

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT For Immediate Release

Contact:

Lori Matoba, Deputy Director, lmatoba@jcccnc.org
Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California
1840 Sutter Street - San Francisco, CA 94115
415.567.5505 - www.jcccnc.org

Bay Area Youth Ambassadors to Visit Japan for Cultural Exchange

SAN FRANCISCO (July 16, 2009) – The Shinzen USA Nikkei Youth Goodwill Sports Program, sponsored by the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern



California (JCCCNC), will be sending 80 participants, 20 youth basketball players and their families, to Osaka, Kobe and Hiroshima, Japan for the Shinzen Program's final year.

The Shinzen Program, now in its 13th year, brings together youth from the Bay Area and Japan each summer, with the Bay Area teams traveling to Japan every other year. This first-hand cultural experience for the youth is invaluable in helping the youth in our Japanese American community develop and define their identity, while also establishing a greater connection to their sometimes seemingly distant heritage.

The 20 chosen youth participants have been working diligently since April to prepare for their trip. These young ambassadors have participated in Japanese customs, etiquette and language workshops; have learned a hip-hop dance, choreographed and taught by Judy Kajiwara, that they will perform in Japan; learned about Japanese American history, about the bombing of Hiroshima and the story of Sadako and have been folding cranes, so they can present the group's 1,000 cranes at the Children's Peace Memorial; and will begin their journey representing the Shinzen Program, their families, their communities and the United States at two upcoming events – the U.S.-

Japan Summit and at a reception at the Consul General's residence next week, before they are off for a their nine-day tour. As grassroots representatives they will attend receptions; participate in intercultural activities and goodwill basketball games; stay with host families in Osaka and Kobe; make a Courtesy Visit to Osaka Mayor Hiramatsu and attend a San Francisco-Osaka Sister City plaque dedication ceremony recognizing the 50th Anniversary celebration in 2006; and make a visit to the Nagata Kodomo Home, an orphanage in Kobe.

The 2009 Shinzen Program Itinerary:

Monday, July 27	Depart SFO
Tuesday, July 28	Arrive Osaka
Wednesday, July 29	Half-day Tour of Osaka Welcome Reception-Osaka YMCA Youth begin homestay
Thursday, July 30	Youth Intercultural Activities Shinzen Friendship Games
Friday, July 31	Players Visit Osaka City Hall 50 th Anniversary Plaque Dedication-Nakanoshima Park Osaka Goodwill Basketball Game
Saturday, August 1	Tour of Kyoto
Sunday, August 2	Youth visit Nagata Kodomo Home, Kobe Kobe Goodwill Basketball Games Youth begin homestay (one night)
Monday, August 3	Return to Osaka Visit Toyosaki Jr. High School, Osaka Shinzen Farewell Reception
Tuesday, August 4	Depart for Hiroshima Tour of Miyajima Island-Itsukushima Shrine Visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Park Place 1,000 cranes at Children's Peace Monument
Wednesday, August 5	Return to San Francisco or begin Tokyo post-tour

This trip would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the players' families in fundraising over the past eight months and with the cooperation of Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco and with the generous support from The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation, Japan Airlines and Kintetsu International Travel. The Shinzen Program would also like to thank Mr. Mits and Mrs. Sadame Kojimoto, Mr. Allen and Mrs. Pat Okamoto, Hoops for Friends, San Francisco Drakes as well as the many individuals, organizations and businesses who have supported the program at our fundraising events and with in-kind donations.

The 2009 Girls Team, coached by Chrissie Hosoda, includes: Kaitlyn Endo, Kelly Eshima, Kara Glapion, Nikki Honda, Brynne Ichiuji, Amanda Joo, Cori Nishimoto, Camille Obata, Maya Ogawa-Okada, Selena Tsang, Kylie Uyeda and Jackie Wong. The Boys Team will be coached by Richard Hata and includes: Kyle Honda, Trent Ichiuji, Brandon Lew, Kiyoshi Moran, Kenny Ouye, Kinji Steimetz, Timmy Tomioka and Kiyoshi Tonai Din.



Front Row (L to R): Kiyoshi Tonai Din, Timmy Tomioka, Brandon Lew, Kiyoshi Moran, Second Row: Kenny Ouye, Trent Ichiuji, Kyle Honda, Kinji Steimetz, Coach Richard Hata



Front Row (L to R): Nikki Honda, Amanda Joo, Brynne Ichiuji, Second Row: Coach Chrissie Hosoda, Jackie Wong, Cori Nishimoto, Kelly Eshima, Kylie Uyeda, Maya Ogawa-Okada, Third Row: Selena Tsang, Kara Glapion, Camille Obata, Katie Endo

For more information on the Shinzen Program, please contact Lori Matoba at the JCCCNC at (415) 567-5505.

About the Shinzen Program

In 1997, the JCCCNC and the office of the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco agreed that although there were a substantial number of traditional, cultural and intellectual exchanges between the U.S. and Japan, there existed a greater need for meaningful dialogue between youth in Japan and Japanese American youth. Through these discussions was born the Shinzen Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program, formed to create a more dynamic and meaningful exchange between the youth and to provide unique opportunities for the exchange of ideas and important values among young people. The Shinzen players work to achieve these goals by creating friendships at a local level to help reinforce a future of global peace and goodwill.

Since the inaugural visit to Japan in 1997, over 1200 participants (players and their families) have visited Japan or hosted a Japanese youth in their home for the Shinzen Program. Over the years, Shinzen alumni have continued to stay involved in the Japanese American community, as youth coaches, volunteers and many have returned to Japan to continue to build and foster international relations and stay connected to their cultural heritage.

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About JCCCNC

Envisioned by the Japanese American community, JCCCNC will be an everlasting foundation of our Japanese American ancestry, cultural heritage, histories and traditions. The JCCCNC strives to meet the evolving needs of the Japanese American community through programs, affordable services and administrative support and facilities for other local service organizations. The JCCCNC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community center based in San Francisco.