

Japanese foundation honors former NTID dean



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James DeCaro, middle, with Minoru Yoshida, left, Pat DeCaro, Maki Honda and Bill Clymer at a reception following the presentation of a Foundation for the Encouragement of Social Contribution award to DeCaro.

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Brighton-Pittsford Post

Posted Nov 22, 2008 @ 06:35 PM

Pittsford, N.Y. —

While most people back in the Rochester area were tucked into bed last Monday night, professor James DeCaro of Pittsford was 9,500 miles away in Japan, where it was Tuesday morning.

DeCaro was one of 50 people — and the only one from the United States — who were in the Far East to receive awards from Japan's Foundation for Encouragement of Social Contribution for contributions in areas such as social welfare and education.

DeCaro, director of Postsecondary Education Network-International (PEN) at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology, was honored for his contributions to the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing people around the world. He is one of only five non-Japanese recipients.

“Imperial Prince and Princess Hitachi were in attendance and I had to practice my bowing prior to the ceremony,” DeCaro said. “In jest, I asked the organizers if I could hug the prince and princess — I had to reassure them that I was only joking.”

James J. DeCaro bio

- Professor at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Served as NTID dean for academic years, including two as interim director and CEO
- Has bachelor's and master's degrees in civil engineering from SUNY Buffalo and a Ph.D. in instructional technology from Syracuse University.
- Rotary International Scholar at University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (England) and a Fulbright Senior Scholar at Orebro University (Sweden).
- Holds an honorary professorship at Tianjin University of Technology (China) and an honorary doctoral degree from Bauman Moscow State Technical University (Russia)

DeCaro has worked in the field of educating deaf students since 1971. He is an honorary citizen of Tianjin, China, and recently was named the city's ambassador of goodwill for disabled people. He also is an honorary professor at Tianjin University of Technology.

“I can think of no other individual in the field of deaf education more deserving of this award than my good friend and valued colleague.” said NTID President Alan Hurwitz. “It is a wonderful tribute to a long-time advocate for equal educational opportunities for young people with hearing loss.”

PEN-International, founded in 2001, is a multinational partnership of colleges and universities dedicated to improving and expanding education for deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals around the world. PEN-International has 18 partner and affiliate institutions and 16 institutional members, and is funded by grants from The Nippon Foundation of Japan.

“I'm honored to receive this award,” said DeCaro, “and I hope that PEN-International's efforts will continue to reap benefits for talented young deaf adults seeking opportunities to attend college and find meaningful employment.”

DeCaro was accompanied by his wife, Patricia Mudgett-DeCaro, who wore an 86-year-old kimono loaned to her by her friend Alice D'Amanda of Rochester. DeCaro said D'Amanda's mother bought the kimono on a visit to Japan in 1922.

DeCaro, on the other hand, was the only recipient in a brown suit and salmon-colored shirt; all others were in black or blue suits with white shirts and dark ties.

“My colleagues from The Nippon Foundation who were in attendance and know me well, nearly died

laughing — very un-Japanese,” DeCaro said.

DeCaro also said Prime Minister Taro Aso was to attend the ceremony but instead met with President Bush and other world leaders in Washington to discuss the global economic crisis. Aso sent his regrets and a representative.

“Can you imagine?,” DeCaro said jokingly. “The global economic crisis was considered to be more important than being at the award ceremony.”