

1. Good morning, everyone. おはようございます。 My name is Yuichi Oba. I am Consul-General of Japan in Chicago. Since I assumed my duties as Consul-General just one month ago, this is my first visit to Kansas. I'm so excited to be at the Kansas City Japan Festival; the first Japan festival I have participated in as Consul-General in the 10 states I cover.

2. Thanks to the Heart of America Japan-America Society, Johnson County Community College, and many performers and volunteers, this festival has grown into a wonderful place for people of all ages to enjoy Japanese culture. The Consulate is very glad to support the festival.

3. Yesterday, I met Governor Kelly, and we had fruitful discussions on how we could further strengthen ties between Japan and Kansas in various areas including business, culture and the Japanese language education. During the meeting, we reaffirmed Japan's contributions to Kansas, and I expressed my deepest gratitude for her warm welcome to the Japanese community as well as support for Japanese businesses.

4. I also visited Panasonic Energy's facility which opened in De Soto last year, and I was able to learn more about the company's huge economic impact in Kansas, creating nearly 2,000 jobs and continuing to grow.

5. Here in Kansas, we can't forget agriculture. For 16 years straight, Japan has been the number one export market for Kansas beef. I really enjoyed Kansas Beef over dinner last night. Japan is also one of the major importers of corn and pork from Kansas.

7. While my first visit to Kansas is coming to an end this evening, I cannot think of a better way to begin my last day than by coming to the Kansas City Japan Festival. I hope today's festival brings each of you as much joy as it has already brought to me, and further deepens your interest in Japan.

8. I would like to wish for a successful festival and for the continued growth of friendship between Kansas and Japan. Thank you very much. I hope you will enjoy the festival.