

COMMUNITY

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Murray State students study abroad in Japan

Special to the Ledger

MURRAY—A pair of Murray State University students had the opportunity to study abroad in Japan this summer with the Kentucky Institute for International Studies (KIIS) Japan Program, thanks to a scholarship generously funded by Sekisui Specialty Chemicals.

Now in its eighth year, the Sekisui Scholarship has provided \$40,000 to fund Murray State Education Abroad opportunities for 32 students, with many of them being Japanese majors or minors.

This year's recipients were James West, a Japanese major and biology minor from Memphis, Tennessee, and Ray Friedland, a teaching English to speakers of other languages major (TESOL) and Japanese

minor from Louisville. Each student documented their experiences studying abroad in Japan.

Friedland, who visited Japan for the second time, spent the trip participating in several activities, including connecting with her host family, visiting local landmarks, temples and shrines and communicating with students at the nearby Tenri University, as well as teaching a lesson to a second-grade class at Tenri Elementary School. She said much of her learning was culture-based, and connecting with locals helped her demonstrate her existing knowledge while building on it, all while helping her to develop a better understanding of Japanese culture.

"Without the financial support of Sekisui, it would have

been incredibly difficult — if not downright impossible — for me to return to Japan and thereby gain all of these wonderful experiences that have benefited me not only academically and in reference to future job opportunities, but have contributed to my happiness and confidence in my language proficiency," Friedland said. "I feel more prepared than ever before to take on the world and hopefully nurture the students of today into the global community of tomorrow. I would like to thank Sekisui deeply from the bottom of my heart for their support and encouragement of individuals wishing to make connections and establish experiences."

West said he particularly enjoyed visiting the island of Miyajima, where he joined fellow

KIIS participants in climbing to the peak of Mt. Misen.

He said the trip helped him gain confidence in his own understanding of the Japanese language. By immersing himself in Japanese culture and speaking little English during his stay, he had an opportunity to develop his linguistic skills and better understand the country in person.

"I want to give my genuine thanks to everyone at Sekisui that enabled myself and Ray to receive the assistance we did to go on the KIIS program," West said. "KIIS was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I was only able to participate in because of the kindness and generosity of Sekisui, and I will always appreciate every bit of the assistance that I was given." ■



Photo provided by Monte Below. A pair of Murray State University students, Ray Friedland and James West, had the opportunity to study abroad in Japan this summer with the Kentucky Institute for International Studies (KIIS) Japan Program. Friedland is pictured on the far right with