

At 1 am on the day, I had a phone call from my mom saying, “A horrible and huge earthquake struck the north part of Japan, and even shook my house.” Even though my parents live in Osaka, located more than 350 miles away from the earthquake’s origin, the energy shook almost all the islands of Japan. While watching the live news of the tsunami attacking, destroying, and swallowing an entire city in north Japan, the incident seemed surreal. But repeatedly watching the ghastly news about the Japanese disaster over and over finally made me realize that the unpleasant incident actually happened in my country. My emotion was a constellation of confusion, sadness, anger and hopelessness, but at the same time, although I was not in Japan, I started to think about what I could do to help my country from where I stood.

A week later, I joined advisors from ISP and students from across the globe in a gathering on campus and together we founded a volunteering team called Highline Supports Japan. In the meeting we came up with various ideas to help Japan, such as bake sales, contacting famous people, and creating videos and written messages for Japan.

At first, we built a message board on the second floor of the Student Union and asked students to write messages on red, circular paper, which represents the Japanese flag. I have read all of the cheerful messages and am amazed how many people care and want to help Japan. We also participated in the Cherry Blossom Festival in Seattle and asked people to write on a white paper cup encouraging notes regarding the Japanese tragedy; we then used the cups to build a memorial wall that read “Ganbare Japan,” meaning hold on, or cheer up, Japan. Before this event, I actually hated the work that doesn’t make any profit because I used to think that money is all the victims need. But while watching the people at the Cherry Blossom Festival, I realized that the moment of writing meaningful messages gives lasting memory of the critical catastrophe. Another recent event we finished was a fundraising bake sale at HCC. The bake sale was held for three days and we earned almost $1300. The messages we gathered on the message board will be sent to Japan electronically, and the money we collected from the fundraising event will be donated to the Red Cross.

Even though our country is suffering from the biggest earthquake in history, our people have strong souls, wills and guts to recover our homeland; we have the strength to stand, on every part of the world, and wait until we can once again wear smiles on our faces and watch the beauty of the cherry blossom as we used to.
Welcome!
By: JingJing Hu (Right)
From: China

Hi, my name is Jing from the capital of China, Beijing. During my second quarter at Highline, I volunteered to be a member of the International Student Programs Welcome Team, a student organization that welcomes and plans events for new students. I took part in planning the spring quarter new student orientation to step out of my comfort zone and adapt to the college life faster.

At our table, there was one Korean student, one Taiwanese student, one Hong Kong student and two Burmese students. At first, they were too shy to talk, some of them were not good at speaking in English and some didn’t have the confidence to talk with strangers. Although I was a shy person, if I didn’t say anything they wouldn’t say a word either. Eventually, I encouraged myself to talk to them first and shared my experiences and feelings when I first came to America. I thought we might have the same feeling and perhaps they would like to talk more and share their stories with me as well. During the break time, we played a lot of games together to help them make new friends and feel more comfortable and warm in the new environment.

I learned a lot from this experience. If I had not participated in this event, I wouldn’t know that planning an activity would take so much effort. We did a lot for new students to make them feel comfortable in the new environment. I am so glad that I am studying at Highline Community College. I not only gained academic knowledge, but also felt a sense of accomplishment from helping people. Meanwhile, I felt more comfortable talking in front of people in public and made a lot of new friends from all around the world. It was a good experience to organize an activity with my wonderful companions. Thanks for giving me this chance to help new students and I think we will do better in the future.

Disaster Tips
By: Marchel Rumla Klak
From: Indonesia

Being a volunteer in the Red Cross-Seattle Chapter is a great opportunity for me as a college student to gain community service experience and utilize my skills to educate the community about disaster preparation techniques that are very crucial in times of disaster. I speak to various communities, associations and schools about the importance of preparing for disaster and the security measures when disaster happens. Washington State is one of the most vulnerable states in the US, especially here in the Greater Seattle Area. With two active volcanic mountains namely Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens located in this state, we must always be ready for earthquakes that can occur any time. In the wake of the Japan earthquake, I would like to give a few tips based on The American Red Cross Disaster Guide on how to prepare for disaster, especially earthquakes, and how to react when it is happening.

If there is an earthquake happening and you are inside a building near an accessible exit, get out as quickly as possible and move away from the building to prevent injuries by the falling debris.

If your position is on the higher floors where you cannot get out of the building easily, find a sturdy table, duck under it and hold on until the tremor totally stop.

Don’t move out immediately if the tremor stops for a while because there will always be aftershocks following the major earthquake. It is better to wait until the tremor completely stops then you can move out.

If you are outdoor or driving and there is an earthquake, find a clear spot where there’s no building, tree or power line and stay there. Stay away from bridges and slopes because they can collapse and triggered landslides. Clear the wall around your bed from hanging pictures, painting or any kind of heavy decorations since they can fall down on you if there is earthquake while you are sleeping.

We in Greater Seattle Area don’t have the potential for a major tsunami because we are protected from the open ocean by the peninsula, different from the areas in Japan where most of them are exposed to the Pacific Ocean and have ongoing potential for tsunami. The next crucial part in disaster preparation is preparing your own or your family disaster supplies kit. The disaster supplies kit is a survival kit for you in time of disaster. Store your supplies in a duffel bag, backpack or covered trash receptacles near accessible places such as near the door, for example. Items you should put in the kit are food, water, portable radio, extra fresh batteries, flashlights, first aid kit, medications, cash and coins, copies of personal identification and important documents such as driver license, passport, etc., utensils, matches in a waterproof container, one complete change of clothing and footwear per person and blankets or sleeping bag. In addition to all of this, put a flashlight and sturdy shoes under your bed for extra precaution.
**Big Love For Japan**  
By: Shiori Yamada  
From: Japan

I went back to Japan last winter and had so much fun with my family and friends. I was planning to return to the States on March 24th but on March 11th at 2:46 pm, a huge earthquake hit the north of Japan in the Tohoku area.

My hometown, Yamagata prefecture, is located in Tohoku. I think everyone already knows what happened in Japan and how huge and how bad the situation was, so I would like to tell you more about what happened after the disaster in my hometown and other areas.

So, what happened after the disaster in Yamagata, the neighbor sandwiched Fukushima prefecture and Miyagi prefecture?

The power in Yamagata was out for few days. We were really excited when the lights came back on because we could finally contact our friends and families. After-shocks were scary especially in the dark, luckily, we had candles and my dad was trying to entertain to us. A few days later we walked around and got supplies from stores that didn’t have electricity but were still really well organized. We got plenty of food and water, though it was rationed. It was a wise idea to limit. No one was angry. Everyone was calm and orderly. It was really comforting to see people going door to door to check on one another. Once we had food and electricity, the traffic lights started working again and then we went out to find gas. But almost every place was either closed or out of gas already. Also the trains had stopped since the quake, and the buses were on a limited timetable to only five places. So it was really hard to get out of my hometown to come back here. Now almost two months later, things are still bad. People in Miyagi, Iwate, Fukushima and the other areas are equally admirable, but are still in vastly worse condition. Please help them. Please be safe. I hope nothing will happen to them anymore.

Anyway I can’t tell you how thankful we are. So many people are trying to do something for Japan in the world. I can only say thank you so much! Thank you so much for giving your ‘big love’ for Japan.

**Stand Up and Speak Out!**  
By: Thu Thu (left)  
From: Myanmar

**What does diversity and multiculturalism mean to you?** Instead of coming up with the answer right away, my mind was filled with nothing but confusion. How could I never think about this before? However, having a chance to attend the 21st Annual Students of Color Conference (SOCC) not only enlightened my life in the US with an incredible experience, but also broadened my mind with knowledge that I have never had before.

To start with, the Student of Color Conference is the conference that is held annually by the Multicultural Student Services Director’s Council in Yakima, WA. The conference consists of cultural caucuses, many workshops that enable students to learn new skills and share the ideas and knowledge with other people. It is also a great place to stand up and speak out our own thoughts on racism and social justice and share each individual’s talent to the world. Additionally, it also gives the participants a great opportunity to meet some outstanding professors from prestigious universities as keynote speakers. What’s more, the color conference allows many students and faculty from almost all the community colleges in Washington State to come together in the same place, sharing perspectives on developing leadership, planning community action and making new friends from various places.

Together with the students and faculty from the Inter-Cultural Center who organized the trip for the students from Highline, we departed to Yakima on April 14. There were about 32 members on the trip. Despite feeling exhausted from traveling, everybody was excited and enthusiastic to enjoy and participate in many activities.

Among many workshops and caucuses, as an international student, I chose an international caucus to attend on “identity development”. This caucus allowed me to meet and share experiences, stories, ideas and difficulties with many international students from different colleges. Secondly, I chose an Asian American workshop to enrich my thoughts about the Asians who migrated to the United States. During this workshop, we discussed the stereotypes of Asian Americans and the reasons and solutions for solving these misunderstandings. We also talked about the current issues in Asian American society. Last but not least, the workshop that I enjoyed the most was the Pacific Islander Performing Arts Show. I was astounded by the truly exotic culture of the Pacific Islanders. We had a chance to interact with their cultures via performances, which not only united the people but also promoted the soul of their culture. Moreover, this workshop was not just about the performing and dancing, it also encouraged and acknowledged people to preserve the culture of the Pacific Islander and from this experience, I definitely believe that this conference unites people from various ethnicities to experience the core value of other tradition and customs.
Ichiro Suzuki
By: Yuta Tanokura
From: Japan

Ichiro was born in 1973. His father was the first coach who taught him how to play baseball and Ichiro practiced a lot with his father. He finally joined a professional baseball league in Japan. After three years, he made a new record for Japanese baseball history. It had only been three years and he was well known in the league. Finally, in 2000, his team became the champion of the Japanese baseball league. After that, he decided to come to America because America was the first place where baseball started. Baseball players always have a desire to play real baseball.

He moved to America in 2001 and joined the Seattle Mariners. At that time, no one thought that he was going to be a successful player in America. Because his body was not as strong as American baseball players, in fact, he seemed to be relatively thin and small. However, in the first year of his American baseball career, he was chosen as the “Most Valuable Player” in the United States. Especially in 2004, he changed Major League Baseball history even though he was a foreign player from Japan. He made a new record for the most hits in a season. When I saw that moment, I was so impressed and was really proud of being Japanese. He was the first Japanese baseball player who became that successful in America.

How could he be that successful in baseball? It was because he was a perfect baseball player. He had the talent and also practiced really hard. When he ran, no one could catch him. When he threw the ball, the speed was like a laser beam. When he hit the ball, he always made the hit. Therefore, people often called him “The Hitting Machine”. He had never forgotten to practice. He didn’t have any weakness. He was just so perfect and that was why I respected him so much.

He is 38 years old now, but nothing has changed. His body is still the same as 15 years ago. Additionally, his skills are still developing even though he is older. He is still creating a new record every year. I’m sure that there won’t be any baseball player like Ichiro 30 years from now. He is my hero forever.
Kiran Bedi
By: Suraj Rai
From: India

In everyone’s life there is someone who inspires them to think differently, inspires them to do something for their country, humanity and nature. This someone can be a man, a woman, a book, or even a movie. Everyone has one, and so do I. I am going to mention a name who has inspired thousands of people in my country.

Kiran Bedi is an Indian social activist and retired Indian Police Service (IPS) officer. As you all might know, forty years ago being a girl or woman was no less than a curse in most of the country. History says there are very few texts that show the importance of women in this world. But some women were there to change the society and their point of view. So she became the first woman to join IPS in 1972 and most recently held the post of Director General, BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development) and Minister of Home affairs.

She is one of the most respected women I know in India. Her contribution to India made her a National Hero, (though she’s a woman I should say “National Heroine”) because her work and enthusiasm is just exceptional. There are many television series being run based on her life and a few movies have been made based on what she did for the country. She is the founder of two NGOs, Navjyoti and India Vision Foundation, which reach out to over 10,000 beneficiaries daily, in the areas of drug abuse treatment and schooling for children of prisoners, in addition to education, training, counseling, and health care to the urban and rural poor.

Nowadays she’s hosting a television series called “Aapki Kachehri” which literally means “Your Court”. This show is about real life situations. On the show, she solves the problems of those who need justice in their lives. Kiran Bedi plays the role of arbitrator on this show. She has been awarded so many honors including the Mother Teresa Memorial National Award, Woman of the Year Award, the Pride of India Award, and the President’s Gallantry Award.

Because of a lack of acceptance from the male dominant society, Indian women suffered immensely. Her role and acceptance made her an important person, a role model for growing girls who was strong enough to change the way people think about what a woman can do or can’t do.

Soekarno
By: Ivan C. Ongkowibowo
From: Indonesia

Soekarno was the first president of my country, Indonesia. He was one of the most important people in the history of Indonesian Independence. Born as the son of a teacher, he studied hard during a time when Indonesia was conquered. At that time, not everyone could get an education. He was one of the lucky kids who had the opportunity and used it wisely. He knew that his hard work at a young age could impact his whole nation. After getting some knowledge, he joined some organizations that prepared for the Independence of Indonesia. He also started the national movement to get rid of the conquerors and was put in jail for his consistency in complaining of suffering that the Indonesian people got from the conqueror. After he was released, he went back to the organization and organized the law. With the help of young people, he then prepared the speech and declared the independence day of Indonesia on August 17, 1945.

He was a friendly and charismatic person. After chosen as the first president, he did not forget about his people. He liked to visit different cities and acted like a friend to the residents. He was greatly honored by Indonesian people; when he spoke, people would pay attention to every word he said. He was the only person who could unite every person in the country, especially at the time after the independence declaration. Even now people still honor him and declare him the national hero of Indonesia.

His life gives me inspiration in facing my college life. Before he could make a big impact on the nation, he started everyday from his diligence in education. His life always reminds me that big things come from the small things that we do in daily life. Although he succeeded in reaching big goals in his life, he kept himself humble to his families and friends. It inspires me to keep being friendly to people and always be willing to help my friends no matter what their life backgrounds and conditions are.

In conclusion, I am proud to have him as my national hero. His life has taught me a lot of things that help me to live better for other people and not only for myself, be a caring person and not selfish, and be enthusiastic in learning to prepare myself to do big things for other people, especially for my country in the future. Thank you for being a great example for the future generation, my hero, Soekarno.
PAST EVENTS HIGHLIGHT

Food Bank Volunteer

Welcome Team Ice Skating

Swimming Pool Party

New Student Orientation

Highline Supports Japan - Bake Sale

Highline Supports Japan - Fundraising