

Inuyama Race – Annie Vogel Ciernia

Annie Vogel Ciernia represented GVH in Inuyama, Japan this year as part of the Japanese runner exchange program. Inuyama is a sister city of Davis and runners have traveled back and forth between the two cities as part of a cultural exchange program for almost 20 years. Each year Inuyama sends runners to Davis to compete in a local race including many years of the Labor Day Race. GVH then sponsors a runner to attend a race in Inuyama, Japan in February. This year Annie Vogel Ciernia was chosen as the GVH representative and she competed in the 10k, winning her age group. Annie's mother, Therese Vogel, also raced the 10k while Annie's husband Ben Flock and father Mark Ciernia cheered them on. Both Annie and Therese thoroughly enjoyed the race and were impressed by the number of children running the 1k and 3k races also held that day. While in Inuyama, Annie and her family also toured the Inuyama castle and other local historic and cultural areas. Annie's mother described the experience as, "...a once in a lifetime opportunity for a truly unique cultural immersion."

As part of the cultural exchange while in Inuyama, GHV runners stay with local host families. Mark and Therese were hosted by Masaki and Michiyo Miyajima with their two children Daisuke and Nanaka, and Ben and Annie were hosted by Atsushi and Tomoko Sugiyama with their daughter Chiharu. When asked about the host family experience, Annie responded that, "The host families were truly wonderful. They were so warm and welcoming we felt right at home. They took care of everything for us - it felt like we were royalty! I highly recommend this program to anyone who is interested in a truly unique cultural and race experience!"



