

# Japanese mayor tours town



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Kawakami, Japan, Mayor Tadahiko Fujihara (right) and General Affairs Division Director Yukihiro Nakajima get a tour of the Berry Bowl on Wednesday during a three-day visit to Watsonville and surrounding areas. *Sister Cities* *7-14-05*

## 3-day trip includes visit to gravesite of key sister city figure

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The mayor of Watsonville's sister city, Tadahiko Fujihara of Kawakami, Japan, toured Watsonville on Wednesday, the second day of a three-day whirlwind visit to the Monterey and San Francisco bay areas. He was accompanied by General Affairs Division Director Yukihiro Nakajima and Kawakami Junior High English instructor Travis Holtzclaw, who is from Aptos.

The tour, headed up by Renaissance High School Principal Robb Mayeda, included a hands-on visit to the Berry Bowl in Pajaro, where the guests viewed indoor cooling systems, packaging and shipping methods and quality-control demonstrations.

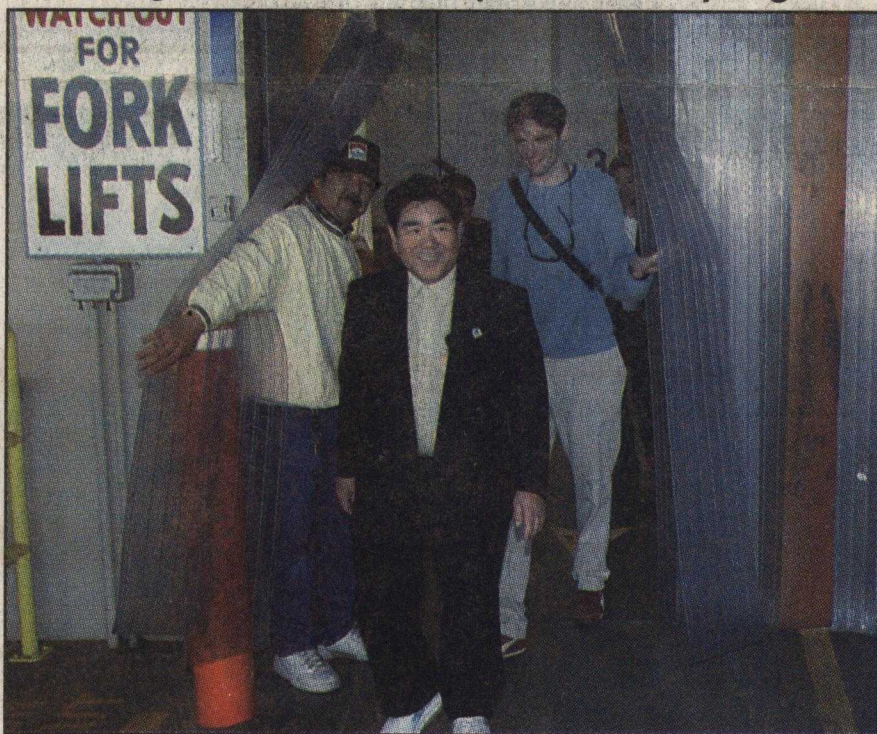
Kawakami, a small agriculture community, produces high-quality strawberries and about 40 varieties of lettuce. Fujihara said Kawakami lettuce (including Romaine and butter) and strawberries are highly sought-after goods, which he described as "famous" products in Japan.

"This factory is larger than any of ours in Japan," Fujihara said. "The scale of every part of this production, the farms, all of it, is much larger than what we have in Kawakami."

Indeed, most farms in Kawakami range from several hundred square feet to about an acre.

The three-day visit has thus far included a tour of Lakeview, E.A. Hall, Pajaro and Rolling Hills middle schools. The group also toured the new Pajaro Valley High under the guidance of Principal Pancho Rodriguez, as well as the Koda farm, where strawberries are grown for the Berry Bowl, on San Andreas Road.

Mayeda said his guests also visited the gravesite of the Rev. Sumio Koga. Sumio and his late wife, Dolis, were both key figures in the sister city program



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Mayor Tadahiko Fujihara (center) gets help exiting a cooler from Richard Etow (left), a shipper at the Berry Bowl in Pajaro, and English teacher Travis Holtzclaw.

from the very start. The gravesite visit was they main reason for the mayor's trip, Mayeda said.

Kawakami, with a population of 4,700, has been Watsonville's sister city for more than 10 years. Each year, about a dozen area middle school students from Watsonville visit Kawakami in May for a week of full immersion in Japanese family life. Then, in September, a group from Kawakami Junior High visits Watsonville for a similar engagement.

Holtzclaw, who is fluent in Japanese, recently completed his second year of a three-year stint as an instructor at Kawakami Junior High.

"It's a real treat to be back in the area

— even if it is just for these few days," Holtzclaw said.

"Our students have always enjoyed visits to this area through sister city," Fujihara said. "Though your weather is very different, the atmosphere — especially with the agriculture everywhere — is similar. I always feel welcome here. Everybody, from young children to adults, is always so friendly in your country."

Today, the sister city group heads to Monterey for a game of golf at Pebble Beach and then to San Francisco for further touring.

Kawakami students are slated for a visit in early September.