

# Corporate citizenship & cultural awareness support caring communities



**ROBERT K. KNIGHT**

*Clark College president*

As I look around the world today, I can't help but think that so many conflicts result from a lack of cultural awareness, sensitivity and understanding. By celebrating the accomplishments and good of all cultures, I believe we make our world a better and more peaceful place.

Clark College, Shin-Etsu Handotai (SEH), the city of Vancouver and its sister city, Joyo, Japan are doing just that.

It is a friendship dating back more than 20 years. In 1990, John Kageyama, president of America Kotobuki Electronics Inc., presented a gift of 100 Shirofugen cherry trees to the city of Vancouver to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Washington's statehood. Under the leadership of Mayor Bruce Hagensen, the trees were planted at Clark College. Our annual Sakura Festival honors that magnificent gift.

At this year's Sakura Festival, we will honor a new gift. Dr. Chihiro Kanagawa, CEO of SEC (Shin-Etsu Chemical Co. Ltd.), personally donated \$1 million to the city of Vancouver to build a Japanese Friendship Garden. At his request, the garden is named for former Mayor Royce Pollard. We invite the community to join us on April 19 at 1 p.m. as we dedicate the graceful, glorious garden which, like the cherry trees, celebrates beauty and friendship.

Supported by its parent company Shin-Etsu Handotai, SEH is the largest manufacturer of silicon wafers in the world. In the past decade, SEH has quietly become a leader as a corporate citizen in Vancouver. Their generosity has benefited countless organizations throughout our region including the Vancouver Symphony and the Fort Vancouver National Trust. Soon after the September 11 attacks, SEH employees raised funds for the Southwest Washington Chapter of the American Red Cross – SEH matched those donations dollar for dollar. The check was presented by SEH Executive Vice President Tatsuo Ito. I believe it was the largest single donation to our Red Cross chapter during that crisis.

In 2011, it was our turn to reach out in friendship during a time of crisis. Shortly after the earthquake/tsunami disaster in Japan, Paul Montague, executive director of Identity Clark County, and I took part in a Flight of Friendship to help provide disaster relief and to demonstrate U.S. support for the recovery effort.

Our deep friendship extends beyond times of crisis. In recognition of Dr. Kanagawa's contributions to our region, Governor Chris Gregoire has named him an honorary citizen of Washington state. With support from the Clark College Foundation, the college has established a scholarship in Dr. Kanagawa's honor. Our hope is that the scholarship recipient, who will attend Clark for two years, will be a Japanese student from the area ravaged by the earthquake and tsunami and will have a connection to SEH. Our long-term plan is to build an endowment to the scholarship so that we increase the number of students from Japan beyond the 10 students we are welcoming this year.

Governor Gregoire has announced that SEH is committed to further expansion in Vancouver, producing the 300mm epitaxial wafer disk used for advanced electronic items. This is a significant signal that SEH is committed to future growth and more jobs in our region.

As we marked the first anniversary of the earthquake/tsunami disaster, it was clear that our cultures – though miles apart in distance – are becoming ever closer through the relationships that have been planted over the years among our communities, our businesses, our leadership and our educational systems.

Like our beautiful cherry trees, those friendships will develop deeper and strong roots, allowing them to bloom and grow for generations to come.