

Messages for the Gymnastic Festival in 2017

From Mr. Freddy Svane, Danish Ambassador to Japan

Konnichiwa Jiyu Gakuen. Happy sports day, I hope you are all ready for a day full of fun activities. I am sad that I can't be here, celebrating this day of friendship between our countries and between Jiyu Gakuen and Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup today.

In 1931, Danish group gymnastics expert Niels Bukh visited Japan. As he travelled around Japan with his team of gymnasts almost 90 years ago, he was met with a wonderful Japanese excitement and a passion for group gymnastics, and this passion still exists today – in Japan, in Denmark, but especially at Jiyu Gakuen. I think Niels Bukh would be proud to see how you cherish the tradition of the group gymnastics to this today. I know I am.

This year, we celebrate the 150 years anniversary of friendship between Japan and Denmark. We have a long tradition of working together and the long and strong collaboration between Jiyu Gakuen and Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup is an excellent example of this.

Today, we are not only celebrating sports and group gymnastics. We are also celebrating the strong friendship between Japan and Denmark.

In 1934, two Japanese female students from Jiyu Gakuen went to Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup to study. Since then, over 50 young students have taken the trip from Jiyu Gakuen to Denmark to study at Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup and 13 of these students took home valuable lessons that

they brought to Jiyu Gakuen to teach gymnastics. But it is not only students from here visiting Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup. Both the Elite team at Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup as well as the Danish national team have visited here several times, learning and being inspired of the long-lived gymnastics traditions here at Jiyu Gakuen. Since 2003, two instructors from Ollerrup have even come to help with this yearly gymnastics festival. In fact, I know two Danish gymnasts from Ollerrup are here today, and I would like to thank them for their part in this happy relationship. Maybe you will visit Denmark and Gymnastikhøjskolen i Ollerrup too one day, teaching us more about your proud traditions and bring back new ideas to keep developing this great tradition of group gymnastics Japan and Denmark share. I certainly hope you do. Group gymnastics is an ideal way of promoting both individual and group and encouraging collaboration between the two. Doing sports together is a gateway to the future of the friendship between Japan and Denmark.

This year, Japan and Denmark celebrate 150 years of friendship and we now look forward to another 150 years. I am sure that group gymnastics will be held at Jiyu Gakuen in 2167 – 150 years from now.

I wish you all a happy sports day and hope you have fun learning and working together.

Danish Ambassador to Japan Freddy Svane