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sustainable japan

Jesse Green, member since childhood, updates and refines facilities

Tokyo American Club's leader ensures value

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URL: www.tokyoamericanclub.org
Hometown: Hong Kong
Years in Japan: 34

Leaders & Readers

WARREN MEEHAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Born in Hong Kong and moving to Tokyo with his American parents as a child, current Tokyo American Club (TAC) Representative Governor Jesse Green grew up at TAC. "Literally my whole life has revolved around this club," said the business executive and entrepreneur. From hanging out with his friends swimming and bowling as a kid to the first meeting with his future wife on the club's pool deck as a lifeguard, he has always found TAC at the center of his life story. With the club now gearing up for a busy year, he took time to sit down with The Japan Times' Leaders & Readers section to talk about what TAC offers members, his time in Japan and changes that have taken place since joining the club board.

"Most of my friends tell me, 'Maybe you can find some other location to spend your time,'" Green joked, but having grown up in the club, he has always been drawn to finding ways to improve the facilities for club members. "One of the things that always troubled me, especially as an avid swimmer and instructor, was that due to the weather (the outdoor) pool was only available to us from about April or early May to September," he explained on how he first became involved in the club's management. "The point was, only about half the year was available for swimming, so when I was invited to get involved in the swim committee to look at ways to keep it open year-round for the members, I found that the opportunity to help as well as my love of the club is what really got me involved."

Ensuring value for members
Since becoming representative governor in November 2021, Green has overseen many of the challenges the club has faced since COVID and is now focused on ensuring that club members get better value for their money. "One of the things we were really focused on was increasing the member satisfaction," he said. First in line for Green was to ensure that all the club restaurants had a distinctive menu and were true to their theme. "Our Traders' Bar is an adult-style bar with a sports-style theme serving sports-style food — it wasn't doing that, it had the

same menu as next door at the American Bar & Grill — and then upstairs we have our formal dining room and event space, which hadn't opened since COVID, so we wanted to start all over again and ensure that every one of our restaurants had a distinct menu with a distinct concept." With the new menus taking off, and the reopening of the upstairs formal dining, the club is now back to running a full calendar of events, including a monthly themed event in the Winter Garden lobby. "Next thing we looked at was our recreational offerings — swimming pool, squash courts, gym — and decided they were all one after the other, and we wanted to find ways to have those facilities more integrated," he said, "so we sought advice on how to better integrate our recreational facilities and rethought our wellness and health and well-being strategies." With food and beverage updated and the reordering of the recreational facilities underway, the TAC board has begun to concentrate on managing costs more effectively rather than simply increasing fees, he said. "By doing that, we can make the organization more efficient, and by doing that we can provide greater value for our members."

Sustainability and cost savings
As well as greater value for members, the board also found that concentrating on the bottom line had significant positive effects on sustainability and the club's energy footprint. "The board put together a sustainability task force to work with the house committee, and we tasked them with determining which equipment needed to be replaced, and if so, how those



HARUO MOTOHASHI

Firefighter, EMT to TAC leader

Jesse Green was born in Hong Kong to American parents and moved to Japan when he was an infant. He grew up attending an international elementary school and spending weekends and holidays at Tokyo American Club before moving to the U.S. to complete high school in New Hampshire. He attended the University of Pittsburgh, where he studied pre-med and worked as an EMT and firefighter before completing a bachelor of arts degree in communication and media studies. In 2002 he returned to Japan, where he worked with the PR consulting company Hill & Knowlton, eventually moving to the real estate company Jones Lang LaSalle to be head of solutions for the work dynamics business in September 2024. Green has been the representative governor of Tokyo American Club since 2021. He holds a master's degree in management from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

replaced resources can be more sustainably efficient in terms of materials and practices." Along with instituting changes such as more sustainable kitchen practices and energy use, the club also installed building management software that provides clear data on how the building is operating from an efficiency perspective with regard to air conditioning, heating and the use of blinds and sunshades, among other things, which allows for cost-efficient reductions in energy use.

More bang for your buck

Green believes the club's special attraction as an event space is that it lacks the meticulous rules regarding the flow of activities that other venues of similar size often have. "We're certainly not a club that will limit your experience — this is the American Club, so we're much more fluid, a much more internationally minded orga-

Times Gallery



The Indonesian Embassy holds a diplomatic reception on Nov. 20 commemorating the 79th anniversary of Indonesian independence and 66 years of Indonesia-Japan relations. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA



Panamanian Ambassador Walter Cohen and the embassy inaugurate the Panama Fair 2024, celebrating Panama's National Month, at Yumenoshima Botanical Garden in Tokyo on Nov. 20. EMBASSY OF PANAMA



Ambassador Harold Burgos and Yuko Itoi of Times Club Inc. join forces to showcase Honduras' premium coffee, highlighting its rich heritage and fostering cultural connections. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS



Yemen's ambassador to Japan, Adel Alsunaini, thanks Japan for appointing Yoichi Nakashima as its ambassador to Yemen, describing this as a sign of the strong ties between the two nations. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN



The Spain-Japan Business Contribution Awards 2024 honors Inditex Japan for strengthening commercial ties between Spain and Japan. THE SPANISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN JAPAN



Bangladeshi Ambassador Md. Daud Ali presents a certificate at a blood donation program jointly organized by the Bangladeshi Embassy in Tokyo and the Japan Red Cross Society. EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH



Concert "Japan Sings to Cuba" celebrates the 95th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Cuba and Japan. Cuban ambassador, MOFA representatives, businessmen and friends attended. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CUBA



Albanian Ambassador Ermal Muca greets the guests at a photo exhibition and movie screening commemorating the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Albania. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA

NTT's SSPP Forum shares ideas on forming communities of future

ESG/SDGs

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NTT's Sustainable Smart City Partner Program (SSPP) supports the development of communities of the future that maximize residents' well-being. The SSPP Forum was launched in 2022 to provide an opportunity for sharing SSPP case studies on community formation, and its third session was held recently. The forum brought together an impressive array of voices from industry, government and academia, creating a dynamic platform for sharing innovative approaches and tackling the unique challenges faced by municipalities across Japan. A series of inspiring sessions captivated attendees, showcasing innovative solutions and strategies. One of the forum's most memorable sessions was a presentation from Nagasaki championing the idea that human resource development is the cornerstone of city planning. This compelling discussion shed light on the city's bold efforts to cultivate talent and build a sustainable future. The session unfolded in three segments, each offering valuable insights. The first part featured a presentation by Hiroya Mimaki, a board member of the Urban Design Center Initiative (UDC Initiative), a prominent organization driving city-building efforts across Japan. He introduced a talent-development program designed for municipalities by UDC Initiative and NTT and provided to Nagasaki. He highlighted the critical role of NTT in city-building, citing the company's extensive resources and strong relationships with local communities as unique advantages. He explained how the program's uniqueness lies in its inclusive approach, bringing together not only NTT staffers, but also Nagasaki municipal employees and university students. This collaboration among the public, private and academic sectors represents a rare and innovative model in Japan. In the second part of the session, Nagasaki Mayor Shiro Suzuki delivered remarks

addressing the city's challenges and his expectations for the training program. He noted that Nagasaki became a member of the SSPP in August 2023 and has been working closely with NTT on various initiatives to tackle regional issues. Being selected as the location for the program is seen as a highly meaningful opportunity for the city. He also noted that although the city faces a serious population decline, there have been major development projects around Nagasaki Station — including the opening of a shinkansen line, the construction of a new station building and international conference center, and the opening of Nagasaki Stadium City — representing a pivotal opportunity for transformation of the city. This training program will directly contribute to the development of the city by addressing the issue of how to connect these areas with the city center area. City officials are actively participating in the program, learning from top-tier instructors to further enhance municipal initiatives. Suzuki expressed his hope that this program will deepen the collaboration between Nagasaki and NTT Group, ultimately leading to solutions for the city's pressing challenges. A round-table discussion held as the third part featured Saki Hirayama of the city center promotion office in Nagasaki's community development department, who participated in the training program; Tadahiro Hata, a senior researcher at the Co-Designing Institute for Polyphonic Society, which provides consulting services for regional revitalization; and Shin Osaki, representative director of Neighbors K.K., which guides the participants in the training program. The Community Development Social Designer Professional Course for fiscal 2024 is being held over a six-month period through February. Osaki said it gives participants substantial content to learn from, with nearly every session featuring lessons from specialists in community development. The NTT employees, Nagasaki city officials and students participating in the eight-session course attend lectures and work on problems in groups.



SSPP Forum #03 NTT

Hata said, "What makes the latest program great is that the participants can join in six months of training with members who reflect the views of the community because they include Nagasaki municipal officials and Nagasaki University students, in addition to NTT employees." Hirayama said, "It is a precious opportunity for me to be able to participate in a training program run by NTT because NTT is a private company. We can hardly find such opportunities to participate in a training program and study and discuss a specific theme for as long as six months" with such a diverse collection of people. The session concluded with remarks from three panelists highlighting the challenges of sustaining municipal service levels amid declining tax revenues and a shrinking workforce. They emphasized that private enterprises will be the key players in addressing these issues. If such initiatives can also drive revenue for NTT, they would create a win-win scenario for both the city and the private sector. The panelists expressed hope that this training program will serve as a bridge, fostering impactful case studies in public-private collaboration and paving the way for innovative solutions. Beyond the session on Nagasaki, the SSPP Forum featured an array of dynamic sessions, each offering unique insights and inspiration. Thus stimulated, participants stayed after the forum ended in order to socialize and network with each other, and excitement lingered in the venue.

Sustainable Japan Network

