



Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California

Overview of U.S.-Japan Exchange Programs to Japan and Cultural Exchange Programs with Japanese Counterparts (1989- 2015)

Historical Overview of JCCCNC Programs to Japan

The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC) is the only Japanese American community based non-profit organization in the nation involved with creating and organizing annual cultural and grassroots exchange programs to Japan as part of its goal to enhance the understanding and appreciation among the Japanese American community, American public and people of Japan.

For over 25 years the JCCCNC has introduced a diverse audience of all ethnic backgrounds to the people and culture of Japan through over 50 trips, in particular with our sister city of Osaka and other cities including Kobe, Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Sendai and almost every major prefecture throughout Japan. Participants have included first time travelers as well as many others who have made numerous trips to Japan on a regular basis. Trips have also included visits and meetings with high level government officials, business leaders, local and prefectural governments, Non-Government Organizations (NGO), schools, senior centers, orphanages, YMCAs and other organizations, many of whom the JCCCNC still partners with today and have played an important role in enhancing our Japan cultural and exchange programs.



The JCCCNC's activities and communication with Japan began in the late 1980's through the encouragement and support of former Consul Generals Shunji Yanai and Ryozo Kato to address the impact on the Japanese American community that resulted from the economic tension between our two countries. Regular grassroots programs began to emphasize the importance of improved understanding that could only be gained through travel to Japan. This was initiated through the *Japanese American U.S.-Japan Relations Program* in 1990 to share the history and experiences of the Japanese American community with business and government leaders in Japan; and the *Kristi Yamaguchi Goodwill Tour* in 1994 when a Japanese American delegation was led by Kristi Yamaguchi, the first Japanese American to win the Olympic Gold Medal for Figure Skating – both, which began to lay the foundation for future programs that the JCCCNC would create to connect our two cultures.

San Francisco – Osaka Sister City Delegations

In 1997, the JCCCNC organized its largest trip when a citizen delegation of over 170 individuals visited Osaka to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship through the *San Francisco-Osaka Citizens Ambassador Conference*, the largest official delegation sent to its sister city from San Francisco, reflecting the diversity and inclusivity of San Francisco. Programs and activities to commemorate the event included a weeklong exchange of educators, business leaders, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, artists and the LGBT community to dialogue with their counterparts. Also as part of the 40th Anniversary activities, the JCCCNC sent 122 participants for the first annual *Shinzen USA Nikkei Youth Goodwill Basketball Program (Shinzen Program)*, a junior high school sports exchange program.



For the 45th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship, in 2002, the JCCCNC organized a delegation involving the San Francisco 49ers football team and their exhibition game against the Washington Redskins at the Osaka Dome.

In 2007, the JCCCNC organized a Japanese American delegation to Japan led by Mayor Gavin Newsom to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Sister City relationship and to promote new businesses to San Francisco's Japantown.

That same year, the JCCCNC organized 80 delegates that included some of the City's finest in the food industry including chefs, critics, buyers and restaurant owners as part of the *San Francisco-Osaka Culinary Tour* to share both cities' culinary delights and ideas on food traditions and trends.

Japanese American Youth to Japan

In 1997, the JCCCNC developed the *Shinzen Program*, which allowed Japanese American youth to meet and connect with their peers at the Kobe and Osaka YMCAs through sports and cultural exchange activities. These youth were also introduced to the culture, customs and language first-hand as a member of a Japanese host family.



Approximately 1,200 youth and families have participated in this program and over 45% of the Shinzen youth participants have returned to Japan to live, work or travel, and others have expressed a desire to return to Japan to further their knowledge about Japan and their own cultural heritage.

The JCCCNC launched the *Nikkei Youth Cultural Heritage Program (NYCHP)*, a collaborative project of the Japanese Cultural Centers Alliance (JCCA) in 2008. College-aged students from JCCA organizations (JACCC in Los Angeles, JCCCW in Seattle, JCCH in Honolulu and the JCCCNC), participated together in a one-month cultural and language immersion program in Kobe, Japan. Participants experienced life in Japan and applied their new language skills daily with

their host family, in art and language classes, and on trips to historical locations, allowing them to gain a better understanding and appreciation of Japan, its history, culture and people.

In 2011, with support from The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation, the JCCCNC started the *Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program (TYAFP)*. The TYAFP is a unique and exclusive scholarship opportunity for youth to participate in workshops aimed at developing leadership skills, learning about Japanese American history, and culminating with a trip to Japan. Through their participation, the fellows create opportunities to build new friendships, meet with leaders, volunteer and become immersed in Japanese culture, while acquiring the tools and confidence to become the leaders of tomorrow.

Guests, Delegations and Dignitaries

The JCCCNC has also played host to many guests, delegations and dignitaries from Japan. Some came to just say hello, but most came to learn about the JCCCNC, the Japanese American community, its history and Nikkei cultural heritage.

Visitors included the Emperor and Empress of Japan, Prime Ministers, Ambassadors and Diet Members, as well as youth who came to live with host families and participate in cross-cultural activities and basketball games with Japanese American youth throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The JCCCNC has also received numerous delegations including business leaders, government officials, NGOs and educational study groups.



Immediately following the Kobe earthquake and Tohoku disasters of March 11, 2011, nonprofit leaders were invited to participate in mental health training and counseling to support victims facing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Cultural and Furusato Tours

For the past two decades the JCCCNC has also continued to coordinate cultural and Furusato tours to Japan. The purpose of this program is to specifically encourage multi-generational Nikkei to travel back to Japan to learn more about their ancestral and cultural heritage.

According to the Japan Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama, the largest percentage of Japanese emigrating to the United States and Hawaii was from Hiroshima, Okinawa, Kumamoto, Yamaguchi and Fukuoka. Thus, the respective Prefectural Offices have supported the JCCCNC in locating gravesites and local temples for the participants to visit. The Prefectural Offices have also assisted in obtaining a copy of the participants' Japanese family registry, the *koseki tohon*.



The Furusato tours have resulted in deeper respect and appreciation for Japan in general, but more specifically for the ancestral members of a participant's family. Being able to personally visit and “feel” the land of one's ancestors and to learn the regional dialect and customs still shared by the current residents provide a sense of wholeness, regardless of one's knowledge of the Japanese language or culture.

Cultural tours have also brought out the essence of prefectural contributions and uniqueness to a specific region in Japan, allowing participants to be able to identify and distinguish certain types of food or folk crafts and their role in preserving the history and culture of the region. While participants see, taste and experience cities such as Hiroshima, Osaka and Sapporo, they also have had the opportunity to visit towns like Kurashiki in Okayama whose canal area dates back to the Edo period and the historic town of Arimatsu, which is famous for its high quality shibori textiles.

Relief Support

Although responding to disasters is not a part of the JCCCNC's mission, we quickly responded to assist survivors of two of the most devastating earthquakes that hit Japan, the Great Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe, 1995) and the Great East Japan (Tohoku, 2011) Earthquakes.

The JCCCNC raised over \$600,000 and shipped 1.5 tons of goods directly to citizen relief efforts after the Kobe earthquake, providing emergency supplies and monetary donations to the local YMCAs in Kobe and Osaka, the City of Osaka, and two orphanages in Kobe City whose buildings were completely destroyed.



On March 11, 2011, the JCCCNC established the *Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund* to aid the survivors of the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and subsequent nuclear disaster. This campaign, a community and volunteer driven effort, grew to become the largest Japanese American community based relief fund in the United States raising more than \$4 million.

Through the tremendous community support for both of these disasters, thousands of survivors received care and hope to get through the tough times. JCCCNC's commitment to support the survivors and organizations in the Kobe and Tohoku areas continue and have been the inspiration for several programs that connect the people of the United States and Japan, like the Shinzen and Takahashi Programs who visit the orphanage in Kobe on each trip to Japan, as well as recent cultural tour visits to Tohoku.

Discover Japan Campaign



In 2002, the JCCCNC in cooperation with Kintetsu International, launched its *Discover Japan Campaign* aimed at our membership to encourage Japanese American families to self-travel to Japan at a discounted price. To date, over 450 JCCCNC members have taken advantage of this travel opportunity program to Japan.

Being welcomed as a member of a host family, experiencing hands-on crafts, meeting relatives in your grandmother's hometown, hearing from local chefs, professionals or artisans, staying at a century-old ryokan, or savoring the specialties of small towns, these are some of the experiences that have touched the lives of the hundreds of JCCCNC participants who have traveled to Japan.

Chronological List of Cross Cultural or U.S.-Japan Exchange Programs

Many have participated in one or more of the JCCCNC's 50+ organized group trips to Japan over the past 25 years with most expressing an overwhelming desire to return to Japan and further the relationship established through these programs.

Here is a list of the major JCCCNC exchange programs to Japan and projects originating in Japan to the San Francisco Bay Area:

| <u>Year(s)</u> | <u>Title of Program</u> | <i>(Bold are programs to U.S.)</i> |
|----------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 1990 –2000 | Sixteen Trips to Improve Japanese American (U.S.)-Japan Relations (Osaka/Tokyo) | |
| 1991 | JCCCNC Tour to Host Physically and Mentally Disabled Individuals (Osaka) | |
| 1994 | Kristi Yamaguchi Goodwill Tour (Osaka/Tokyo) | |
| 1995 | Professional Mental Trauma Care Program (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 1995-96 | Japanese NGOs Nonprofit Study/Training Program (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 1997 | 40th Anniversary San Francisco-Osaka Sister City Citizens Ambassador Conference | |
| 1997 | Shinzen Program to Japan (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 1997 | Cultural Tour | |
| 1998 | Shinzen Program (Kobe) | |
| 1998 | Cultural Tour (Osaka/Okayama) | |
| 1999 | Cultural Tour | |
| 1999 | Shinzen Program (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 2000 | First California Japanese American Leadership Delegation to Japan | |
| 2000 | Shinzen Program (Osaka/Kobe) | |
| 2001 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Nagoya/Tokyo) | |
| 2001 | Shinzen Program (Osaka/Kobe) | |
| 2002 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Okayama/Osaka/Tokyo) | |
| 2002 | 45th Anniversary San Francisco Osaka Sister City - San Francisco 49ers | |
| 2002 | Shinzen Program (Osaka/Kobe) | |
| 2003 | Cultural Tour | |
| 2003 | Shinzen Program - Wings of Peace Tour (Osaka/Kobe/Hiroshima) | |
| 2004 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Tokyo/Tokushima) | |
| 2004 | Shinzen Program (Osaka/Kobe) | |
| 2005 | Furusato Tour (Fukuoka/Hiroshima/Kumamoto/Wakayama/Yamaguchi) | |
| 2005 | Shinzen Program (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 2006 | Furusato Tour (Hiroshima/Okinawa/Yamaguchi/Yokohama) | |
| 2006 | Shinzen Program (Osaka) | |

Chronological List of Cross Cultural or U.S.-Japan Exchange Programs (continued)

| <u>Year(s)</u> | <u>Title of Program</u> | <i>(Bold are programs to U.S.)</i> |
|----------------|---|------------------------------------|
| 2007 | 50th Anniversary San Francisco Osaka Sister City Goodwill Visit with Mayor Newsom | |
| 2007 | Shinzen Program (Kobe/Osaka) | |
| 2007 | San Francisco-Osaka Culinary Tour | |
| 2007 | Osaka Mayor Seki Luncheon at the JCCCNC | |
| 2007 | Cultural Tour (Tohoku) | |
| 2008 | Nikkei Youth Cultural Heritage Program | |
| 2008 | Shinzen Program (Osaka) | |
| 2008 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Kurokawa/Tokyo/Yanagawa) | |
| 2009 | Nikkei Youth Cultural Heritage Program | |
| 2009 | Shinzen Program (Osaka/Kobe) | |
| 2009 | Cultural Tour (Ishikawa/Kyoto/Yamanashi) | |
| 2010 | Cultural Tour (Snow/Ice Festivals in Hokkaido) | |
| 2010 | Nikkei Youth Cultural Heritage Program | |
| 2010 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Nagano/Nagoya) | |
| 2011 | Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program | |
| 2011 | Nikkei Youth Cultural Heritage Program | |
| 2011 | Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF) Japan Disaster Assessment | |
| 2011 | NJERF Hosts Towards Recovery and Healing - Mental Health Training (Tohoku) | |
| 2011 | NJERF Project Aloha to Tohoku (Crayons for Japan/Ishinomaki Baseball Field) | |
| 2012 | NJERF Hosts Youth for the Future – Sendai YMCA Student Visit (Sendai) | |
| 2013 | Cultural Tour (Miyagi/Niigata) | |
| 2013 | Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program | |
| 2014 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Okayama) | |
| 2015 | Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program | |
| 2015 | Cultural Tour (Kyoto/Hiroshima/Ehime/Tokyo) | |