

## JATP Graduation Ceremony – October 6, 2015

Ms. Anne Franz, Big Bend Community College, Mr. Takashi Yoshikawa, Japan Agricultural Exchange Council, graduating trainees, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to say a few words on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the Japanese Agricultural Training Program. First I'd like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those involved with JATP, including Big Bend Community College, Big Bend Community College Foundation, University of California Davis, host farmers, and host families.

In July, JATP's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was held in Moses Lake. The ceremony was truly memorable with the presence of more than 100 former program participants. Once more, I'd like to congratulate JATP on completing half a century of successful training.

To all of this year's trainees, congratulations on the successful conclusion of your term in the US. It is a great asset for all of you to have cultivated friendly relations with local Americans and a network among trainees. This is exemplified by the experience of former program participants over the past 50 years. Please continue this tradition.

As you all know, the environment surrounding Japanese agriculture is severe, including the situation related to free trade agreements. I would hope all the trainees will serve as leaders to transform Japanese agriculture in the increasingly competitive international market. I'm looking forward to seeing your active contributions in the future.