

Japan Future Scholarship Program 2017 Participants



Risa Aoki Department of Liberal Arts, Aoyama Gakuin Women's Junior College
(Graduate of Yokohama Kokusai High School, Kanagawa Prefecture)

Risa's mother committed suicide the summer of her senior year of high school. While her death remains to this day the most painful experience of Risa's life, she decided to apply for the BEYOND Tomorrow program because this experience inspired her to think not only about herself, but of others, and how to help them in times of need. Her hope is to feel at home with her new friends from the program, feeling comfortable in sharing her experiences with them. She wants to be able to realize the lessons she has learned from her mother, both in her short life and in her death. Through her time in Thailand and Malaysia, studying their economic disparities and environmental issues, Risa has acquired a keen interest in studying foreign cultures and diplomacy, especially in developing countries. In the future, Risa hopes to keep her focus on tackling global issues without losing sight of the problems that affect people on an individual basis.



Yuki Abe Faculty of Law, Nihon University (Graduate of Nihon University Tohoku High School)

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, Yuki and her family sought refuge to escape the potential harms of the nuclear reactors. Her father died soon after, and Yuki spent her high school years grappling with a crippling sense of loss. When she first joined BEYOND Tomorrow, she felt she was not able to keep up with others' discussions and reflections, and she spent a lot of time crying. But with time, she opened up to tell her own story about the earthquake, and she slowly grew confident, telling herself, "I can do this." Yuki now hopes to be an unrelenting source of support for new members of BEYOND Tomorrow, just as others were for her. In the future, she wants to always bring joy to others' lives.



Sayaka Arata College of Policy Science, Ritsumeikan University (Graduate of Osaka Gakugei High School)

Sayaka lost her mother at a young age, and she grew up in a foster care group home since elementary school. When she was in middle school, she vowed to go to college, and since that time, she threw herself into her studies, night and day. Her goal-oriented efforts allowed her to not only learn more about herself, but also think about others around her. Her heart bled every time she saw impoverished people featured on the news, and she now hopes to work in a capacity where she can connect with people globally, pursuing her dream to care for others. Sayaka wants to leverage her time in college to participate in international volunteering, which may help to better define her passions.



Honoka Inamura Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University (Graduate of Miyagi Gakuin High School)

Honoka lost her childhood home in the Great East Japan Earthquake. Only a few students at her school suffered such losses from the disaster; however, and as such, Honoka felt left alone. Now, in reflection, Honoka still keenly feels the loss of her home, memories, and childhood, but she sees all that she has gained from these painful experiences: friends, courage, strength, and compassion for those less privileged. During high school, she spent a year in Bolivia, and she was struck by the abject poverty she witnessed there. She then went to New York with BEYOND Tomorrow, which inspired her to dedicate herself to tackling poverty. She is determined to continue pursuing her dreams, treasuring the new encounters and experiences she will come across on the way.



Aika Uketa Department of Children, Kagawa Junior College (Graduate of Zentsuji Daiichi High School, Kagawa Prefecture)

When she was in second grade, Aika decided to leave the foster care group home she was at to live with foster parents. She strongly believes that this decision led her to meet extraordinary people and significantly affected her life. When the time came to think about applying for university, she was faced with the reality that her options were limited due to financial constraints. Despite this, Aika still pursued university because she wanted to stay true to herself and her dreams rather than continue to ruminate about the uncertainties of the future. She hopes to one day become a teacher, motivated by her own experiences of being supported by others during her own times of need. Her dream is to be a teacher who can support children's personal development.



Takafumi Oyama Faculty of Economics, Yamaguchi University (Graduate of Matsuyama Kita High School Nakajima Branch, Ehime Prefecture)

Takafumi was born into an orange farming family on a remote island in Ehime prefecture. Ever since his father committed suicide when Takafumi was still in elementary school, he grew up supporting his mother, who had a limited command of Japanese language, and his own education by delivering newspapers. He felt that island life was too small for him; he yearned to see more of the world. He thus joined BEYOND Tomorrow as a high schooler, and the new encounters and experiences there opened his eyes. In 2017, Takafumi plans to take a year off university to be in his mother's home country, the Philippines, doing an internship to help administer English language programs. He eventually hopes to work in the food industry, highlighting Ehime's products and contributing to the local business growth.



Wataru Kanno Faculty of Science and Technology, Shizuoka Institute of Science and Technology (Graduate of Katoh Gakuen High School)

Wataru was placed into the foster care system immediately after birth and grew up in a foster care group home. There were many days when he wondered why he was not able to live with his biological parents, but he soon realized that he was able to pursue his goals thanks to the staff at the group home, who always cared for him with kindness, even though sometimes with strict discipline. Wataru nearly gave up on going to university because of financial constraints. But he followed through because he strongly felt that he needed to give back to all those who gave him so much, and he also wanted to chase his dreams of designing and building rescue robots that can play a role during natural disasters. In joining BEYOND Tomorrow, he hopes to broaden his world views through his experiences and encounters.



Masumi Koiwa Faculty of Administration and Social Sciences, Fukushima University (Graduate of Toryo High School, Iwate Prefecture)

Masumi grew up in a single father household. After the Great East Japan Earthquake, she visited her mother's home country, the Philippines, while worrying about the financial difficulties her family was facing. She was deeply moved by the sight of young children selling goods, darting between cars on their thin legs. When she came back to Japan, she left her high school and transferred into a distance-learning school. She worked every day to save up money to go to university, and finally enrolled into a night class university program. When she joined BEYOND Tomorrow, she was extremely inspired by her peers, who had experienced so much suffering. She now sees BEYOND Tomorrow as her second home, where she can speak freely about her and her family's past struggles with poverty. She hopes to eventually work in the field of education.



Ryuki Sasaki Faculty of Liberal Arts, Tohoku Gakuin University (Graduate of Ofunato High School, Iwate Prefecture)

Ryuki lost his father, grandparents, and house in the Great East Japan Earthquake. The tsunami also swept away his friends and so many things he had cherished. But he realized that what he can do as a survivor was to live life to its fullest, and not just his own, but also the lives that were lost. Driven by this realization, he continued to pursue his passion for baseball and even entered the national tournament. In the future, Ryuki hopes to work in disaster prevention, continuing to speak with others about his own disaster experience and the importance of disaster preparedness. He joined BEYOND Tomorrow because he wants to engage in conversation with people from all over Japan about the Tohoku recovery process, as well as broaden his own understanding of the world.



Mai Sato School of Nursing, Nagoya City University (Graduate of Ofunato High School, Iwate Prefecture)

The tsunami of the Great East Japan Earthquake swept away Mai's childhood home in Rikuzentakata City. She joined BEYOND Tomorrow as a junior in high school, and there, she openly talked about her disaster experience for the first time. When she looked around at the people intently listening to her, she realized how acutely she had needed this experience of telling her story. This year, she hopes to discuss with her peers her life reflections and keep participating in the program. She would like to become a nurse, work towards increasing healthcare access in rural places like Rikuzentakata, and help rejuvenate her hometown.



Hirobumi Suzuki Radiological Course, Chuoh College of Medical Technology (Graduate of Fuji High School, Tokyo)

Hirobumi entered a foster care group home as a high school junior. It was a very painful experience, but he believes that because of this struggle, he now appreciates the importance of family and human connection. His life experiences cultivated his interest in medicine, and he decided to pursue a career as a radiology technician. Joining BEYOND Tomorrow as a high school senior was a turning point in his life, and he has since been inspired to see more of the world. He hopes that, with his peers, he can continue to chase his dreams and realize them.



Nanami Takahashi College of Liberal Arts, International Christian University (Graduate of St. Georges School in Switzerland)

Since joining as a high school sophomore, Nanami has grown to see BEYOND Tomorrow as a place that helped her up every time she felt like she was ready to fall down. She made many friends from all over the world through her studies abroad in France and Switzerland, developing global perspectives, not to mention building proficiency in English and French. After interacting with people with diverse backgrounds, Nanami has come to appreciate the understated beauty of the personal pursuit of one's path, which is often not as celebrated as one's degrees or certificates. She is currently hoping to contribute in relieving the Syrian refugee crisis and hopes to eventually work in international aid.



Kyosuke Tani Department of Community Child Education, Nara Saho College (Graduate of Kyoto City Fushimi Technical High School)

Because of difficulties at home, Kyosuke was transferred to a foster family as a high schooler. Before moving in with the family, he temporarily stayed in a foster care group home, where he helped care for the younger children living there. He was inspired by the feedback that he would be good at childcare, and since then has pursued a goal of becoming a childcare worker. Though he had never had any dreams of his own, this marked a new life chapter, where he felt motivated to work towards realizing a goal he set for himself. He hopes to become a childcare worker who can help children to be themselves; furthermore, Kyosuke wants to hone his skills, serving to understand others' pain so that they can turn the pain into something positive.



Kasumi Tani Faculty of Science, Okayama University of Science (Graduate of Tokushima City High School)

Kasumi's parents divorced when she was young, and she grew up with her grandmother. Her domestic difficulties caused her a lot of pain and frustrations. But when she entered high school, she realized that while it was difficult to change her environment, she had the ability to change herself. From then, she vowed to become a strong but kind person who will confront issues with a positive attitude. Her dream is to become a high school teacher, interacting with people and helping them. Through BEYOND Tomorrow, she hopes to gain a wider perspective, acquire more knowledge, and engage in spirited conversations – tools to help her realize her dream. Her hobby is Awa Odori (a dance from Tokushima prefecture).



Mirai Hagiwara Faculty of Human Development and Culture, Fukushima University (Graduate of Shibukawa Girl's High School, Gunma Prefecture)

Mirai's father committed suicide when she was a high school senior. When she was forced to face her father's death and life, she gained a perspective that she never had before. She also learned to treat people with empathy. Though her childhood dream was to be a civil servant so that she can help create safe communities, she decided that she would like her career to be something she likes to do. In that vein, she is now pursuing a career in singing and music education. In the setting of a single mother household, the financial stressors of entering a university sparked a search for scholarships. This is when Mirai learned of BEYOND Tomorrow and applied to join when she was inspired by the idea of interacting with peers who bring a rich history of experiences, working together to find their role in society and pursue their passions.



Daigo Machinaka Faculty of Law, Tohoku Gakuin University (Graduate of Kurosawajiri Kita High School, Iwate Prefecture)

Daigo lost his mother when he was in elementary school and his younger sister in middle school. These were the most difficult experiences of his life. But when he sees them again, he wants to tell them that he not only has lived his own life to the fullest, but also that of his sister, who was able to live for only 13 short years. As such, he vowed to live life facing forward. His dream is to become a local civil servant, helping local citizens just as his hometown, Hanamaki City, has supported him. He feels nervous participating in BEYOND Tomorrow, but he hopes to overcome the anxiety and eventually be able to call BEYOND Tomorrow a second home.



Emiri Matsufuji Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kochi University (Graduate of Kochi Commercial High School, Kochi City)

Emiri participated in a high school project to help build a school in Laos, thus engaging in a relationship between Kochi prefecture and Laos. From this experience, she was inspired to serve a role to bridge Japan with the rest of the world. Growing up in a single mother household, financial constraints forced Emiri to give up on academic and extracurricular activities a number of times. However, Emiri decided not to dash her own chances of pursuing her dreams; instead of using her family situation as an excuse, she wanted to stay true to herself, and applied to BEYOND Tomorrow's Japan Future Scholarship Program. She completed a short-term study abroad in Canada, with her hopes of someday working on a global platform, with her home Kochi as her foundation.



Yoichi Miyara Faculty of Agriculture, University of Miyazaki (Graduate of Nanryo High School, Kumamoto Prefecture)

As Yoichi's parents divorced when he was young, and his father passed away when he was in high school, Yoichi lived with his grandfather. When he joined BEYOND Tomorrow immediately following his father's death, Yoichi had the opportunity to engage in conversation with his peers, and he was able to convert his sadness into motivation for greater things. He feels grateful that he was able to evolve from being just a grieving son. His father's last words have been a guiding light for Yoichi: "Don't stop half way. Make sure you follow through on your dreams." He would like to eventually become an educator in agriculture, applying his knowledge in a global scale and supporting Japan through agriculture.



Ayaka Mukasa Faculty of Humanities, Nagasaki Junshin Catholic University (Graduate of Junshin Girl's High School)

Ayaka grew up in a foster care group home since middle school, and her mother passed away when she was in high school. She decided to apply to BEYOND Tomorrow to help her relieve the financial stressors of living on her own after graduating from high school and the group home. Furthermore, she was excited that BEYOND Tomorrow allowed her the opportunity to be involved in an educational program that exposes her to international cultures and broaden her global perspective. Her dream is to work with books and communicate with others the magic of reading. While in university, she hopes to explore areas of her home prefecture Nagasaki that she has not been to, and study Japanese and global cultures and history.



Saori Morise Department of Infant Education, Aomori Chuo Junior College (Graduate of Aomori High School, Aomori Prefecture)

When her parents divorced, Saori's mother became a single mother. But when she died, Saori found herself living alone with her younger siblings. Though she had always dreamed of becoming an English teacher, she gave up that goal in order to stay at home and be with her siblings. It was around this time when she joined BEYOND Tomorrow. She suddenly found herself surrounded by peers who, like her, suffered personal travesties, but were motivated to turn their pain into an opportunity to pursue their dreams. Inspired by them, Saori discovered her passion to build a foster care group home herself. Just as BEYOND Tomorrow has helped her find her passion, she hopes that she, too, can help others find their dreams.



Noriko Yusa Faculty of Art and Design, Tama Art University (Graduate of Miyako High School, Iwate Prefecture)

Noriko lost her mother when she was young. Through her sorrow, Noriko was always convinced that her mother was watching over her, which was always a motivating force in her life. After entering university, she discovered her dream of becoming a graphic designer, and transferred out after one year in order to apply to an art school. To pull together the funds for the entrance examinations, Noriko worked whilst studying. She hopes to be a designer who can bring happiness to people, communicating warmth, love, and beauty through her design. Through BEYOND Tomorrow, she also looks forward to building long-lasting friendships that can help each other keep a positive attitude for life.