

# Sacramentans get ready to meet Japanese leaders

By Kimberly Moy  
Bee Staff Writer

About 100 Sacramento volunteers took a crash course in Japanese culture and protocol Wednesday night in preparation for the city's first international conference next month.

Japanese leaders and business people, about 200 strong, will arrive in Sacramento for the 22nd annual Japan American Conference of Mayors and Chamber of Commerce Presidents, said event spokeswoman Karen Bakula. The conference runs Oct. 10-14.

Participants at this year's event, whose theme is "Improving the Quality of Urban Life," include Walter Mondale, the U.S. ambassador to Japan; Gov. Pete Wilson; and U.S. Rep. Bob Matsui, D-Sacramento.

The conference will help put Sacramento in the spotlight as an attractive Pacific Rim city for business ventures and tourism, said former Sacramento Mayor Anne Rudin, co-chairwoman of the conference.

"We will have the visibility to establish Sacramento in place for global markets," Rudin said.

The 200 conference volunteers — half of whom attended an orientation session Tuesday night — are a crucial part of establishing a long-term relationship with Japanese leaders and business people, said conference organizer Diane Miller.

"People invest in places where they feel comfortable and wanted," she said. "Besides, they're guests. We want to make them feel comfortable."

The orientations helped prepare volunteers and staff members of the convention bureau and the Hyatt Regency Sacramento, where the conference will be held, for the differences between Japa-

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nese and American communication styles.

If American volunteers are unaware of Japanese culture, they may unintentionally insult their guests, said Douglas Lipp, an intercultural business consultant who helped give lessons Wednesday.

For example, the speed of conversation and physical distance between speakers differ immensely, he said.

In the United States, people engaged in conversations often interrupt each other in a style described as a fast-paced Ping Pong game, Lipp said.

But Japanese conversations are more like even-paced bowling, in which players plan their next move before acting, he said.

Japanese visitors talking with Americans may feel like a bowler who has rolled a ball down a lane when a bystander jumps into the alley, steals the ball and runs away, Lipp said.

Conference volunteers include members of Matsuyama-Sacramento Sister City Corp., college students from Japan, and Florin High School students who are studying Japanese.

"It will give us a chance to show off our Japanese," said 16-year-old Jeffery Chou, who is in his third year of Japanese classes at Florin High.

Conference organizers are still looking for volunteers. Those interested should call the Sacramento Convention and Visitors Bureau at 264-7718 by Friday.