NEVER FORGET: A Community Gathering to Commemorate the Events of 3/11

San Francisco (March 24, 2016) – On Friday, March 11 at 6:00 p.m., the San Francisco Japantown community and the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCNC) welcomed approximately 200 guests to reflect, pray, remember and to NEVER FORGET the lives that were affected by the events surrounding the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011.

The program opened with a Shakuhachi performance by Tim Hamano, remarks from Diane Matsuda, Chairperson and the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, followed by a performance to All You Need is Love from students of Nihonmachi Little Friends.

The Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR), a Japanese nonprofit organization, which the JCCNC’s Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF), through its relief, recovery and rebuilding phases, has been supporting for the past five years, provided a report on the ongoing efforts in the Fukushima prefecture. AAR provided services in the Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi prefectures immediately following 3/11. They delivered emergency and medical supplies, provided health-related services, mobile clinics and mental health services. For the past two years, they have been focusing its programs and services in the Fukushima area of Minami-soma supporting temporary housing facilities and implementing relief assistance in eleven of the city’s municipal districts. The presentation given by Atsushi Naoe and Shinichiro Ohara included stories from evacuees in the Tohoku region; evacuation zones and housing conditions; death, suicides and mental health related statistics; and implications for resettling or returning to Tohoku for evacuees.
Following the AAR report, an interfaith meditation and prayer ceremony was given by members of the Japanese American Religious Federation including Reverend Ronald Kobata and Reverend Elaine Donlin from Buddhist Church of San Francisco; Reverend Masato Kawahatsu, Reverend Joanne Tolosa and Reverend Rodney Yano from Konko Church; and Reverend Hiroko Suzuki from the Christ United Presbyterian Church.

The program concluded with a guest procession. Over 200 messages written on colorful akabeko were pinned by guests as they remembered the almost 16,000 lives taken by the disaster, thousands more injured and over 2,500 people that still remain missing today. Over 200,000 people still have no home to return to and remain in either temporary housing or permanent relocation.

In fall of 2016, the JCCCNC will be organizing a cultural tour to visit all of the six prefectures of the Tohoku region. In 2017, they plan to send a delegation of Junior High School youth to participate in an inter-cultural exchange program with other youth from the affected areas.

Supporting Organizations: Buddhist Church of San Francisco; East West Academy of Healing Arts, Dr. Effie Chow; Japanese American Citizens League - Northern California Western Nevada Pacific District; Japanese American Citizens League San Francisco Chapter; Japanese American Religious Federation; Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California; Japanese Community Youth Council; Japanese Cultural Fair; Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California; Japantown Task Force; Kokoro Assisted Living; Konko Church of San Francisco; Minami Tamaki LLP; Nakayoshi Young Professionals; Nihonmachi Little Friends; Nihonmachi Street Fair; Oakland Fukuoka Sister City Organization; Pine United Methodist Church; San Francisco Japantown Foundation; San Francisco Kyoto-kai; San Francisco Osaka Sister City Association; San Francisco Taiko Dojo; United Nation Association of America San Francisco Chapter

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About the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund
In response to the March 11, 2011 disaster, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) established the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF). The fund was initiated on the same day and would raise over $4 million by the end of the fundraising campaign. Over 13,000 donors and 25,000 on causes.com contributed to NJERF and various organizations, community non-profits, businesses, schools and private individuals held over 300 fundraising events.

**About the 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 facility usage. The JCCCNC is a non-profit community center based in San Francisco.