

# Nagoya environmentalism gets a boost

To its haughty neighbors, Japan's fourth largest city may be best known as a shinkansen stop somewhere between Tokyo and Osaka. Things have a way of changing, however, and Nagoyans are ready.

If all goes according to plan, Nagoya has a shot at becoming a 21st century showcase. Not as a center of industry or transport, but as the Japanese city which offers the highest standard of living. It is a city where "going green" may someday have two meanings — the second referring to its neighbors' envy.

These plans for change are not sitting on the desks of the city fathers, at least not yet. In fact, patriarchs in the region have their own grandiose schemes in mind.

Sadly, their plans to develop a huge airport and numerous high-tech complexes threaten to destroy much of the remaining natural environment in the area.

For the moment, the "greenprints" for change are in the hands of a rapidly growing community of concerned and active citizens. Their aim: to guide Nagoya and the Chubu region toward a sustainable and ecologically sound future.

Neither their concept nor their concern are unusual. Citizen coalitions worldwide are seeking to promote sustainability and benign urban growth. Japan is no exception. Groups here are organizing recycling programs and organic food cooperatives and pushing for legal and city-planning reform.

What is remarkable in Nagoya is the diversity of individuals involved and the array of activities being undertaken. Foreigners from around the globe are joining with Japanese in efforts which include government lobbying, awareness-raising events, plans for a future ecocity, recycling and eco-



## Our Planet Earth

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tours.

One woman in particular has taken a singular leadership role. Turning the famous proverb on its head, Shannon Crane has proved that the protruding nail will not always be hammered down. In fact, she has shown that hundreds of others are just waiting for a chance to make a stand.

Crane, an American who has lived in Nagoya for five years, has one goal in life: "My mission," she said, "is to be a catalyst for ordinary citizens to make a commitment to taking responsibility for our collective global future."

A bit much to bite off, some might say. But Crane seems up to the challenge, as her accomplishments so far prove.

Her primary work is directing the Nagoya Earth Day Committee, which she established in 1990. Recently the committee has begun concentrating on coordinating and planning "Eco-Design Chubu." According to Crane, the project is intended to "give an ecological focus to future development in the Chubu region."

With other activists she is also organizing ecotours of key environmental sites in the southern Chubu region. And with more than 60 other groups and hundreds of individuals, Crane and her associates are seeking to prevent the damming of the Nagara River.

She is also the international correspondent for Save Fujimae Association (SFA). Led by Tsuji Atsuo of Meijo University, SFA is working to prevent destruction of the Fujimae tidal flats in Ise Bay, Nagoya.

Fujimae has been recog-

nized as a wetland of international importance to migrating shorebirds. Nagoya bureaucrats, however, view it differently. Faced with a growing waste problem, they see the wetland as a handy site to dump garbage.

And still there is more. Thanks to Crane and Tsuji, two Japanese and one Nepalese representative attended the United Nations of Youth Alliance Conference last fall in Belarus.

As a result, a Nagoya chapter of UNOY has been established. The group will work to encourage universal representation for youth and youth organizations throughout Japan and worldwide.

According to Crane, her present swirl of activity began with a single phone call. She had been living quietly in Nagoya for two years when, in early March 1990, she saw a listing of Earth Day activities in the Japan Environment Monitor, a monthly English publication, contact phone: (0552) 28-5386.

She phoned the Tokyo office of Earth Day Japan, hoping they would let her sing at one of the events scheduled for April in Tokyo. Instead they asked her to organize an event in Nagoya.

Within weeks Crane had established the Nagoya Earth Day Committee.

On International Earth Day, April 22, 1990, as events were being held all across the world, Nagoya held one of its own. Despite rain, more than 450 people attended.

Earth Day Nagoya has since blossomed. In 1991, the event attracted 30 information booths, many entertainers and 5,000 participants. In 1992, performers and 50 different groups attracted over 6,000 visitors. This year, activities will be taking place each weekend throughout April.

"Eco-Design Chubu" will be the theme of this year's event. Nagoya has billed it-

ment and conservation activities across the Chubu region could be coordinated to minimize environmental degradation.

"Our vision is for this area to become an international model for ecological regional planning by the year 2010," said Crane.

And how do they plan to accomplish such a feat? A series of contests, according to Crane, aimed at inspiring community awareness, participation and, finally realization of the project.

In April, Eco-Design contest organizers will be accepting entries for a logo, a poster, a song and a performance. In addition, a competition will be held for Eco-Design Chubu master plans and 3-D models.

The Nagoya Earth Day Committee will be encouraging citizens to participate at every level, from conception to implementation. In short, the citizens will be asked to determine what their needs are rather than letting bureaucrats tell them.

"The idea of creating an ecological city isn't new, but actually few cities... have been able to manifest ecological city planning," wrote Crane in a newsletter she publishes monthly in English and Japanese. "Any city that does would instantly be of international interest."

"Our city leaders indicate their desire to become truly internationalized," she continued. "Perhaps our leaders could be persuaded to make a lasting contribution to the world by developing our city along the guidelines offered under the theme of [Eco-Design Chubu]."

The Earth Day Nagoya Committee is now seeking individual and company endorsements as well as financial support for the project.

The blossoming of environmental concern in Nagoya has been the work of numerous dedicated volunteers, Crane stressed. She also asked that they all be credited — by name. Clearly, Crane's experience and her degree in environmental and systematic biology have taught her the importance of interdependence within and among ecosystems.

She did, however, give spe-