WELCOME BACK!
The Center reopens May 3, 2021
Visit jccnc.org to learn more
Welcome Back, Looking Back, Moving Forward

On May 3, 2021, when the Center officially reopens its doors, we will have been closed for an unbelievable 417 days. Out of the COVID-19 pandemic’s rising concern, we closed the Center on March 12, 2020, five days before the mandatory Shelter in Place was put in effect. At the time, there were approximately 1,323 confirmed cases and 38 deaths in the United States (U.S.).

No one thought or could have imagined that in the U.S. alone, over 40 million would become infected by the virus, and the number of deaths would reach nearly 600,000. Hundreds of thousands of small businesses have permanently closed and millions have been unemployed this past year. The COVID-19 pandemic will define generations to come and has changed the course of world history. This makes the reopening of the Center bittersweet.

What will also be remembered is the courage of our essential workers, many of whom may have been taken for granted in the past. Perhaps none more so than the medical doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, administrative staff and maintenance workers in our hospitals. Since damaging my spine in February 2011, I spent countless days in the hospital and nursing homes. As much as I appreciated everything they have done for me, my admiration and respect for their bravery and dedication to patient care have gone way beyond just words of gratitude. This past year they put their lives on the line and brought us hope during the darkest times as they shined bright when we needed it most.

It also goes without saying that our deepest gratitude must go to the medical scientists and researchers. They worked tirelessly to develop a vaccine for one of the deadliest viruses in world history.

As we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel and get our lives back to normal, we must remember the millions who lost their lives and the loved ones they left behind.

As much as I celebrate the reopening of the Center, I do so with mixed feelings knowing that many of the Nisei who walked through our doors just a year ago may not be able to return.

In writing this message, I find a new appreciation of family, friends and loved ones. I am also touched beyond words by our many donors. They did not forget about us despite our doors being closed for over 400 days. As we reopen our doors, we open to a new beginning.

As proud as I am about our building, our new Center now includes a virtual community. I have learned through this pandemic that the Center is much bigger than a physical space. It’s a state of mind; it’s a place with no boundaries and a community spirit that is endless.

Welcome back, everyone!

Paul Osaki
Executive Director
The Center is Reopening on May 3 with Limited Capacity!

It is still hard to believe, but it will be over a year since the Center closed its doors by the time you receive this newsletter. As mentioned in the previous newsletter, we didn’t know when we could reopen. With the increase in the vaccination rollout and the decrease in infections, we will be reopening on May 3 with limited capacity while prioritizing the health and safety of our community.

Like many other cities, San Francisco was forced to shut down under California’s four-tier system after coronavirus cases and hospitalizations began increasing in the fall. San Francisco is currently in the orange tier, and numbers are encouraging and dropping weekly. With a large number of vaccinations being administered, we are optimistic of the continuing drop in the number of cases.

We are ready and preparing every day to reopen on May 3. Your health and safety are important to us, and we want you to feel comfortable coming back. We will be using your participant surveys to inform our reopening plan for our programs and events.

Stay connected! We have also updated our website, and you can now find our COVID-19 updates under the “About Us” tab, along with our Reopening Overview and Center @Home Activities page. We hope you will continue to keep in touch with us virtually, and we hope to see you soon at the Center!

Website: www.jccnc.org
Facebook: @LikeJCCCNC
Instagram: @jccnc_sf

San Francisco Vaccination Numbers
(as of 3/20/21)

764,514
Estimated San Francisco population over the age of 16

283,156
(37%) Received first dose

136,090
(18%) Received complete vaccination — single and two dose

KEEP WEARING YOUR MASKS
Although you may have received your complete vaccination, please remember that while the vaccine may prevent you from getting sick, it is unknown at this time if you can still carry and transmit the virus to others.
Meet our Newest Board Members

**Aya Ino** is a San Francisco Japantown native. She identifies as a Shin-Nisei woman, as her parents are from Saitama Prefecture and Fukushima in Japan.

Aya first became involved at the Center as a Nikkei Community Intern in 2005. After college, she went on the JET Program in Shiga Prefecture, got her master's degree in New York and returned to the Center to work in both the Development and Programs Departments. Aya now works for Autodesk on the Diversity and Belonging team to help employees adjust to a remote working environment, lead trainings on racial injustices and make sure teams and managers are prepared to have meaningful conversations. Aya is also a new mom to a 5 month old.

**Q: What makes the Center’s mission meaningful to you?**

A: To preserve and promote the Japanese and Japanese American cultural heritage — that is one of the most meaningful bullet points of the mission statement. It relates to me, professionally and personally. It’s what I totally strive for in my career. Personally, that’s what I want to do, not only for myself and my husband, but also for Seo, my son, to keep him connected to his roots and his cultural heritage.

**Q: What has been your most memorable event or moment at the Center?**

A: The first that pops into my head is Tabemasho because I used to organize it. It is an event that holds a special place in my heart because it is really when the community thrives, when we build together towards a single goal. There’s also another moment. When I first joined as an official staff member in Programs, I used to read Japanese books to Jordyn [daughter of Jennifer, Director of Programs] when she was in preschool. I feel like it ties into what the Center does. It’s cultural heritage; it’s the whole language and culture side of me; it’s passing on tradition from generation to generation: those key themes pop into my head when I think of that happening.

**Kyle Tana** has been a 7th grade English and History teacher in Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto for the past 5 years. Before that, she worked for the Mural Music and Arts Project consulting and leading middle and high school students through the process of creating murals in the communities of East Palo Alto and San Francisco. Kyle grew up in New York and transplanted to the Bay Area when she was 10. In middle school she started going to the Center for basketball tournaments and events with her best friend, Alyssa. Kyle’s dad, a jazz musician, and her mom, a public defender lawyer, made social justice issues, equity, music and art a key piece of her upbringing, which directly impacted her career today.

**Q: What has been your most memorable event or moment at the Center?**

A: I remember going to a Day of Remembrance event at the Center, honoring the Japanese American internment camps, and being able to go with my mom and my great aunt and uncle, who were both at Tule Lake, as well as my younger cousins. It was a space where we could actually have a conversation and ask questions to my great aunt and uncle about their camp experience. I was in middle school when I went to this event, and I just remember it so vividly because it felt like the first time we were having these conversations with my aunt and uncle sharing their experiences.

**Q: What makes the Center’s mission meaningful to you?**

A: I really see the Center as the cornerstone of Japantown and the community throughout history and today. The Center has really made it a priority to bridge communities. That’s always what I’m about—how do we bridge communities in Japantown and San Francisco and our Northern California communities but also throughout the US and with Japan? Seeing those connections and relationships grow stronger throughout the years is a true testament to the Center, especially under Paul’s leadership. I’m excited to continue to see the growth and how we continue to bridge communities in this virtual world.

Originally from Pasadena, **Leigh Sata** is a longtime resident of San Francisco. He attended UC Berkeley and after graduation, moved across the bridge to settle in San Francisco, where he became involved in Japantown and the music scene.
through the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. His two sons attended Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) and Leigh’s family started stopping by the Center to take advantage of the events. Professionally, Leigh is a second-generation architect, and most recently worked on a project at the Peralta Community College District.

**Q: What makes the Center’s mission meaningful to you?**

A: We’re down to a few Japantowns in the entire country, so it’s really important that the Center is the provider of the institutional and cultural art of the Japanese American community. It’s vital to remain connected to like-minded cultural institutions as a way of teaching the valuable lessons that can be learned from our community’s experiences, especially WWII and afterwards.

**Q: What has been your most memorable event or moment at the Center?**

A: One was the movie *Go for Broke* about the history of the 442nd shown a few years back. I think particularly these days, there’s cultural relevance because we need to remember that we have gone through this experience of being singled out based on the color of our skin. We still have to continue thinking about that and educating people that the American experience is so much broader than just one type of experience. We’re all contributing to it. The other one that was really memorable for me was an event called “Contested Histories” that was sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum (JANM). They brought an exhibit with several artifacts that were made in camp to see if the community at large could identify some of these objects. In addition to the artifacts, there were several photo books. I was flipping through them, and I saw a photo of my grandfather in the book making a piece of furniture. I told the JANM folks, “Hey, that’s my grandfather! I have that dresser! That dresser is in my parents’ house. I know exactly what it is.” They stopped everything, and they announced it. It was fun because it met the goal of why they even sponsored this event. It’s a wonderful reminder of the institutional importance of the Center and how it allows an avenue for us to connect Japanese Americans, both culturally and personally.

All board member interviews have been edited for clarity and brevity, but the full length versions can be found on the Center’s Facebook account (facebook.com/LikeJCCCNC)

**Newest Staff Member**

Elena Nielsen is our new membership coordinator. Born in LA and raised in the East Bay, Elena is a 28 year old half Japanese American and half Scandinavian San Francisco resident. Elena is passionate about supporting Japantown local businesses and uplifting communities, especially during the pandemic. If people have any questions about their membership or want to know more about membership, they can contact her at membership@jcccnc.org!

**Q: What are you most excited for about joining the Center’s staff?**

A: I’m really excited for when we open again, and I get to hang out with people! I loved seeing people come in and getting to chat with staff or bother Matt. Matt was my mentor and now he’s my boss. I’m looking forward to those little 1-to-1 or even small group interactions with people.

**Q: What makes the Center’s mission meaningful to you?**

A: I think a lot of different organizations talk about supporting the community in their mission statement, but ever since I was a Kase Program intern at the Center, it’s something that I felt immediately. As soon as I started working at the Center as an intern, I really felt that staff did everything they could to welcome me and make me feel like a part of the community.

**Q: What is your vision for the Center and Japantown?**

A: My vision for the Center and Japantown is to give everyone the same experience that I had coming in, where I felt immediately welcomed into this community. It didn’t take long for me to really feel like a part of Japantown. I want everyone to feel like there is a space for them, regardless of their background, whether they’re Shin-Nikkei or Yonsei, like me, or LGBTQ or mixed. That’s what I’m really passionate about, making everyone feel that they’re not just accepted into the community, but that this community truly represents them and their interests.
Cherry Blossom Donations
Donations made to the Center and our GoFundMe Campaign
35 U.S. States, 5 Different Countries

Prior to the GoFundMe Campaign, we received a $10,000 gift from the Margaret E. Haas Family Fund. “Margaret’s gift came as a total surprise. I never thought about other people feeling as emotionally impacted as we were about the loss of our Cherry Blossom trees. Her concern and gesture of kindness gave us hope and inspired the GoFundMe drive that others might feel the same way.”

—Paul Osaki
Messages from the Community

"We are so sad this happened. We are so grateful to the Japantown community and look forward to the day when the blossoms will bloom again."

Although we’re no longer living in SF, we remember many, many happy days in Japantown. We will meet again.

Japantown is an important and cherished part of San Francisco. May its cherry blossoms always bloom.
“To J-town that has supported the community, my family and friends. Thank you to JCCCNC. Where they choose chaos, we create community.”

Dear Joe,

My name is Ellie.
I feel bad for you.
I want to make the bullies nice.

Love, Ellie
Age 5

Picture of a cherry blossom tree with heart blossoms.

Dear SCCNC,

We heard about the tragedy of the cherry trees at your center and wanted to share our sadness. We support you and hope you regrow with resilience!

From your friends,
Students of Thousand Oaks and Oxford Elementary schools in Berkeley, in our garden class!
Spectacular." That’s the word Paul Osaki uses to describe mature cherry blossom trees in full flower. “They light up the sky.”

So when a vandal destroyed two of the three cherry blossom trees outside the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, methodically returning over three nights to snap every single branch, it felt personal to the center’s executive director.

First, Osaki was angry. Then, the more he thought about the violence of the act and the destruction of a beautiful, living symbol of San Francisco’s Japantown, he felt sad and disturbed.

“I considered it kind of an assault or an attack on our cultural heritage,” Osaki said, adding that the trees “were significant not just to the center, but to the Japanese culture. Cherry blossoms are synonymous with the Japanese culture.”

Now, they also represent solidarity. News outlets including The Chronicle picked up the story, and a Facebook note posted by the center about the vandalism received a flood of support. When the nonprofit started a GoFundMe campaign last week that promised “the cherry blossom trees will bloom again,” donations poured in.

Over the first four days, the crowdfunding effort received close to $30,000 in contributions, dwarfing its $5,000 goal. Other donors have reached out separately, offering to replace the trees, including one $10,000 gift before the campaign went online. More than 500 people have contributed, some from far beyond the borders of Japantown and San Francisco.

“These are people who don’t know who we are, they don’t know the organization, they probably have never come by,” Osaki said. “They just saw this story and felt compelled to want to help. We’re just overwhelmed with the support.”

There are other cherry blossom trees throughout Japantown — a third tree in
front of the cultural center and others along Post Street and in Peace Plaza — but the two targeted were special.

They were planted to commemorate a visit to the center by the emperor and empress of Japan in 1994, only the second time the monarchy had visited the United States. They were also the first cherry blossom trees to be planted in Japantown after the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency tore through the neighborhood in the late 1950s and ’60s.

“When I was growing up, most of Japantown was dirt lots, like whole blocks, with chain-link fences around it,” Osaki said. “Redevelopment also took out whatever plants or trees were planted by the first generation of Japanese.”

It took 17 months of planning and construction to get the pair of cherry blossom trees planted outside the center, where Osaki said they fit in with the building’s façade and had grown to 12 or 15 feet tall over 20-plus years. A third tree in front of the center was similarly damaged two years ago.

The community response to the trees’ destruction has been a bright spot during a tough year. In March, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center shut down with the rest of the city, and it has yet to reopen; its income from activities and events has vanished as the pandemic continues. Throughout the neighborhood, small businesses are struggling to stay afloat.

“It’s been incredibly difficult. Most of Japantown’s restaurants and stores rely an awful lot on tourism dollars,” Osaki said. For the last 10 months, tourists have been largely absent.

The cultural center has been using grant money to help small businesses, “but it’s nothing compared to what they need,” Osaki said. He knew of several that had already closed and others that are teetering on the edge. A lot are in jeopardy because of the rent they owe, he said.

Losing even a portion of the mom-and-pop ramen spots and gift shops that draw Bay Area residents and out-of-town visitors to Japantown could have a reverberating effect on the historic area.

“We’re a small community,” Osaki said. “Even if you lose 15 or 20 businesses, it’s going to have a huge impact on Japantown.”

Over the summer, the center created a program called Picnic in the Plaza, with tables and canopies and socially distanced seating for 200, an effort to revitalize the dining scene and draw customers back to the neighborhood.

Open on Saturdays and Sundays, the area drew 30,000 people before shutting down in November, Osaki said. “It brought life back to Japantown. You started to see people come by.”

Now, he’s looking to the cherry blossom trees as a symbol of hope for the future. Although Osaki doesn’t yet know how much it will cost to tear up the sidewalk and remove the damaged trunks, using the money from the GoFundMe campaign and other contributions, he hopes to have new trees planted by spring so they can bloom along with the rest of the neighborhood’s cherry blossoms.

In addition to replacing the pair that was vandalized, Osaki would like to add a fourth tree outside the cultural center along with some kind of decorative barrier to protect the trees from future damage.

“Having that finished — all the trees up and some kind of design that creatively brings it all together — would really help commemorate this outpouring of support that we’ve gotten from all over the place,” Osaki said. “That’s something we want to always remember. That will be part of the story of the Japanese Cultural and Community Center.”

“...These are people who don’t know who we are, they don’t know the organization, they probably have never come by. They just saw this story and felt compelled to want to help. We’re just overwhelmed with the support.”
March 11, 2021 marked the 10th Anniversary of the largest earthquake ever recorded in Japan, followed by a powerful tsunami and the meltdown of a nuclear power plant.

Today, it is commonly referred to as the Great East Japan Earthquake, but it was much more than that.

For those of us who are old enough to remember, we saw scene after scene of houses, cars, buildings, fishing boats and other objects being forcibly pulled away from their foundations and swept out into the ocean. Official records note that the death toll and those who remain missing are over 23,000, but others who live in Tohoku say it is much higher than that.

In addition, over 200,000 persons were forcibly evacuated from their homes because of the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. Some of the residents will never be able to return home even though their family lineage had never lived anywhere else.

It is easy to forget about these staggering statistics now that it is no longer a regular topic on the news and new houses and buildings have been built on the large acres of land that the tsunami had flattened.

But, we should not forget. And, why not?

What happened in Tohoku ten years ago could happen anywhere in the world. A natural disaster like a 9.0 magnitude earthquake triggering an explosive tsunami is not limited to Northern Japan. If that same level of earthquake and tsunami hit San Francisco, the entire City would be eliminated. Would we be prepared? Would we want people to forget?

That is not the only reason why we should not forget. We should not forget the outpouring of immediate concern, support and love expressed by people around the world to want to help the residents of Tohoku.

When the Center created its fundraising drive within hours after the disaster occurred on March 11, the phones did not stop ringing. Literally, thousands of people were calling to want to help. Individuals drove into the City as far away as Sacramento or Los Angeles just to drop off donations. Parents used
the occasion of their child’s birthday to raise money for Tohoku, and one set of sisters sold many of their well-loved toys because they cared what the children of Tohoku would need and want.

Sometimes it takes something as glaring and as heartbreaking as a disaster for us to realize that we need to always take the time to care for one another.

The Center led several delegations to Tohoku to offer friendship, hope and support. The Center visited Tohoku on the 3rd Anniversary of March 11th and the 5th, and plans were underway to visit this March for the 10th Anniversary but halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While visiting many of the towns in Tohoku, we always asked what we could do to further help. The answer was quite simple: please do not forget us. We have honored that promise and will continue to do so even as the anniversary years increase in number and those who were directly involved are no longer with us.

We have learned many things from this experience: learning how to administer a massive fundraising campaign; making decisions on which nonprofit organizations to work with to directly help the residents of Tohoku; how to report our findings in a succinct yet informative way; and to know that we can do anything we set our minds to — or at least make a good attempt to do it. It was a great training ground for other projects we have encountered after this major project— all of which has made us a little stronger, a little wiser and better able to look outside of our own world to help when needed.

We will not forget you, Tohoku, and we look forward to the time when we can see and meet the residents once again.
Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF)

On March 11, 2011, the Center immediately established the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF), committing 100% of the money received to citizen-to-citizen relief, recovery and rebuilding following the Great East Japan Earthquake, Tsunami and Nuclear Disasters that devastated the Tohoku Region.

The NJERF campaign — a community and volunteer-driven effort — grew to become the largest Japanese community-based relief fund in the United States.

What made the Relief Fund unique and ultimately led to its success was its three-fold plan to support in phases the relief, recovery and rebuilding, along with the commitment to allocate 100% of the donations received directly to nonprofit and local community-staffed organizations. Early funds were distributed to meet the most pressing relief needs. From the experience of the Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe) earthquake in 1995, the Center knew that the long-term recovery and rebuilding phases would require the most resources and would evolve through the phases. It was also essential to focus on the often-overlooked populations, the elderly, children and those physically and mentally challenged.

Through these photos (and others in our NJERF Summary Report*), we hope you can feel the heartfelt support from the thousands of donors and supporters, see how the fund brought hope to those affected by the devastation and see how the Center has continued its promise never to forget. Through 3.11 remembrances, visits to Tohoku and our commitment to building friendships amongst the people in the Bay Area and residents in the cities and towns, we will keep our promise and remember, always.
1) Kristi Yamaguchi, NJERF spokesperson at Giants game, rallied SF Giants fans to donate (June 3, 2011); 2) AAR Japan delivers vegetables to a welfare facility; 3) Center’s NJERF donation wall with event flyers; 4) Shea Wakasa sold her toys to raise money; 5) SVA PunPunDani Book Project, girls with drawings; 6) Sendai YMCA representative delivering goods
Update from the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan

Building Healthy Communities Project

Great East Japan Earthquake Recovery Initiative

Following the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the Center established the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund (NJERF) with three main pillars of support for survivors: relief, recovery and rebuilding. The Center initially estimated that the three-fold plan would take around five years to implement; however, we continue to support organizations for the recovery and rebuilding efforts and receive updates from those continuing to support the survivors of the 3.11 disaster.

In the early stages of the relief efforts for NJERF, the Center began a partnership with the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan), a Japanese nonprofit organization that provided direct services in Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures following 3.11. AAR Japan’s main objective is to support the restoration of the daily lives of those affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. They started their efforts following the disaster by delivering emergency and medical supplies; providing health-related services, mobile clinics and mental health services; and supporting temporary housing facilities and relief assistance. In the Tohoku Region

Active listening sessions, one of the programs that the Center has continued to fund for the past decade, are held for the elderly living in the public housing complex (Minami Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture, November 16, 2019)
following the disaster, AAR Japan saw the devastation of the evacuees: the dismal housing conditions; death, suicide and mental health implications; and evacuation and resettlement issues. Nearly a decade later, many survivors have rebuilt their lives and livelihoods. Some, though, especially the vulnerable, like elderly persons, persons with disabilities and single parents with children, still require much support after the fallout of the disaster. Reports from the Reconstruction Agency of Japan estimate more than 40,000 individuals are still displaced from their hometown in the disaster hit area. Though construction of new public housing has been completed, many survivors were unable to occupy these spaces, and many areas in Fukushima Prefecture are still uninhabitable due to the radioactivity. It will take some time for all individuals to return to their homes.

AAR Japan started the “Building Healthy Communities” (BHC) Project for survivors in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures to help improve the physical and psychosocial conditions, as well as the community relations among survivors, specifically those who are most vulnerable. The BHC Project consists of four main activities: rehabilitation through massage, physical therapy and calisthenics; counseling services by qualified volunteer counselors; lunch gatherings to share information; and recreational events. AAR Japan provides physical and occupational therapists to elderly persons living in the public or temporary housing complexes who do not have the opportunity to do much physical exercise. The physical and occupational therapists provide massages while listening to their participants’ concerns. Qualified volunteer counselors also provide counseling services prior to and after massage services. Participants talk about daily and family issues of life before and after 3.11. AAR Japan also provides lunch gatherings to prevent elders from feeling isolated. Lunch gatherings provide the opportunity for individuals to prepare, eat lunch and clean up. Participants also share food cooked in their own homes. Other recreational activities provide residents with interaction through craft classes, tea parties and health classes. AAR Japan continuously innovates new programming to help bridge community among their participants. In 2016, AAR Japan helped distribute 200 akabeko created by the Center’s community to residents in temporary housing, mostly seniors. One such akabeko was made by a youth in our community especially for a senior. It is this special care and attention to detail that makes AAR Japan’s continuous programming and efforts so exceptional and sustainable.

Due to the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic, AAR Japan suspended their normal activities from March 1 until May 31, 2020 in accordance with the Japanese government’s State of Emergency declaration that was in effect from April 7 to May 25, 2020. They resumed programs on June 1, 2020 with updated measures and guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by using sanitizers, wearing masks and keeping distance between participants. Even with the suspension of programs due to COVID-19, AAR Japan has consistently delivered a range of activities to a large scale of survivors. Over 1,200 participants have participated in 61 events in Fukushima, Iwate and Miyagi prefectures. AAR Japan promises to continue assisting those affected by the disaster, especially the elderly, persons with disabilities and children through the BHC Project. Even after a full decade, AAR Japan continues ongoing, weekly and monthly programming to provide opportunities for survivors to connect and care for one another. They have effectively brought people together in the wake of one of the worst disasters. The Center is thankful and inspired by AAR Japan’s care and concern in providing community.
Spring Cleaning Treasures

In Japan, families undergo a massive cleaning of their homes to prepare for the start of the new year at the end of December. However, here in the U.S., many of us get the urge to do a little purging during our spring cleaning.

But then, where did spring cleaning get its origins? According to the website, Fantastic Cleaners (fantasticcleaners.com), the origins of spring cleaning follow the Persian New Year called Nowruz which is celebrated on the vernal equinox. There is an Iranian practice called khooneh tekouni, shaking the house where the entire home is thoroughly wiped and polished.

Others date spring cleaning back in history to the ancient Jewish custom of thoroughly cleaning the house in preparation for the springtime feast of Passover.

Yet other websites say cleaning when the weather gets better after a harsh winter is just a natural thing to do. Whatever origin you wish to believe, many people take the time during the spring season to clean out their homes and donate or throw away items that are unused or no longer wanted.

Sheltering in Place has added an extra incentive to want to clean your home because you are home more often. Some of us have to share our home with many other family members in a crowded space.

Before you get out your green trash bags to say goodbye to your items, we encourage you to step back and think about what may be useful to others.

Recently, the Center was gifted a number of items from an individual who lived in Japan during her youth in the early 1950s. She felt it was time to clean out some of the things she had been holding onto for many years but wanted to find a suitable home where her feelings for wanting to preserve and pass on what she treasured were understood.

She lived on one of the US bases in Japan with her family right after World War II ended but still had the opportunity to enjoy and observe life “as is” during that time. Luckily for us, she included an envelope of vintage photos so that we could get a glimpse of everyday life during that era. Comparing those photos to what we experience today in Japan gave us a chance to reflect how rapidly life has changed in Japan’s largest cities.

It must have been a huge transition for many people who moved from rural communities to a city like Tokyo and participated in the massive development of buildings, apartments and factories that popped up after World War II.

The photos provide us with a view of a time before technology played a role in how we shopped, ate, played and socialized.

So before you pull out your trash bag, please take a few seconds to think about whether those items that you own will have some use to others. Collections you may own, items you have treasured even though you do not know its original purpose, a photo of a period of time or a place, or things that have been in your family for as long as you can remember may be items of value to someone else.

(Photos courtesy of Gretti Keith and her family)
Preserving Culture One Class at a Time

What's Happening Online at the Center

Greetings from the Center’s Programs Department! We welcome you to peruse the list below that feature all the fun that we offer. The first class session is free for any first-time participant (materials costs for select classes still apply). We encourage you to try something new! For more information or to register for a class, please visit our website www.jccnc.org, email programsevents@jccnc.org or call (415) 567-5505.

All in-person classes are temporarily cancelled until further notice with the exception of the classes listed here. Please make sure to visit our workshops/events on page 20-21.

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**BEYOND BASIC ART CLASS (VIRTUAL)**
This weekly art class is designed for both intermediate and advanced students and will allow participants the opportunity to explore new media, subject matter and ways of thinking. This class will use basic drawing, painting concepts and subject matter, but will also look to expand participant’s artistic horizons. The atmosphere of the class is very informal for creating art.
Instructor: Rich Tokeshi
When: Saturdays, 10 a.m.-noon
Cost: $30 M | $40 NM monthly (virtual rates)
Drop-in: $9 M | $12 NM (drop-in)

**DANCE**

**YOSAKOI DANCING WITH ITO YOSAKOI DANCE GROUP (VIRTUAL)**
Join the Ito Yosakoi Dance Group’s weekly classes to learn the lively, energetic dance style of Yosakoi dancing! Yosakoi dancing features choreographed group dances with traditional movements mixed with modern, up-tempo music to make for a captivating dance style that is growing in popularity in Japan and abroad! No dance experience is necessary. Class members have the option of dancing with the class recreationally, or learning the group’s repertoire to perform in public.
When: Fridays, 7-9 p.m.
Cost: $12 M | $17 NM monthly
Drop-in: $5 M | $5 NM

**MARTIAL ARTS AND FITNESS**

**KARATE—MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY CLASS (VIRTUAL)**
Karate is an Okinawan martial art meaning “empty hand.” Develop self-defense skills and strengthen yourself mentally and physically. Our class is part of the International Karate League (IKL) which instructs a modified Shorin-Ryu style of karate. This class is open to all skill levels age 6+.
Instructor: Craig Hamakawa
When: Mondays and Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m.
Cost: $25 M | $42 NM monthly
Drop-in: $8 M | $13 NM

**SENIOR CHAIR AEROBICS (VIRTUAL)**
Designed for seniors who want to build basic physical strength in a low-impact class. Students will use a chair to participate in exercises to increase flexibility, muscle coordination and strength. Classes end with a hands-on massage to relieve any lingering stress.
Instructor: Kaeko Inori
When: Thursdays, 10-10:45 a.m.
Cost: $3 M | $4 NM drop-in (virtual rates)

**MUSIC**

**UKULELE – INTERMEDIATE (VIRTUAL)**
Designed for ukulele players who have prior experience. This class will focus on learning and reviewing chords, as well as songs and strumming patterns. (New students with no prior experience should participate in the Ukulele 101 workshop held twice a year to cover basics such as tuning, basic chords and techniques.)
Instructor: Don Sadler
When: Saturdays, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Cost: $40 M/$60 NM/Monthly
$12 M/$17 NM/Drop-In

Teaching ukulele online is a very different experience from teaching in the classroom. After eight months of teaching ukulele on Zoom, I am so grateful for the technology that allows us to stay connected. There definitely is a place for virtual ukulele instruction, even after the pandemic is over and we can all meet again!
—Don Sadler, Ukulele 101 instructor
Upcoming Workshops and Events

See what exciting and enriching virtual workshops we have coming up this spring, including various cooking programs and special lectures. Be sure to check the Center’s website for additional workshops and events as they are added to the calendar!

KENJI’S KITCHEN MONTHLY ONLINE COOKING CLASS
Sunday, once a month (exact dates TBA)
11 a.m.–12:30 p.m.
$7 Members | $10 General
Instructor: Kenji Yokoo
Register: jccnc.org/virtual-classes-and-programs

Chef Kenji Yokoo of YouTube cooking channel Kenji’s Kitchen continues offering his monthly virtual cooking class with us over Zoom. Originally from Saga Prefecture in the southern island of Kyushu, Kenji shares with us his skills and techniques inherited from his own grandmother’s kitchen and honed over years of fastidious practice. Kenji’s classes are paced so you can cook along at home, and a new recipe is selected each month for you to add to your Japanese cooking repertoire!

COMMUNITY KITCHEN VIRTUAL POTLUCK
Tuesday, once a month
(exact dates TBA) 6–8 p.m.
Free, advance registration required
Register: jccnc.org/virtual-classes-and-programs

While our in-person Community Kitchen dinners are on hold due to the pandemic closures, our Community Kitchen committee has gone online to host a monthly potluck and discussion over Zoom! Cook a dish following each month’s theme in advance, and share with other cooking enthusiasts what you’ve made and other aspects of Japanese foods and culinary practices during the discussion. While we aren’t able to cook together for now, we can still eat together virtually!

MEET PROFESSIONAL 3X3 BASKETBALL PLAYER RYAN TANA
April 24, 4 p.m.
Free, advance registration required
Register: bit.ly/RyanTana

Did you know that 3x3 basketball is now an Olympic sport? Meet Ryan Tana, professional 3x3 basketball player and co-owner of team Tokyo Crayola 3x3 in Japan! Learn how he got involved in the sport, how he established life in Japan and more!

Ryan was born in New York City, but grew up in Belmont, CA playing basketball for San Mateo JYO and San Jose Ninjas. He attended Junipero Serra High School then played for New York University for four years.

SPRING KAISEKI VIRTUAL COOKING WORKSHOP
Saturday, May 1, 2–3:30 p.m.
$7 Members | $10 General
Instructors: Larry Sokyo Tiscornia and Kimika Soko Takechi
Register: bit.ly/kaisekimay2021

Our seasonal kaiseki cooking workshops are back, in virtual format! A centuries-
old culinary tradition, kaiseki cuisine draws on influences from traditional tea ceremonies and the light cuisine of Zen monasteries, resulting in multi-course meals comprised of aesthetically pleasing and fresh and healthy courses made with fresh and colorful seasonal ingredients. Be sure to check our website for the exact menu of each workshop!

Civic leaders and ordinary people from all walks of life in San Francisco cultivated and celebrated their city's ties with Japan almost immediately after the Pacific War ended, most notably with the construction of the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center in the Japantown neighborhood. This talk will explore the city's many economic, civic and cultural relations with Japan, and the ways that the recent enemy became central to postwar San Francisco's civic identity. We'll look at examples such as the now-defunct sister-city relationship, the precursor to the Asian Art Museum, Japanese restaurants, Japanese food imports and the role of Japanese Americans in these transpacific relations.

JAPANESE AMERICANS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS IN WESTERN ADDITION REDEVELOPMENT
Thursday, May 20, 6 – 7 p.m
Free, advance registration required
Register: bit.ly/jtownhistorymay2021

This talk will explore the contrasting ways that redevelopment portrayed San Francisco Japanese Americans and African Americans, despite the quite similar ways in which both groups sought to carve out places for themselves in their discriminatory city. We'll look at examples of Japanese American and Black cooperation and conflict with city officials (CANE, WACO, Nihonmachi Community Development Corporation, Fillmore Community Development Corporation) to see how redevelopment and city relations help to cast the two populations in opposing frames, despite the commonalities in tactics and overarching goals.

CHILDREN’S DAY VIRTUAL SCHOOL VISITS
April 1 – 30
Free for K–2nd Grade classrooms
Contact programsevents@jccnc.org for teacher access to virtual content

Our popular annual Children’s Day School Visits program will be held virtually this year. Kindergarten through 2nd grade classrooms are invited to engage in craft activities, storytelling and cultural lessons teaching about Japanese Children’s Day as well as Boys’ Day and Girls’ Day holiday traditions and practices. Please contact us if you are interested in providing this virtual learning experience to your young students.
We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to our donors for their support in our Year End Annual Support Drive. Your support means more to us than ever before, with so much uncertainty this past year. We are humbled by the compassion and generosity of our community. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, our donors’ steadfast support has lifted our spirits and given us hope during these past several months. During this time of great uncertainty, we’ve been comforted, encouraged and humbled by the outpouring of support from our community. Despite the challenges and difficulties facing us well into 2021, our goal is to be a better, more dynamic organization than before the pandemic started. Donations toward our Year End Annual Support Drive received from August 1 – January 31, 2021 are listed below.

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In this edition, we would like to recognize the tribute gifts made In Memory or In Honor of someone special through our 2020 Year End Annual Support Drive from August 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021. We thank you for remembering and honoring those extraordinary individuals who have helped to make your lives and our community exceptional.

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DON AND ADA SADLER
Mr. Herman Tachera, $100
Mr. Peter Renteria, $25

MITSUE SHINDO
Mr. Jonathan and Mrs. Joyce Shindo, $390

MINEKO TAKATA’S 99TH BIRTHDAY
Mr. Kaz and Mrs. Michi Takata, $100

HIDEKO TAKESHITA
Ms. Atsuko Takeshita, $150

DENISE TERAOKA
Ms. Dianne Ige, $25

THOSE IMPACTED BY COVID, ESPECIALLY NISEIS
Ms. Sharon M. Fujii, $150

ALLISON TSUBOI
Mr. Ken and Mrs. Mary Tsuboi, $100

YOSHIFUJI NEW YEAR’S
Mr. Kaz and Mrs. Michi Takata, $100

NAOKO YOSHIMURA ITO
Ms. Patricia Ito, $500

In Recognition of

SAKE DAY
Mrs. Marina Giordano, $50

PAUL OSAKI CHALLENGE
Ms. Colette Ono-Ko and Mr. Peter Ko, $250
Mr. Eric and Mrs. Alice Akiyama, $100
Mr. Cole Iwamasa, $100
Mr. Owen Iwamasa, $100
Mr. Tai Iwamasa, $100
Ms. Ali Kagawa, $100

Mr. Drew Mametsuka, $100
Ms. Nina Mametsuka, $100
Mr. Matt Okada, $100
Ms. Kelly Yuka Walton, $100
Mr. Jeff K. Yoshioka, $100
Mr. Jimmy Dieng, $75
Ms. Stephanie Gee, $70
Ms. Selena Tsang, $50
Mr. Matthew Tominaga, $25
Ms. Jenny Ha, $20
Ms. Yuki Nishimura, $15
Mr. Anish Thakkar, $10
Ms. Nami Saito, $5

In Honor of

TIM KAWAKAMI
Mr. David Flemming, $250

DONNA KIMURA
Ms. Denise Teraoka, $50

ALAN KITASHIMA
Mr. Jerald and Mrs. Nina Lowe, $50

KC MUKAI
Mr. Alex Rodriguez, $20

HISAE NAKAMURA UYESUGI
Ms. Susan Cranna, $500

CURT, JACKIE, KATE AND JESSICA NAKANO
Mr. Todd Choy, $1,000

Year End Tribute Gifts
continued from page 25
San Francisco's Japantown is the oldest Japantown in the continental United States. It moved to its current location after the 1906 earthquake and was a thriving self-contained community consisting of over 30 blocks prior to World War II. After the war, it was able to rebuild, and even after the City's redevelopment plans demolished many buildings in the community, calling them blighted and uninhabitable, it was able to rebuild a second time. It is a community that has survived many bumps and hills over the course of its 115+ year history.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has made life very trying for many businesses to stay open, and it has been especially difficult for our Japantown businesses. When the Shelter-in-Place Orders went into effect last March, the main commercial corridor of Japantown, the three Japan Center Malls, was forced to shut down, as all indoor malls were required to close. Limited operations are now allowed for the restaurants to provide take-out service, and retail businesses can allow a few people in their stores at one time, but these restrictions make it very difficult for businesses to sustain the level of income they need to stay afloat. Rent is still being charged; fixed costs do not go away during a pandemic; and competition with online merchants has made it especially tough on the Japantown merchants who pride themselves in offering authentic, quality and personalized services to their customers.

Through a generous grant by The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation (Takahashi Foundation), the Center was able to create two specific projects to bring people to Japantown and to help merchants with immediate cash resources to be able to restart their operations.

One of the programs, Picnic at the Plaza (Picnic) accommodated more than 30,000 people during its weekend service, which ran from July to November 2020, constituting more than 70% of sales for some of the restaurants.

The other successful program, the GAMBARO Project, created the ability for the Center to purchase gift certificates from Japantown businesses and then distribute them to direct service nonprofit organizations in Japantown to help with fundraising and other promotional efforts.

The benefits of the project have been two-fold. First, the Japantown
businesses were able to receive a guaranteed amount of money when the gift certificates were purchased. They were free to utilize these resources in whatever way they needed to reopen and start anew. Second, the direct service nonprofit organizations who have received the gift certificates have been able to incorporate them into their fundraising plans to help supplement the great loss of income they suffered when they were forced to close their doors for services.

These projects would not have been possible without the support of Masako Takahashi and the Takahashi Foundation.

Picnic at the Plaza is now seen as a model for other communities to duplicate to help small businesses in their area accommodate guests with a clean and safe place to eat their meals. The safety protocols developed for Picnic will now be incorporated into the daily practice of cleaning and purification at the Center when it opens its doors to the public.

The GAMBARO Project has brought new shoppers and visitors to Japantown as the gift certificates have been distributed to a wide and diverse range of recipients — many of whom have never spent any time learning and benefiting from the shops in the Japan Center Malls and other businesses in Japantown.

The Center is very grateful to the Takahashi Foundation for allowing us to conduct these programs and the Japantown small businesses who have had to endure a very anxiety-ridden year of many unknowns but still have persevered to stay afloat.
Community Tributes

We would like to extend a special thank you to those who remember the Center when making unsolicited community gifts. These unsolicited gifts remind us how important the Center is to many in the community who appreciate the work that we do—whether it is a place for them to socialize with friends, share cultural traditions with their children or grandchildren or a place where they can feel comfortable coming to in the community. We thank you for thinking of us and allowing us to share in remembering or honoring the special people in your life. Gifts received from November 1, 2020–January 31, 2021 are listed below. Annual Support Drive donors are listed in the previous pages.

In Memory of

KEIKO AKASHI  
Mr. Kenneth and Mrs. Yoshiko Ho, $50  
Mr. Robert and Mrs. Gail Mametsuka, $50  
Mrs. Kay K. Onishi, $50  
Mrs. Nancy and Mr. Giichi Sakurai, $50  
Mrs. Kazue Ihara, $30  

RICHICHI AND SUZU ASHIZAWA  
Ms. Joyce Ashizawa-Yee and Mr. Bradley Yee, $2,500  

ROY AND FUMI ASHIZAWA  
Ms. Joyce Ashizawa-Yee and Mr. Bradley Yee, $2,500  

MITZI HADA  
The Coxon Family, $100  

GEORGETTE IMURA  
Paul Osaki, $150  
Ms. Diane Matsuda, $50  

CANDACE KIKA  
Mr. Ron Omori, $100  

MIK KITAGAWA  
Mrs. Fumi and Mr. Nobusuke Fukuda, $50  

GEORGE KUWATANI  
Mrs. Kay K. Onishi, $50  
Mr. Don and Mrs. Ada Sadler, $50  

TERRY LEONG  
Mr. Kenneth Kawabata, $50  

VICKY MIHARA  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

JOE AND YAE TONDO  
Mr. Gary and Mrs. Sharon Kato, $100  

YORI AND CHIYO WADA  
Ms. Carol Kawase, $50  

SACHIKO WOO  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

JAU-FANG WU  
Mrs. Gloria Wu Julien, $250  

PETER YAMAMOTO  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

IWAO YAMASAKI  
Ms. Dianne Fukami and Mr. Gerry Nakano, $100  
Ms. Minna Tao, $100  
Mr. Milton K. Wong and Ms. Dianne K. Furuya-Wong, $100  
Mr. Eddie Wong and Ms. Donna L. Kotake, $75  
Ms. Diane Matsuda, $50  

HATSY YASUKOCHI  
Anonymous, $25  

In Honor of

BENKYODO  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

JACK AND JUN DAITIKI  
Ms. Kazuko Hishida, $100  

JENNIFER HAMAMOTO  
Ms. Mutsuko Arima, $50  

MORINO COFFEE SHOP  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

JUNE-KO NAKAGAWA  
Anonymous, $100  

NB DEPARTMENT STORE  
Ms. Nancy Nagano-Lock, $50  

TERESA ONO  
Ms. Mutsuko Arima, $50  

DON AND ADA SADLER  
Ms. Karen Mah-Hing, $100  

ROBERT AND ALICIA SAKAI AND LAUREN AND JOSH SAPPINGTON  
Diane Matsuda, $600  

YUKA WALTON  
Mrs. Cynthia Bader, $40  

In Recognition of

NOBORU AND DOROTHY YAMANAKA  
Ms. Wendi Yamanaka, $100  

COVID-19  
Mr. Kazuo Maruoka, $500  
Mrs. Margaret Kusaba, $100  
Ms. Michiko Tashiro, $100  

OUR LONGTIME ‘CAL’ FRIENDS  
Mr. Raymond and Mrs. Mona Kitase, $50  

YOSHIFUJI FAMILY  
Ms. Karen Boyden, $250  
Mr. Gary and Mrs. Sharon Kato, $100  
Mr. Aki and Mrs. Michiko Kuramoto, $100
COMMUNITY DONATIONS

$5,000+
Ms. Joyce Ashizawa-Yee and
Mr. Bradley Yee
Cultural Heritage Fund

$1,000-$4,999
Hoops for Friends, Inc.

$500-$999
Ms. Marilyn C. Oshiro
Mr. Kenji Yokoo

$250-$499
San Francisco Drakes

$100-$249
Anonymous
Mr. Leland and Ms. Eleanor Dong
Miss Madison Eade
Mr. Masao and Mrs. Setsuko Handa
Ms. Sato Hashizume
Mrs. Lyn and Mr. Brian Hirahara
Ms. Brenda Jow
Ms. Miyako Kadogawa
Mr. Eric and Mrs. Vera Kawamura
Reverend Roger and
Mrs. Christine Morimoto
Ms. Yukie Mino
Ms. Jane Naito
Ms. Kim Nakamura
Nihonmachi Little Friends
Ms. Catherine Pantsios
Mrs. Harumi Serata
Ms. Kylie Tamura
Mr. Takayoshi Wiesner
Ms. Donna Yoshida Castro

$0-$99
Ms. Ronnie Bartolome
Dr. Mary Bitterman
Ms. Kazuko Hishida
Ms. Shirley Imamoto
Ms. Hope Kamimoto
Mrs. Jeanie Kashima
Mr. Albert Lau
Ms. Ibuki Lee
Mr. Dii Lewis and Ms. Joyce H. Oishi
Mr. Robert and Mrs. Diane Matsumura
Ms. Audrey Metzger
Ms. JoAnn Momono
Mrs. Eva Monroe
Mr. Tomokazu "Tetsu" Morikawa
Mr. Dennis and Mrs. Deborah Nakamura
Ms. Lisa Nakamura
Ms. Kathy Nelsen
Mr. Ross Sakamoto
Mr. Donald and Mrs. Marian Seiki
Ms. Michiko Yamamoto
Mrs. Dorothy Yanagi
Ms. Liane Yanase
Mr. Hiroyuki Yumoto
Ms. Masako Yumoto

CORPORATE GIVING

Bank of America Employee Campaign
Blackbaud Giving
Community Health Charities
THE CENTER’S ANNUAL SPONSORS

The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation

2021 Nikkei Youth Raffle Tickets on Sale Now to Support Youth Programs at the Center!

Reserve online at bit.ly/youthraffle2021

Early Bird Drawings:
March 31, April 14 and April 28 for 5 Japantown retailer/restaurant gift certificates
Grand Prize Drawing on Children’s Day (Wednesday, May 5, 2021) for 2 roundtrip economy airline tickets
All drawings held on Facebook Live (www.facebook.com/LikeJCCNC)