

## Path of destruction

The strongest earthquake ever recorded in Japan triggered a devastating tsunami that swept over cities and farmland.

**KAMAICHI:**  
Cars, boats swept away by waves.

**KESENNUMA:**  
Town burned into the night.

**SENDAI:**  
Hundreds of bodies found.

**FUKUSHIMA:**  
3,000 people ordered to evacuate nuclear power plant when cooling system for reactor fails.

**TOKYO:**  
4 million buildings without power; airport closed.



Epicenter of 8.9 magnitude earthquake; aftershocks of magnitudes 6.0 or greater felt.

Tsunami gained speed of 500 mph across the Pacific.

Fault lines

Pacific Ocean

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## LOCAL ANGLE

# 'It was like a wake-up call'

By **RAY LEGENDRE**, **HOWARD BUCK** and **TOM VOGT**

*Columbian staff writers*

While preparing for today's Japanese Festival at Washougal High School, teacher Shoko Fuchigami questioned whether local residents cared enough about her home country's culture to attend the diverse art and music event.

But fellow teachers' reactions to Friday's catastrophic earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and their concern for her parents' safety, lifted her spirits.

Hundreds of people are dead after a magnitude-8.9 earthquake struck Japan's northeastern coast, triggering 23-foot high waves that triggered severe flooding and tore apart buildings.

Fuchigami said she was so wrapped

# Local angle:

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up in planning the festival that she did not learn of the disasters until other teachers alerted her. Her parents, who live in southern Japan, were not affected.

"It was like a wake-up call," said Fuchigami, who teaches social studies and Japanese language and culture at Washougal High.

"This event makes me feel now (like it's) easier to connect with people ... because this event shows people care about other people's life."

In Friday morning's class, her students asked about Japan's geography and size, which is close to California's, and expressed relief her parents were safe, she said.

There are many current or former Clark County residents with personal links to the quake site and the path of the tsunami.

Thirteen of Clark College's 70 international students are from Japan, said Susan Taylor, program adviser.

Taylor e-mailed each of them early Friday to alert them to the disaster. Throughout the morning, most stopped by the group's popular Penguin Union Building lounge to check for online updates from home. Thankfully, she said, reports from family or friends have only been positive.

Another educator with per-

sonal and immediate connections was Mary Metcalf, who teaches first- and second-year Japanese language classes at Battle Ground High School. She awoke to find an e-mail from a friend who lives on Japan's main Honshu Island, where the quake hit. The woman, who was part of Metcalf's host family when she worked in Japan, reported all was well in her city.

There was a Facebook message, too, from a Japanese friend living on the far southern Kyushu Island near Nagasaki, who hadn't even felt the jolt. She reported the media was "ablaze" with quake coverage in several different languages, Metcalf said.

Quite naturally, Metcalf and her Japanese students spent much of Friday discussing the disaster.

But foremost on her mind: a long-planned spring break trip to Tokyo with three of her Battle Ground students and one teaching colleague. They're part of a group of 22 students and teachers from San Diego and Boston due to fly west in just three weeks, on a privately funded trip.

"We're not knowing whether we're going," she said late Friday morning. The early news reports indicate that Tokyo and central Japan should be safe to visit by then, however.

The many business links that connect Clark County and Japan include Wacom Technology Corp. Vancouver resident Jim Mockford, who works for Wacom, said he learned of the

## If you go

■ **What:** Washougal High School's sixth annual Japanese Festival. There will be free art, flower and sword-technique displays in the cafeteria area from 1 to 3 p.m. Japanese food will be sold. Japanese musicians will perform in the auditorium starting at 3 p.m.

■ **When:** 1 to 7 p.m. today.

■ **Where:** In the school's cafeteria commons and Washburn Auditorium, 1201 39th St.

■ **Cost:** Admission for the concert is \$3 for adults and \$1 for teens. Children younger than 12 and senior citizens are free.

quake through a tweet at about 11 p.m.

After comparing notes with colleagues, Mockford said that all their co-workers in Japan seemed to be fine. Yasushi Masuda, who spent two months in Vancouver last fall, posted that trains were down so he had to walk for three hours from Saitama to Tokyo to meet his wife and confirm that she was unharmed.

In 2008, Mockford said, he was on the 15th floor of a Tokyo hotel when he rode out a 5.5 earthquake.

"It sways a lot, and that continues for some time," Mockford said. "A 5.5 was as much as I want to experience."

As the tsunami spread, some former Vancouver residents

were waiting for the waves.

Norm and Joanne Erickson moved from Cascade Park to Hilo, Hawaii, about 11 years ago.

"That's all that's been on TV," Norm said during a phone conversation Friday morning. "Not long after the earthquake struck, they were already predicting that the tsunami would arrive at Kauai four hours later, at 2:15 a.m." Hawaiian time, he said.

"We got to sleep about 3:30 a.m.; we'd seen all we wanted to see."

Several places suffered tsunami damage, but the Ericksons weren't too concerned. Their home is in a subdivision that is 700 feet above the Pacific.

"I've always known that I didn't want to be at sea level," Norm Erickson said.

The quake and tsunami could deliver a follow-up punch, he added. Like just about everywhere else, Hawaii's economy has been struggling — and the earthquake sure won't help.

"A lot of our economy comes from Japanese tourists. They're probably the biggest spenders. Now they're predicting a big decline because of the earthquake," Erickson said.

Fuchigami, the Washougal teacher, said her native country's resolve will be tested. But people will bond together, as is their custom, to help those affected by the earthquake and tsunami put their lives back together.

"In Japan, it's common sense for us to help other people," she said. "Help other people and it will come back to you."

Friday's natural disaster in Japan also affected many of the musicians scheduled to perform at Washougal High's Japanese festival. Many of them are either from Japan or have parents or grandparents from Japan.

"You hate to see the devastation and lives being disrupted," said Karl Baxter, a trumpet player in the Minidoka Swing Band. "You feel the same way, no matter whether it's a hurricane in the United States or a tsunami in Japan."

Baxter, whose mother was born in Japan, spoke Friday with his nephew, who lives in Yokohama, and also learned his aunt and uncle there were OK.

Baxter's nephew said that Yokohama, which is about 60 miles south of Tokyo, felt like it had a severe earthquake, but did not have widespread damage.

The Minidoka Swing Band's purpose is to raise awareness about the Japanese-American citizens put in internment camps during World War II. (Minidoka, in Jerome County, Idaho, was the site of a camp.) In light of this week's natural disaster, Baxter said the cultural festival has taken on an added significance.

Baxter, who has visited Japan five times, agreed with Fuchigami that the country would rebound.

"The people really work together as one and they think as one," he said. "They'll recover, but it will take a while."