



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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INTRODUCING THE 2017 GOODWILL AMBASSADORS

Washington, DC [March 1, 2017] – The National Cherry Blossom Festival is proud to announce the 2017 Goodwill Ambassadors, a group of bright and driven young adults who promote cross-cultural exchange. Since 1994, more than 100 men and women have represented the Festival. Many of the hardworking students either study or have studied Japanese language and culture. As official Festival representatives, they educate youth and engage visitors. The Goodwill Ambassador program is supported by Macy's.

Tyler Crump is a George Mason University graduate student, majoring in Anthropology and specializing in Japanese Cultural Studies. He has studied Japanese for a year and a half and spent six weeks abroad in an intensive language program at Akita International University. Currently, he's preparing his thesis on the globalization of Japanese culture through pop culture media formats like anime, manga and video games. He hopes to further explore research studies abroad and to one day publish his work.

Kenneth Lee is a senior at Georgetown University, majoring in International Politics and minoring in Japanese. Having grown up in Hong Kong, Lee lived and studied for four months last year in Tokyo, where he learned about everyday Japanese life while working part-time at a convenience store at Waseda University. He hopes to share his appreciation for Japanese culture and language with the D.C. community.

D'Juan Mercado is a senior at George Mason University, majoring in Global Affairs and minoring in Japanese. Previously, he was involved with the United States-Japan Conference on Cultural & Educational Interchange. Recently, he completed a year abroad at Sophia University in Tokyo. After graduation, Mercado hopes to obtain a job in which he can help further strengthen U.S.-Japan relations.

Moe Nakahara, is a junior at Akita International University and currently an exchange student at George Mason University. She was born and raised in New York City and moved to Japan at the age of 11. Nakahara aspires to create a stronger cultural bond between the two countries she calls home.

Carolina Sosa is a sophomore at Georgetown University. As a student in the School of Foreign Service, she's majoring in Culture and Politics and minoring in Spanish. Raised in Fairfax, Virginia, she developed an interest in International Affairs, which led her to study abroad in Spain, learn Portuguese and conduct research on forced migration. Honored to be a 2017 Ambassador, Sosa is excited to learn more about Japanese culture and U.S.-Japan relations.

Justine Ty recently graduated from American University's School of International Service, having majored in International Relations and minored in Japanese. She previously studied abroad at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto. Ty is excited to see the cherry trees in bloom and to kick-start her career in U.S.-Japan relations by working with the Festival.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival is the nation's greatest springtime celebration. The 2017 Festival, March 15 – April 16, includes four weeks of events featuring diverse and creative programming promoting traditional and contemporary arts and culture, natural beauty, and community spirit. Visit nationalcherryblossomfestival.org or call 877.44.BLOOM for more information and find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CherryBlossomFestival) (CherryBlossomFestival), [@CherryBlossFest](https://twitter.com/CherryBlossFest), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/CherryBlossFest) (@CherryBlossFest).

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