

# Subaru Telescope Astronomer Dr. Yuko Kakazu Appointed Education Ambassador for the OIST Foundation

*The Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Foundation appoints Dr. Yuko Kakazu as Education Ambassador to Inspire Next Generation Science Leaders*

IRVINGTON, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, April 10, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Astronomer & Outreach Specialist [Dr. Yuko Kakazu](#) at the Subaru Telescope Appointed [OIST Foundation](#) Education Ambassador

The Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Foundation ([OIST](#) Foundation), a New York-based 501-c-3 non-profit organization launched in November 2019 is delighted to announce the appointment of Dr. Yuko Kakazu, Astronomer and Outreach Specialist at the Subaru Telescope in Hawaii, as the Foundation's inaugural Education Ambassador.

The mission of the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Foundation, Inc. is to promote innovative global scientific breakthroughs through enhancing and strengthening science and technology research and related programs at the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST) and to empower Americans to support the sustainable development of Okinawa and deepen U.S.-Japan relations through OIST.

Dr. Kakazu's encounter with OIST dates back to 2014 when she was invited to host a seminar at the campus in Okinawa. OIST was founded in 2011, and Dr. Kakazu is and has been one of the early supporters who witnessed and supported OIST through its development. She has also been an early supporter of the OIST Foundation, and recounts when she was first introduced to the Foundation in 2019, explaining that she especially resonated with one aspect of its mission: inspiring the next generation of youth to get engaged in science, especially young people in Okinawa. Hoping to promote this aspect of the Foundation's mission, she decided to join the organization as a Trustee. "It's been such an honor and pleasure to work with the Foundation," Dr. Kakazu says.

Dr. Kakazu herself was a young student in Okinawa, and her own experience of growing up in Okinawa as an aspiring astronomer is the driving force for her passion in outreach. After her interest in astronomy was ignited through her participation in the NASA Space Camp in the United States, she struggled to develop as an aspiring researcher in Okinawa. Despite all the support from her parents and peers, she recalls her time in Okinawa as a student full of

obstacles as she did not have any scientist role models to look up to nor science workshops for her to develop her interest. "My life would have been completely different if OIST had been present at that time," she says, indicating the role OIST plays in providing pathways for local youth interested in science. She believes, "outreach is crucial because many students in Okinawa still don't know that they can become scientists and engineers - they don't even know such life paths exist."

As OIST Foundation Education Ambassador, Dr. Kakazu wishes to further build upon the outreach programs OIST already has for local students by expanding the programs to even younger students in middle and elementary schools. In Japan, unlike in the United States, students are required to decide their major at the end of high school or even before. She hopes to provide students with more opportunities to explore science as their potential career path before they have to make decisions with their life plans.

Another amazing plan that Dr. Kakazu is excited to put into action is an exchange program between OIST and international educational organizations. She hopes to make OIST the hub of those student exchange programs where students from around the world bond over a common interest: science.

"What OIST is doing for the local community is huge. They are setting examples by providing resources as well as opportunities for local students to come to OIST and see world-leading researchers and facilities," says Dr. Kakazu. She hopes to see OIST further develop as a "hot-spot" for STEM, providing Okinawa with more technology and industry, and encouraging diversity and gender equality, especially for female students. With Dr. Kakazu as Education Ambassador, the OIST Foundation hopes to strengthen its programs to educate more researchers from Okinawa who can become future Dr. Kakazus.

David Janes

Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Foundation

+1 9142964260

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