

JATP Graduation Ceremony – Oct 4, 2016

Dr. Terrance Leas, (President of Big Bend Community College), Mr. Paul Hirai (BBCC Foundation Board), Ms. Sandy Cheek, (Director of the Japanese Agricultural Training Program) graduating trainees, ladies and gentlemen.

I am honored to be greeting everyone at the closing ceremony of the Japanese Agricultural Training Program. From the formal education, to training on the field, and to the personal connections made, these diverse set of experiences together reflect JATP's achievements. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Big Bend Community College, BBCC Foundation, host farmers, host families and all those involved that make this program a success, exemplified by the 53 students present this afternoon.

You have all worked very hard during these 19 months. I have full faith that you will put the skills you learned to good use, serving as leaders, transforming and strengthening Japanese agriculture in the face of an increasingly competitive market. I'm looking forward to seeing your active contributions in the future.

I hope you will all continue to cultivate the friendly relations made during your time here with each other, with the host farmers and families, and with the local community. It is the bond between individuals that helps strengthen the relationship between the United States and Japan. I hope you will all continue this tradition following the example of previous program participants.

My best wishes for your future endeavors, and congratulations on this wonderful accomplishment.

Thank you.