



1. This festival is the largest event in the academic year

Every year toward the end of October, Sophia Junior College in Hadano is the site of a two-day, weekend program organized by the current students and called the SJ Festival.



This is the picture of the stage at a recent SJ Festival.

Each festival is well attended by current students.

Each year the students form a committee to manage the festival. The faculty committee in charge of student life oversees the festival and links it to other extracurricular activities of the junior college. From the beginning in 1978, the SJ Festival has had a strong impact as an autumn celebration of the students. Some recent important reforms and extensions of the celebration aspects of this festival can easily be identified. We can express the recent changes in

a few words by considering that there has been a shift in educational paradigm from conducting ordinary classes as the central junior college emphasis to linking extracurricular activities more strongly with the educational activities of the junior college. This policy change grew out of suggestions of a faculty committee to consider various reforms; this committee operated in the early 21st century. Currently, the Festival offers a chance for many SJC students to participate according to their individual purposes in the largest event of the student calendar year. The 34th SJ



This is a picture of the *Sabinas* Spanish dance performance in the dining room of the St. Mary dormitory during the first junior college student festival in 1978.

Festival (2011) took place on the weekend of October 22nd and 23rd with the overall theme of “Sparkling Magic – For Our Dreams”.

2. The Historical Story of the Sophia Junior Festival

Sophia Junior College was founded in 1973. The predecessor to the current student festival was held for the first time on October 21st and 22nd, 1978. Its name was October

Festival, with an arranged expression based on a classical Japanese word for October, *Kannatsuki*. The theme was “A Maiden Voyage”. During this first October Festival, student volunteers and student circles that were especially interested in academic disciplines presented English plays



This is a picture of the *Sabinas* Spanish dance club performing on the outdoor stage. Their performances are a welcome tradition in each SJ Festival.

and prepared poster sessions and special oral reports. A Spanish dance club promoted by the Spanish nuns living in the St. Mary dormitory was at the center of the cultural presentations. The *Sabinas* dance group has thus been involved in every festival since the first one. Recent festivals have preserved this excellent tradition of Spanish dance presentations. In the early years, this program was called a student culture festival.



This is an old picture of the arrangements on the main lawn, around which small tents or booths are set up to sell things.

Professors from universities were invited to give special lectures. The dormitory festival was held concurrently with this October culture festival.

As was the custom with college festivals of that period, a popular singer or singing



This picture shows an event that was part of the selection of Miss Sophia Junior College. The selection is made by votes cast by visitors to the festival.

group was invited to give a long concert in the dusk and evening, either just before the festival or at the end of the first day. Usually the green area in front of the classroom building was used for festival events, but there was no central location where performers and audience members could assemble. For the 17th SJ Festival held in 1994, a temporary outdoor stage was constructed on the central grassy area of the campus. Among the specialized events

were the contest to choose one student as Miss Sophia Junior College

(abbreviated Miscon) and an English speech contest for the SJC President’s trophy sponsored by SEA (Sophia English Association).



This picture shows the central area of the English Speech Contest for the SJC President's Trophy.

A costume parade was started during the 28th festival in 2005. The following year, this costume parade was held on the evening before the first day of the festival. The end of the festival was marked by a display of lights that spelled out “Sophia”. Recently, the SJ Festival has grown to include oral presentations and poster sessions about the research results of each seminar. Each full-time faculty member of SJC manages one such seminar. During the Festival, there are sometimes presentations about local educational research, given by students or by faculty members or by special staff members connected to the Service Learning Center.



This is a picture of the Halloween costume parade, which started in 2005.

3. SJC student volunteer activities become involved in the SJ Festival

This junior college tries to live out the educational principle of “living cooperatively with other people and serving them”. SJC thus encourages and supports the activities of student volunteers in the local community. Many students challenge the volunteer activities facilitated by this junior college in the neighboring schools and in other citywide programs. At the same time, there are a number of SJC clubs or circles for various extra-curricular activities on campus. To facilitate student participation in such challenging activities, a committee of faculty members was created to renew existing student programs and design new ones. The faculty members meeting positively welcomed the suggestions of this committee. Far from undervaluing the results of student participation in extra-curricular activities, the teachers try to synthesize the learning in regular classes and the learning from activities outside the classroom, so that regular class materials and outside experiences can complement each other. The faculty members hope to understand and reward the students who have taken advantage of opportunities to develop their abilities through a combination of class attendance and working in the community or in the wider Japanese society. This could happen, for example, if students develop the power to grasp a problem, to think about solutions, taking them on squarely without hesitation, and to work in teams. The service learning activities of SJC are helping to foster the growth of this methodology that combines experience and reflection and to promote the development of the local volunteer activities that closely connect to service learning. Exhibitions of various aspects of these volunteer programs are also part of recent SJ Festivals.

4. Spreading the targets of celebration during the SJ Festival

While many junior colleges in Japan make much of their roots in the local area, SJC stresses its connections to all areas of Japan. This does not mean, however, that SJC is not open to the citizens of the local areas. During the events of each SJ Festival, one can experience the widening of many areas of our junior college activities and can attend various forms of presenting our educational and research activities.

■ Opening to the local area

From the 26th SJ Festival in 2003, the festival included a room devoted to interchanges with the residents of the local area. One could see there some possibilities of further opening of SJC to the local communities.. Two years later, at the 28th Festival (2005), a Halloween costume parade was started as an event for the evening before the first of the two days of the festival. Such a costume parade had started in the previous year with the kind support of the Chamber of Commerce and other local educational institutions, not to mention the local nursery schools and kindergartens closely connected with SJC students. The student organizing committee included support for educational programs directed at local children who were not Japanese citizens, based on the voluntary activities of SJC students in the local area. The parade organizing committee invited children from municipal primary schools and kindergartens, along with their parents. The actual Halloween parade was held off-campus along the roads and shopping streets near Hadano station. Thanks to the cooperation agreement negotiated in 2007 between the city government and SJC, the scale of this parade expanded. It was cancelled in 2009 because of the fear of the spread of flu among local children. In 2010, the organizers began to think more seriously about the dangers of traffic accidents that might occur if many children were walking in the early evening along city streets that also carried vehicular traffic. The venue of this parade was accordingly changed to the SJC campus and it became another event of the expanded SJ Festival.

■ Opening to the graduates of SJC

Starting with the 23rd Festival in 2000, the alumnae association of SJC, called the SophiaKai, decided to hold its annual general meeting during the SJC Festival, and to include the ceremony to award certificates to SJC graduates from 25 years ago on the silver anniversary of their graduation. To these



This picture shows the annual ceremony to honor the ladies who graduated from SJC 25 years ago. This is their silver anniversary homecoming. The ceremony was started in 2000 and is now held on one of the two days of the SJ Festival, to suit the President's convenience.

ladies who had left the educational nest of SJC 25 years ago, the alumnae association awarded a certificate in Latin that included the challenging words: You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world. Thus, this ceremony is now scheduled at a time when the alumnae can view the modern version of their old campus and can meet and interact with some of the current students.

■ Opening to the Parents' Association

From the 26th Festival in 2003, the Sophia Support Association, an organization for the parents and guardians of the current students, has provided a classroom where anyone and everyone can sit and rest for a while and enjoy delicious refreshments. This pleasant room is planned not only for



The Parents' Association of SJC opens a room for rest and refreshments during each SJ Festival.

the comfort of visitors to the Festival, but also as a place for casual conversations among people the same

age as the parents, from the neighborhood and from the main campus, and current students and recent alumnae and parents and faculty and staff members.

The SJ Festival is an opportunity for current students to communicate a variety of cultural messages. From now on, we can expect that current students will continue to find the SJ Festival a situation that they can freely make use of to present what they have learned practically by their local activities and their local volunteer service programs. At the same time, the SJ Festival promises to continue to facilitate suitable human cultural interactions among local residents, among different generations, and among people raised in different cultures.



The SJ Festival tries to create an atmosphere where there can be interchanges among people from various regions, generations and cultures.