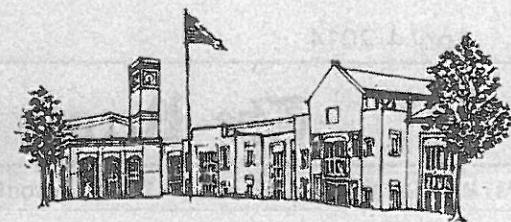


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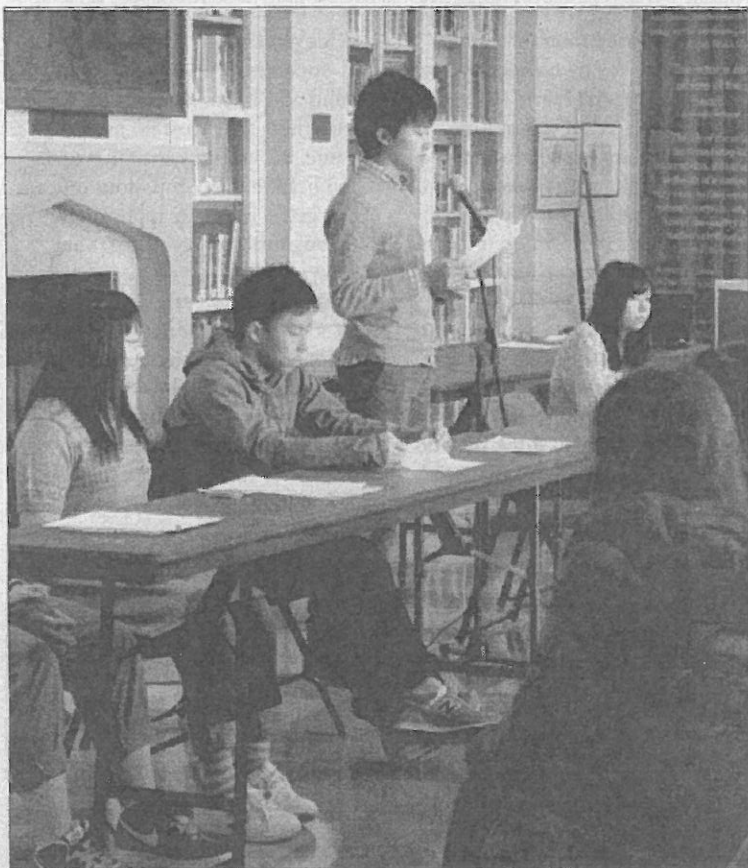
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Maddie Bender/Staff Photographer

High school students from Japan, at left, share their experiences with the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, natural disasters which triggered the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant explosion. French students and their hosts, at right, sightsee during their spring break trip to France.

Cultural exchanges promote understanding

MADDIE BENDER
Staff Writer

Japanese visitors describe experiences with natural disasters

Visiting students from Japan gave firsthand accounts of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and subsequent reconstruction during a presentation on Monday.

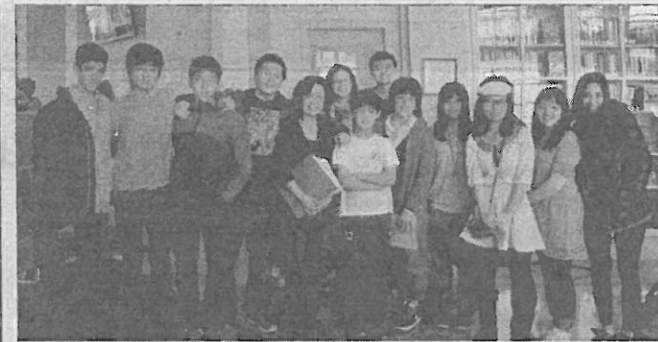
These natural disasters triggered an explosion at the Fukushima Daichi nuclear power plant, and the five visiting students lost homes and family members. They just have started the process of rebuilding their lives.

One student, Kent Sato, used to play soccer at a field nearby the nuclear plant. After the disaster, the field was closed due to radiation and was turned into a decontamination base.

Kent decided to research the effects of the disaster across the globe. "I found out what other countries thought about Fukushima Daichi and I thought much harder than before."

Another student, Hina Habuzaki, lost her grandfather in the earthquake. "Suddenly, the plant exploded; we had not even finished my grandfather's funeral."

These students were able to travel to New York City as part of a program created for those affected by the



French students, at left, pose during their trip over spring break. Students from a Japanese high school and their hosts pose in Olshan Lobby on Monday.

natural disasters. The program, called the Ashita/Tomorrow Program, was created by Japanese teacher Mami Fujisaki for students from Japan to "dream, hope, and explore the world," she said.

"After hearing the speeches, it's nice to see that they have a positive outlook on life," Anna Daddazio (10), who hosted Habuzaki this week, said.

Hosts appreciated learning about Japanese culture from their guests and sharing American experiences with them, they said.

"It's been great to speak to someone constantly in Japanese," said Parker Levi (10), who translated *The Record's* questions into Japanese for the student he hosted. "I was able to tell Haruta was very appreciative of what we did together."

Isaiah Lewis (10) enjoyed eating typical American food with his Japanese guest. "Giving Kent his first American hamburger was memorable—that guy can really eat," he said.

time together." French teacher S.