



**PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT  
For Immediate Release**

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**Seeking Applicants for  
2016-17 Shinzen USA Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program**

SAN FRANCISCO (March 21, 2016) – The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) is currently seeking applicants for their 2016-17 Shinzen USA Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program (Shinzen Program). The Shinzen Program brings youth from the San Francisco bay area and youth from Japan together for an international exchange of culture and camaraderie. Youth participants in the 2016-17 Shinzen Program are provided the opportunity to learn about their culture and heritage both here in the Bay Area, through pre-trip workshops and then by experiencing Japan with their team and families in July 2017. Through spirited basketball games, youth exchanges, touring and homestays, our young ambassadors begin to build stronger relationships with the people of Japan.



The JCCCNC has organized U.S. Japan youth cultural exchange programs for nearly 20 years, with the first being the inaugural 1997 Shinzen Program. “We understand that a first-hand cultural experience with another young ambassador 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. It is by experiencing things on their own – actually seeing, touching or tasting and actually meeting Japanese youth that the history and heritage of their ancestors and the future role they might play in U.S.-Japan relations is realized,” mentions Paul Osaki, Executive Director of the JCCCNC.

Amanda Joo from Santa Clara, reflected on her experience soon after returning from Japan in 2009 by saying, “When we first started, I didn’t understand the meaning of goodwill and friendship, I just thought, basketball and Japan - that sounds like fun, but it was much more than that. We volunteered, went to events, we learned about the bomb in Hiroshima and played with the kids at the Kodomo Home (orphanage)...I learned that friendships can be created and maintained for probably my whole life. These friendships that I made in Japan will always be remembered.” Amanda and three generations of her family traveled to Japan that summer.

As a 2016-17 Shinzen participant, the youth, along with their families, will participate in community events as volunteers, host fundraising events, spend the summer months participating in cultural workshops, learning about Japan, practicing basketball and spending time together as a group in preparation for their journey to Japan next summer.

While the primary beneficiaries of the Shinzen Program are its youth participants, the families of Shinzen youth are also afforded a unique opportunity to benefit from the enriching cultural activities, both locally and while traveling in Japan. In their roles as cultural ambassadors, Shinzen families are also expected to promote the principles of the Shinzen Program. The dedicated effort of Shinzen families plays a critical role in the success of the Shinzen Program as they learn about past generations of Japanese and Japanese Americans struggles and triumphs, to the customs and traditions that they have passed down. One of the goals of the Program is to engage both the players and their families to take an active role in the community, as well as the Program, to help continue to share our community's rich history and heritage and further their role in U.S.-Japan relations.

The Shinzen USA Committee is looking for boys and girls (currently in the 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade whose birthdate is between January 1, 2000 and (no later than) May 31, 2004) and their families that are interested in learning more about Japanese/Japanese American culture, traditions and heritage.

**Applications are due by Friday, April 8, 2016.**

Activities to prepare for the trip to Japan next summer will include Japanese customs, language and etiquette workshops, Japanese American history workshops, basketball practices, leadership development activities, volunteering at community events and fundraising. For more information on the Shinzen Program or a 2016-17 application, contact Lori Matoba at (415) 567-5505 x226 or visit [www.jcccnc.org](http://www.jcccnc.org)

### **Shinzen Program History**

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, community interns, 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 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 administrative support and facilities for other local service organizations. The JCCCNC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community center based in San Francisco.