



Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

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PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT For Immediate Release

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Colma Japanese Cemetery Clean-Up a Success

Nearly 150 volunteers keeping history beautiful

June 3, 2011 (San Francisco) – In preparation for the 60th annual Community Memorial Day Services at the Colma Japanese Cemetery, nearly 150 volunteers from ages 6 to 85 years old gathered on Saturday, May 21, 2011 for a youth and family clean-up day. Volunteers from around the Bay Area gave up most of their Saturday pulling weeds, raking up leaves, scrubbing headstones, trimming hedges and placing over 500 fresh flowers throughout the 3 acre cemetery.

“Spending the day cleaning the cemetery was such a rewarding experience and I now feel a greater connection to my past,” said volunteer Kara Okamoto. “I’m really looking forward to helping again next year.”

This annual community service project organized by the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) began in 2010 as a way to honor the past, remember those who past on, bring the community together, and educate others about a place that deeply represents the history of the Japanese American community.

“It was great to see so many volunteers of different generations at our Community Clean-up Day, especially the young adults and children. I feel that it is important to get the younger generations to understand the history of our ancestors and community that is here at the Colma Cemetery, as they will soon be the caretakers and link to continue to share our rich heritage to future generations,” said Lori Matoba, Deputy Director at the JCCCNC.

The project has been such a great success over the past two years, the JCCCNC plans to organize the Colma Cemetery Clean-up Day on an annual basis on the third Saturday in May.

“I hope that the annual clean up of the Japanese Cemetery can continue for generations to come. It is a good way for Japanese Americans of all generations to know of the leaders that came before us and to see this venue as an extension of our community,” said Diane Matsuda, event co-organizer. “This year was a special year for our family as our 97.5 year old uncle who recently passed away made it an annual duty to spend time to clean and respect his parents, friends and elders here.”



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In attendance for the clean-up were Deputy Consul General, Michio Harada, Akira Ishido and Yoshiro Tasaka also from the Consulate General of Japan office, and Japanese Benevolent Society of California (JBSC) President, Eddie Moriguchi, who joined in on the cleaning.

“The JBSC and Caretakers of the Japanese Cemetery at Colma thank all that came out to do a wonderful job,” said Mr. Eddie Moriguchi, President of JBSC. “We are especially grateful to the JCCCNC and Diane Matsuda for the excellent organization and execution of the clean-up.”

The JCCCNC would like to thank the following supporting organizations for helping to make this project a success: Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, Berkeley Ohtani, Buddhist Church of San Francisco, Eden Youth Group, JACL NCWNP, Japanese Benevolent Society of California, Japantown Merchants Association, Japantown Youth Leaders (JYL) of Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC), Nichi Bei Foundation / Nichi Bei Weekly, San Francisco JACL, Brownie Troop 31259, Troop 29.

For more information or to have a group or organization participate in next year's clean-up on Saturday, May 19, 2012, please call Lori Matoba at (415) 567-5505.

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The Colma Japanese Cemetery was established in 1901 by the Japanese Benevolent Society with support from the Meiji Emperor of Japan to provide “a suitable burial ground for deceased Japanese.” www.jbens.org. It is now a resting place for over 5,000 Japanese and the tower honoring 3 crewmen from the Kanrin-Marū, which arrived in San Francisco on March 17, 1860 and brought the first Japanese Embassy to the U.S. to strengthen goodwill between the two countries.

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) was established as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in California in 1973. The JCCCNC serves over 185,000 individuals a year and conducts numerous exchange programs between the United States and Japan.