Celebrating Generations
The JA Yellow Pages
A 45 Year Tradition of Connecting Our Community

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, I’m reminded of our first community project, which occurred eight years before the Center opened its doors in 1986. Recognizing a need to keep our community connected even then, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California compiled the first Japanese American Community Directory. It was printed using an office mimeograph machine. Although Yonsei today have no idea what a mimeograph machine was, most Sansei can still remember the mesmerizing aroma of the ink on the paper, which schools used to make copies of quizzes for the classroom.

Later in 1997, we published an updated book version called the Northern California Japanese American Community Directory, which was a comprehensive guide to community organizations and their services. 8,000 copies were distributed throughout Northern California and became the go-to resource for information on community organizations.

In 2008, recognizing the internet’s growth, the Center created the JA Yellow Pages. This first online community news and national directory helped connect the wealth of talent and resources available within the Japanese American community and listed hundreds of organizations across the country. The site provided valuable information on our community’s resources in the areas of politics/advocacy, arts/culture, youth/children, senior services, education, health, religion, media, social services, recreation, and U.S.-Japan relations.

We hope that the JA Yellow Pages continues to be a valuable resource to help people discover community resources and better understand the vastness of our Nikkei organizations sprinkled throughout the United States. As the Japanese American community expands and becomes more diverse across the country, we hope this website, first conceived long before the internet, can keep us connected and informed about our community activities and the common threads that unite us. In this second 50th Anniversary newsletter, you’ll read about some of the Nisei who helped build the Center, who dedicated their time, energy and lives to creating the community hub we have today. Just like the many passions and interests of the organizations and nonprofits found in the JA Yellow Pages, these people worked tirelessly, and often quietly, behind the scenes to preserve connections. We would not exist without them, and just like the many passions and interests of the organizations and nonprofits found in the JA Yellow Pages, these people worked tirelessly, and often quietly, behind the scenes to preserve connections.

We are a changing community with the passing of many in our Nisei generation. We are diverse yet united by common concerns and interests to preserve our cultural heritage. We are many organizations throughout the country striving to meet the ever-changing needs of the Japanese American community. And if you are ever curious about a resource, or want to share one with friends and family who may be looking, visit jayellowpages.org.

Executive Director

Paul Osaki
Executive Director

MISSION

The Center is a nonprofit organization which strives to meet the evolving needs of the Japanese American community by offering programs, affordable services and administrative support and facilities for other local organizations. The Center also provides educational, cultural and recreational programs that meet and address the interests and concerns of the community. Our goals remain rooted in preserving the Japanese American cultural and historical heritage as well as fostering the foundation for future generations of Japanese Americans.
50 For 50 Fun Facts About The Center

1. The original location chosen for the Center was on the corner of Sutter and Buchanan Street (the current site of Hotel Enso). There was a bridge initially designed over Sutter Street connecting the Buchanan Mall to the Center.

2. Within six years of the incorporation of the Center in 1973, membership grew to 1,200 members.

3. Mayor Dianne Feinstein and Yori Wada were Co-Chairpersons of the “Vision 80s Capital Campaign,” with the goal of raising $3 million.

4. On October 5, 1984, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the start of construction of the Center.

5. In 2007, the Center became the first nonprofit organization in San Francisco to install solar panels on its roof.

6. In 1996, the Center organized the largest private tailgate party in Candlestick Park’s history, with 1,200 tailgaters paying tribute to 49 pre World War II Nisei baseball players during the SF Giants game. 1,300 pieces of teriyaki chicken were barbecued in the parking lot.

7. In 2000, the Center organized the first Japanese American Leadership Delegation Program to Japan. The program is currently coordinated by the US-Japan Council in Washington DC.

8. The Center created the San Francisco Japantown History Walk, a permanent educational display featuring historical and culturally significant landmarks in the community. The walk includes 16 stops in a ten block route around Japantown. It can now be followed on our app.

9. The Center asked Janice Mirikitani, renowned poet laureate of San Francisco to write a poem for the California Japantown Landmarks located in the three remaining historic Japantowns (San Francisco, San Jose and Los Angeles). The poem is the only public display of her poetry in the Japanese American community.

10. The three sides of the Japantown Landmark which stands on Post and Buchanan Street represent: 1. The Beginning; 2. The Exodus; 3. The Promise.

11. In 2008, the Center received the White House Preserve America Designation for Japantown, which was the first neighborhood in San Francisco to be given this federal recognition.

12. The first Shinzen Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program started in 1997 with over 120 participants traveling to Kobe and Osaka.

Continued on page 3
13. The Center houses the original mechanical cast iron mochi pounding machine, stone usu and wooden kine used by Yamada-Seika Confectionary for 36 years.

14. The Center has a Maneki Neko mascot named Maido, which means “welcome” in Kansai dialect. Maido was created to promote the reopening of the building after the pandemic.

15. From 2004 to 2008, the Center spearheaded the California Nisei High School and College Diploma Project for those Nisei who were incarcerated during WWII and unable to receive their diplomas. Approximately 2,200 diplomas were awarded throughout the State during graduation ceremonies at their attending school or universities prior to the War.

16. The Center has sister relationships with Japanese Cultural Centers in Washington State, Hawaii and Los Angeles.

17. The orange decorative border around the gymnasium floor is based on a kimono obi design.


19. There are 17 steps to our front door, which Marj Fletcher would always count when walking up.

20. The Center’s building and land are owned by the Japanese American community.

21. The cherry blossom trees in front of the building are from Portland, OR.

22. Edith Tanaka, a Nisei, was the first woman to serve as President of the Board of Directors and had the longest term of seven years.

23. The Center was the inspiration for the recently opened Terasaki Budokan in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

24. The Center created the first photojournalism history book on Japantown for its 25th anniversary.

25. Paul Osaki wrote Senate Bill 307, the landmark legislation to preserve the three remaining historic Japantowns in California.

26. The Washi Ningyo Japanese Paper Doll class was the first program offered at the Center in 1989. It still continues to this day.

27. The Center’s cherry blossom trees were purchased with the assistance of the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco.

28. The rock slate wall in front of the building was designed to resemble the foundation of a Japanese castle wall.

29. The Center is the largest Japanese American community-owned facility in Northern California.

30. The Japanese folding screen painting (byobu) on the second floor was donated by the Asian Art Museum.

31. Notable people who have visited the Center:
   - Speaker Emeritus, Nancy Pelosi
   - U.S. Senator and former San Francisco Mayor, Dianne Feinstein
   - Clinton Administration Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown
   - Clinton Administration Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta
   - Wife of former Vice President Al Gore, Tipper Gore
   - Rev. Jesse Jackson
   - Olympic Gold Medalist, Kristi Yamaguchi
   - Prime Minister of Japan, Toshiki Kaifu
   - Former Prime Minister, Kiichi Miyazawa
   - Actor, George Takei
32. The Center has been rented by over 600 organizations and used for more than 2,100 events since its opening.

33. Current Center President Scott Okamoto’s grandfather was the first President of the Board of Directors.

34. The Center was designed to support a third floor. One day we may build one.

35. The original Redevelopment Plan for the Center had a hotel with 120 guest rooms built above it.

36. There once was a parking lot in the back of the Center.

37. The ceramic tile donor wall in the second floor hallway has 800 tiles.

38. Paul Osaki has served under 14 Presidents and 113 Board of Directors for more than 34 years.

39. The Center has a collection of over 18,000 original Issei and Japantown historical documents as part of the archives created by Seizo Oka, founder of the Japanese American History Archives.

40. Between staff members Paul Osaki, Jennifer Hamamoto, Ruby Hata, Lori Matoba, Haruka Roudebush and Mika Shimizu they have worked at the Center a combined 125 years.

41. The Center has an original Executive Order 9066 poster ordering “all persons of Japanese ancestry to evacuate Japantown.”

42. Paul Osaki was 29 years old when he became Executive Director.

43. The Center supported an orphanage in Kobe, Japan following the earthquake that struck the Kansai region in 1995. The Center continues to visit it almost every year since.

44. The Center organized a trip for the San Francisco 49ers to visit Osaka as part of the 45th anniversary of the SF-Osaka Sister City Relationship.

45. The Center organized a national conference for Japanese Americans called Nikkei 2000. More than 500 attendees came from seven states, as well as Canada, South America and Japan.

46. The largest group the Center ever brought to Japan was 174 people in 1997, for the 40th Anniversary of the SF-Osaka Sister City.

47. Since the start of the Center’s annual Cultural Tours to Japan in 1997, all 47 prefectures in Japan have been visited at least once.

48. The Center has organized the Japanese community Colma Cemetery clean-up since 2010.

49. An estimated 4 million people have visited the Center since its opening.

50. The Center organized a national conference for Japanese Americans called Nikkei 2000. More than 500 attendees came from seven states, as well as Canada, South America and Japan.

Upper left: California Nisei High School Diploma Project

Upper right: The Legends of the Japanese American Baseball League

Bottom left: Kristi Yamaguchi supporting NJERF efforts

Bottom right: Shinzen Nikkei Youth Goodwill Program USA in Hiroshima City
Nisei Faces of the Center

In 1973, after two years of community town hall meetings, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California was officially designated as a non-profit organization and the dream of building a community center in Japantown was born. The JCCCNC was built by the community and for the community, a collective vision of a place that was owned, operated and managed by the very people it served. In this special 50th Anniversary Fall issue, we would like to recognize just a handful of some of those Nisei who dedicated their time, energy and passion to bring the Center to life. Their names are familiar to many, their impact known to most, and their influence still lives within the walls of our building here at 1840 Sutter Street.

Hatsuro "Hats" Aizawa
Hats was a member of the original Nihonmachi steering committee to build a community center. He strongly believed that the community needed to own a building that could serve the entire community after witnessing the destruction of Japantown by the Redevelopment Agency. He served as one of the leaders of the Vision 80’s Capital Campaign Committee. Along with his wife Amey, they were not only major donors throughout their lifetime but they embodied everything about the Center, participating in many programs and events on a regular basis.

Shichinosuke "David" Asano
David Asano was appointed to act as chairperson for the first two community townhall meetings to discuss the need for a community center. His leadership as Chair of the Steering Committee for the Nihonmachi Community Center from 1971 to 1973 was vital in bringing together several community organization representatives. Under his leadership, the need for a community center in Japantown began to take shape, leading to the development of the Articles of Incorporation. He later served as President of the Board of Directors during the early years of the formation of the Center as a nonprofit organization.

Nobusuke "Nob" Fukuda
Nob Fukuda was the Center’s President of the Board during a truly transformative period, from 1987 to 1993. His term started when the Center first opened its doors to the community in 1986. He was a firm believer that the Center was an organization that could bring Japantown together and be open to everyone in the community. The campaign to raise money for the gymnasium also came under his leadership. His steadfast commitment inspired the Board and community to stay focused on the capital fundraising and as a result of his leadership and dedication, the Center would pay off its 30-year mortgage in just six years.

“I hope that a few generations from now that Yonsei and their children will still be coming here because of their sense of culture and the importance to maintain the identity that their parents and grandparents have had. We must take the initiative to prepare the next generations to carry on our mission for us. Our community needs to become our children’s community.”

—Nobusuke Fukuda
Yoshiko “Yo” Hironaka
Yo Hironaka served on the Board of Directors of the Center for decades, from the Vision 80’s Capital Campaign up until 2010. For over a decade she was the last Nisei to serve on the Board. Despite that, she was the youngest at heart. Her impact as a strong but quiet Nisei woman leader acted as a bridge between the Nisei, Sansei and Yonsei. Yo was known to have friends across all generations. Yo’s enthusiasm for the Center made her the perfect person to serve as the Community Gifts Chairperson for the Vision 80’s Capital Campaign. Her gentle approach to asking for donations played an instrumental role in securing financial backing from the community.

“Celebrating generations means honoring the contributions of the first and second generations. Through so much sacrifice and hard work, these generations have made the path a little bit easier for their children. At the same time, this is a time to turn over the leadership of our community to the future generations, so that their own dreams and visions can be fulfilled.”

—Kenji Murase

Katherine Nunotani
Katherine Nunotani was a dedicated volunteer to many organizations in the community and a leader in the cause for redress and reparations for the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII. As the Chair of the Center’s membership campaign, she recruited over 1,100 members even before the Center was built. She worked tirelessly campaigning for the need of a community center in Japantown. She set the standards of what it meant to be a community volunteer. When a young Paul Osaki was appointed Executive Director, she gave him $100 and said, “It’s time for you to start wearing a suit.” She, along with her husband Wally and daughter Karen, all served on the Board of Directors at different stages of the Center’s development.

“The young people of our Japanese American community need to work cohesively, with one goal and one purpose, towards continuing the dreams of our community. The simple goal is to preserve the Japanese cultural traditions and history.”

—Yo Hironaka

Kenji Murase
Kenji Murase’s quiet leadership and steadfast dedication to support Japanese American non-profit organizations in the community made him a perfect candidate to serve as one of the founding board of directors, who continued to serve for 17 years. He wrote many of the capital grants to major foundations throughout the country. Kenji’s background work in racial understanding and multiculturalism was instrumental in helping to develop the cultural heritage philosophy of the Center and its programs.
Takeo Okamoto

Takeo Okamoto's leadership and volunteerism in the community made him the perfect candidate to serve as the Center's first President of the Board of Directors in 1973. He was a founding member of the Steering Committee for a Nihonmachi Community Center. He also played an instrumental role in helping to develop the future purpose of the organization in its Articles of Incorporation. There were several names being considered for the new community center, such as the Nihonmachi Community Center, but it was Takeo who came up with the name of the future community center. The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California. Being a Kibei Nisei, he had strong feelings that culture should play an important role in the purpose of the organization and in considering the name, culture should come before community.

Wayne Osaki

Wayne Osaki served as a member of the original Steering Committee for the Nihonmachi Community Center. As the future architect of the Center, he wanted to contribute to the design of a new Japantown following the Redevelopment Agency's (RDA) destruction of the community from the 1960s to 1980s. In 1967, Wayne joined the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO) and challenged the RDA along with the Black community in the Western Addition during the early stages of the destruction of their community. His inspiration for becoming an architect was rooted in his experience of the incarceration at Tule Lake, after which he was dedicated to improving people’s lives and helping to physically rebuild the Japanese community.

Martha Masako Suzuki

Martha Suzuki, along with her sister Tomoye Takahashi, were the first donors to build a community center in Japantown. They made the donation after attending their first meeting of the Steering Committee for the Nihonmachi Community Center. She felt that a new community center could help save what was left of the Japanese American community following redevelopment. She believed that the community needed a building to own, that could be built to serve the Japanese American community, and never be taken away. She continued to support throughout her lifetime, leaving a $4 million endowment to support programs and staffing.

“Together as one community of Japanese Americans, we shall appreciate and respect the contributions of each generation. From the deepest level of passing along family traditions, let us celebrate the past and future accomplishments of our Japanese American heritage.”

—Wayne Osaki
“Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Yonsei, Gosei — so many wonderful aspects and accomplishments of each generation. Each generation has their own unique identity and individuality in this world. Each generation should learn from each other and be able to benefit from the contributions of each generation passed along.”

—Edith Tanaka
Transformative Performance: Nobuko Miyamoto Celebrates Five Decades of Arts, Activism and the Center’s Legacy

On August 5, 2023, as one of its signature 50th Anniversary events, the Center Nobuko Miyamoto in Concert: 120,000 Stories at the Presidio Theatre, a powerful performance left the audience inspired and reflecting on the days of solidarity, activism and with dreams of a more just future. The title, 120,000 Stories, a smithsonian Folkways album and a concert, draws from the history of the incarceration of Japanese Americans, during which Nobuko was just a child, imprisoned with her family. She recalls that her very first moments were of the dusty, stench-filled stables and barracks of Santa Anita Racetrack, as she rode on top of her father’s shoulders around the camp. "A heavy atmosphere was around us," She recalls. "And that image has lived with me forever."

After the war, and with childhood aspirations to study ballet and dance, Nobuko’s passion for the arts was supported by her parents, which eventually landed her roles in seminal films and Broadway shows, including The King and I, Flower Drum Song and West Side Story. But as she ventured deeper into Hollywood as an Asian American, she found that only stereotypical roles and opportunities were available to her, limiting the complexity that reflected her lived experiences.

Profoundly transformed by her exposure to the groundbreaking activism of the late 1960s and 1970s, Nobuko became involved with social justice movements across the color lines, leading her to an organic formation of the groups Chris and Joanne, with Chris Iijima, and Yellow Pearl, with Chris, Joanne and Charlie Chin. Along with the Center, 2023 marks 50 years since the release of their album, A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggle by Asians in America.

Nobuko, now in her 80s, delivered a rare and once-in-a-lifetime Bay Area performance in celebration of the Center’s 50th Anniversary, as Nobuko and the Center have overlapped in many formative decades of service to not only the Japanese American community, but broader marginalized communities in their respective locations.

To open the show, the Center’s Board President, Scott Okamoto, and Board Member, Kyle Tana, welcomed a house of more than 300 audience members who came from all walks of life. While many were familiar with Nobuko personally or professionally, there were many attendees who had not known of Nobuko’s long storied career, hearing her songs and musical collaborations, many written in partnership with Chris Iijima for the first time. Special guests to the stage for musical numbers included San Jose Taiko’s PJ Hirabayashi and saxophonist Francis Wong. At the end of the show, the Center’s Executive Director Paul Osaki presented Nobuko with flowers and a speech of gratitude, remarking on the incredible
achievements of her long career in carving her own path in the performing arts.

After the show, sponsors and VIP guests gathered at the Presidio’s outdoor patio for a relaxing afternoon reception which turned into a reunion for many attendees, some who had not seen each other, or Nobuko, in more than two or three decades. The show, played against the backdrop of the Center’s five decades of service, captured the beauty of many years of activism and the struggle for a cause and community, powered by the people.

Thank you to the Host Committee and VIP Sponsors who made this performance possible.

HOST COMMITTEE


VIP SPONSORS

Japantown Task Force | Jerry and Shelly Ferguson | Leroy and Barbara Hedani Morishita | Michael and Vickie Ina | Ron and Mimi Kaeghiro | Kumi Kawashiri | Bob and Irene Kawamoto | Keith and Priscilla Kojimoto | Cindy Nakamoto |
Tabemasho 2023
Celebrating Generations

Saturday October 7 | 2:00 - 5:00 PM
Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California
1840 Sutter Street
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FEATURING SPECIAL ARTISANS FROM JAPAN:

TANAKA KAMA INDUSTRIES
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PURCHASE AT BIT.LY/TABEMASAGO2023 OR
BY CALLING THE CENTER AT (415) 567-5505

CELEBRATING THE GENERATIONS OF JAPANESE AMERICANS
WHO TURNED DREAMS INTO REALITY
The 2023 Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program

From left to right: Elle Arikawa, Chloe Okamoto, Pax Nakahata, Chris Hsu and Dru Yonemura at the Nagasaki Peace Park.

Five high school students from the Bay Area embarked on a once in a lifetime trip to Japan and from their unique experience of harvesting their own food, fleeing from typhoons and navigating a country with different culture (and transportation systems) learned what it meant to be a 2023 Takahashi Youth Ambassador. This program wouldn’t have been possible without the generous support from The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation and Japan Airlines.

The Takahashi Youth Ambassador Fellowship Program (TYAFP) was created as a youth exchange program between the U.S and Japan to help the Japanese American youth define their identity and establish a greater connection to their roots. Our 2023 TYAFP Ambassadors: Elle Arikawa, Chris Hsu, Pax Nakahata, Chloe Okamoto and Dru Yonemura established the 2023 TYAFP theme to be peace and sustainability. In an effort to raise additional funds for their trip, the TYAFP Ambassadors held a large Mottainai sale to reflect their theme and encourage people to re-use, repurpose and upcycle. The students raised over three times their original goal of $1000. In order to prepare for their trip, the five students practiced Japanese etiquette, folded 1000 cranes to present at the Nagasaki Peace Park (which they hand carried on two trains to get to the park) and created all sorts of crafts together from dyeing t-shirts to cooking okonomiyaki.

The trip faced many challenges with plans getting cancelled and train lines being shut down due to a chasing typhoon that the TYAFP Ambassadors faced with great flexibility and patience. During their visit, they experienced all different walks of life-from “the rural region of Kumamoto where they met and stayed with a family who raised their own rice and vegetables, to the bustling city of Tokyo where they shopped at Ginza and Akihabara” - Diane Matsuda

Throughout the trip, each Takahashi Ambassador was in charge of a day to blog and showcase the days’ events to their families and friends.

"In Fukushima we met the Watanabe family, who took us out to Komine-Jo castle. The castle is one of the few in Japan that is entirely made of wood and hand carved, and is easily defendable as all castles are. Even though the castle was refurbished it still bears the bullet holes from the Boshin war." "We then went to the daruma workshop, where we were shown around the workspace, then taught how to decorate our own daruma" ~Chloe Okamoto

"We started off the day with a bang, rushing out of the door and into the rain around 7:30. Today was more active compared to yesterday. Going to the aizome demonstration was very eye-opening. This demonstration gave all of us newfound appreciation for small family owned companies and for their dedication to their craft. Dyeing the cloth was fun but also a little scary, Having a vat of indigo in front of you comes with the risk of falling in" ~ Dru Yonemura

To learn more about TYAFP, please contact the Center at: (415) 567-5505/ info@jccnc.org
The Center sponsored a special presentation on Thursday, August 24 at the Center to share and discuss the findings of pre-World War II Issei records and images.

The records and images from the Center’s Japanese American History Archives (JAHA) collection, specifically from the Yokohama Specie Bank (YSB), were discussed. The Yokohama Specie Bank was a financial institution established in 1880 that played a significant role in managing Japan’s foreign exchange. In San Francisco, it served as the major financial institution for many newly-arrived Japanese immigrants, Issei, to remit money to their families in Japan, and conduct local business, community and other activities since many mainstream U.S. financial institutions did not support loans and other financial services to Japanese and other Asian immigrants.

Over the past year, leading scholars with expertise in pre-World War II Issei history, economics and education, have spent countless hours examining the YSB records to discover important findings about the history of early Japanese immigrants to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Although the Center has been the fortunate recipient of this priceless collection since 2004, the contents of
JAHA have not been made public because of the fragility and unreplaceable nature of some of the documents. With the great assistance of Kay Ueda of the Japanese Diaspora Initiative at the Hoover Library & Archives at Stanford University, the digitization of the most vital documents has started. JAHA’s goal in the near future is to implement and promote a community digital collection as well as undertake a fully renovated archive, with a virtual and graphically visual history walk of San Francisco Japantown at the Center.

We are grateful to The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation for the initial financial assistance in preserving the documents and physical renovation of JAHA, and are honored to receive a prestigious grant from the National Historical Publication and Records Commission (NHPRC)/Mellon Foundation to allow us to begin this important journey of preservation and recognition of our Issei community.

For more information, please email us at: info@jcccnc.org.

The presenting scholars were:

Kay Ueda, Curator of the Japanese Diaspora Collection, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford University

Eiichiro Azuma, Professor of History and Asian American Studies, University of Pennsylvania

Yoko Tsukuda, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law Department, Seijo University

Toyotomi Morimoto, Professor of Human Sciences, Waseda University

Meredith Oda, Associate Professor of History, University of Nevada, Reno
Within hours after staff at the Center witnessed the massive destruction in Tohoku on March 11, 2011, a relief fund was established to support those in immediate need.

Named the Northern Japan Earthquake Relief Fund, or NJERF for short, over $4.1 million was raised. Hundreds of people, both near and far, helped contribute to NJERF, so the Center made sure that the organizations receiving support in Tohoku had a clear plan of implementation to work directly with the residents.

For the first five years, the Center made annual visits to the area to support and monitor activities. Plans to visit the region on the 10th anniversary in 2021 were also in place but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the visit was postponed until March of this year.

To make up for the lost time, The Center created a Cultural Tour to Japan on March 8-17, 2023 to specifically visit and meet with the organizations and residents of the Tohoku Region. Each moment on the tour provided a time to reflect on the long term challenges many Tohoku residents have overcome, all with great dignity, resiliency and an affirmative look to the future.

The theme of the tour was called “Wasurenaide,” or “not to forget.” We wanted to make sure that we circled back to revisit the places, people and areas that have held a special place in the Center’s heart.

Several equally important highlights on the tour include a special service at the Jifukuji Temple on March 11th that allowed us to remember those who passed away in the City of Kesennuma, Miyagi Prefecture.

Several hours later on that same day, we paused for a moment of silence at 2:46 PM, the exact time the earthquake occurred in 2011, while we were visiting
“The trip was filled with mixed emotions. I felt sadness as we visited a memorial museum and attended a service on 3.11 in Kesennuma, but inspired by young people working to grow their communities and delighted to see the smiles of seniors who finally returned to their homes in the mountain town of Yamakiya after being forced to leave 12 years ago. It was a heartwarming trip that connected us with the people of Tohoku and a reminder never to forget.”

— Lori Matoba

the grounds of the Seiryo In Temple, also located in the City of Kesennuma.

Spending time in this area, where the fishing industry has played a historically significant economic role, also allowed a reconnection with retired Priest Shukyo Katayama and our friends with the Hamawarasu organization.

We took a brief trip to the city of Oshu, the birthplace of the great baseball star, Shohei Ohtani. Nambu cast ironware also originated in Oshu, and visiting the city gave us a better appreciation for the skill and deep knowledge that it takes to create each piece by hand, which are then sold worldwide.

Traveling south, we had the opportunity to meet with our partners at the Sendai YMCA where the Center was acknowledged for its support in helping young children overcome the many physical and emotional challenges following the earthquake.

Our final stop was to the small town of Yamakiya in Fukushima Prefecture. There, we were treated to handmade soba made by one of the elderly residents of the area and imoni, a special type of stew featuring satoimo, a Japanese potato. In Yamakiya, we learned more about what happened to residents living near the Daiichi Nuclear Powerplant. Although a few towns near the power plant have been given permission to re-open, certain areas continue to remain unavailable for residents to move home and sadly, there is no estimated timeline when the prohibition will be lifted.

We met and spoke with a few residents who have been told that they cannot move home. They now live in apartments created by the government and attend activities at a community center. Many of them are in the older years of life. None of them expressed bitterness or a feeling of despair despite the fact that their home and their land that they had been living on for their whole lives and held on to for many generations, will never be
Tohoku 12 Years Later  
continued from page 17

accessible to them.

In fact, we never heard one comment of resentment or discontentment throughout the journey. Those affected by the tsunami, who had many lives taken away from them told us that even though the sea can be cruel, it also brings them their livelihood and creates a peaceful sense of beauty.

Those who have been forever displaced by the nuclear power plant are grateful for a permanent home. Friendships have been created within their new community and environment and they are grateful to still live in Fukushima — their home, their pride, their life.

We all took away a deep sense of happiness in the fact that we played a small part in helping out these communities in need. It reaffirmed that you can contribute in such meaningful ways, person to person, across national boundaries to help a fellow human being.

The Center will never forget the people of Tohoku and we hope that we can continue to pursue projects and activities that will have long-lasting and significant impact to others.

And finally, here is our message to you, our supporters and readers:

Please support farmers and products from Fukushima. There have been many studies that confirm that Fukushima products are not contaminated and will not cause any physical harm to you.

Please consider visiting Tohoku on your next trip to Japan. They need your support, not only in economic dollars but to know that you support them in their continuing efforts to regain their strength.

The Center is a small nonprofit organization that feels it is important to continue its relationship with Japan in many different ways.

—Haiku from Tohoku Tour Participant

“2023 Tohoku Trip”
Nine days, six hotels
Solemn moments, stand with friends
Non-stop treats and more

“We will remember”
Twelve years since earth heaved
Seas raged, reactors melted
Forget you never

“Feast for all senses”
Seafood, meats galore
Each bite unforgettable
Eyes, nose in bliss, too
The Center hosted two special performances by the Grateful Crane Ensemble on June 24 and June 25 as part of our 50th Anniversary events. We were proud to partner once again with Los Angeles-based Grateful Crane Ensemble to pay tribute to the greatest generation, the Nisei, and the legacy business that defined so many lives in Nihonmachi, Benkyodo.

Music has played a major part in defining our community through the generations, both the good times and bad, celebrating our past and present. Our 50th Anniversary would not be possible without the support of the Nisei from throughout Northern California, as more than 80% of the Center’s capital campaign came from the Nisei, who believed so deeply in our vision to preserve and pass on our cultural heritage to future generations.

“Sentimental Journey: A Nisei Life in Song” paid tribute to the Nisei generation featuring hit American and Japanese songs from the 1940s and ’50s that defined their youth and life experience. “Arigato Benkyodo,” told a nostalgic musical journey through the eyes of Ricky and Bobby Okamura, as they ponder closing the family’s century-plus old business while obtaining wise advice from their parents and grandparents. A comedic moment and unexpected surprise for the crowd was when performer Darrell Kunitomi appeared as Benh Nakajo, wearing his staple scarf and emulating his deep, unmistakable voice.

We thank The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation for their support of both programs, and the San Francisco Japantown Foundation for their support of “Sentimental Journey.”
Ongoing Classes at The Center

We welcome you to peruse the list below that features all of the fun and enriching cultural and recreational classes 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! Please be advised that all in-person programs require participants to be fully vaccinated and pre-register. For more information or to register for a class, please visit our website, jccnc.org, or call (415) 567-5505.

**IN PERSON CLASSES**

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**BEGINNERS IKEBANA**
Prevailing as a popular art form through the ages, Ikebana holds its roots in tradition, but also has evolved as a modern expressive artform. Please contact the Programs Department at least 48 hours in advance if interested.
Instructor: Chizuko Nakamura
Second and Fourth Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.
Cost: $22 M | $28 NM drop-in

**IKEBANA**
Reflect on the simplistic beauty of nature and create a harmony of linear construction, rhythm and color through the traditional Japanese art of Ikebana (floral arrangement). Please contact the Programs Department at least 48 hours in advance if interested.
Instructor: Chizuko Nakamura
Wednesdays, 6-8 p.m.
Cost: $70 M | $90 NM monthly
$22 M | $28 NM drop-in

**WATERCOLOR**
Learn the building blocks of this water based medium using basic brush techniques. Observe still life objects and bring your artistic vision to life with the guidance of instructor Wendy Yoshimura. This class is open to all skill levels.
Instructor: Wendy Yoshimura
Mondays, 10 a.m.–noon
Cost: $40 M | $48 NM monthly
$11 M | $14 NM drop-in

**DANCE**

**LINE DANCING**
Learn the dance steps to smooth R&B and pop music and keep in shape while making new friends. This fun anaerobic (low impact) dance class is open to all skill levels. No dance experience required.
Instructor: Darlene Masamori
When: Fridays: 12:30–2 p.m.
Cost: $4 M | $5 NM drop-in

**MARTIAL ARTS AND FITNESS**

**KARATE**
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
Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30-8 p.m.
Cost: $30 M | $48 NM monthly
$9 M | $14 NM drop-in

**KENDO WITH SAN FRANCISCO KENDO DOJO**
Learn the modern Japanese martial art of Kendo. Kendo uses bamboo swords and protective armor to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the katana. This class is hosted by San Francisco Kendo Dojo. To learn more and to register visit sanfranciscokendo.org or contact them at info@sfkendo.org.
Instructor: Koji Lau-Ozawa
Thursdays, 7-9 p.m.

**SOCIAL**

**BRIDGE**
Keep your mind sharp while playing bridge in a fun, social environment.
Coordinator: Alice Moriguchi
Fridays, 12:30-4 p.m.
Cost: $2 M | $3 NM drop-in

**HANAFUDA**
Keep your mind sharp while playing Hana Fuda in a fun, social environment. Hana Fuda is a traditional Japanese card game meaning “flower cards”. There are 48 cards divided into 12 months of the Japanese calendar.
Wednesdays, 11-3:30 p.m.
Cost: $2 M | $3 NM drop-in

**PICKLEBALL**
Join the new craze of pickleball that combines elements of tennis, badminton and ping-pong. Learn the game, meet new people, and get some exercise! All skill levels welcome!
Mondays noon-4 p.m.
and Thursdays, noon-3 p.m.
Cost: $4 M | $6 NM
Wednesday and Saturdays, 10 a.m-noon
Cost: $3 M | $5 NM
MAH JONGG
Engage in social activity and develop creative strategy skills by playing this popular Chinese tile game. If you would like to learn how to play Mandarin style Mah Jongg, classes will begin when we have four new players. Sign up at the Center’s front office and indicate if you would like to attend either a Tuesday, Thursday or both classes. You will be contacted by the Mah Jongg coordinator when we have at least four new students enrolled. Invite your friends!

Coordinators: Yone Higashigawa and Nancy Nakai
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-4 p.m.
Cost: $2 M | $3 NM per season

30 AND OVER BASKETBALL
Sign up for the Center’s Monday Night (draft) Basketball League. Participate in games that are competitive, but friendly! See our website for league information.

Mondays, 6-10 p.m. (up to 15 weeks per season)
Cost: $120 M | $155 NM per season

40 AND OVER BASKETBALL
Get your friends and join the friendly competition in our Wednesday Night (draft) League. See our website for league information.

Wednesdays, 6-10 p.m. (up to 15 weeks per season)
Cost: $105 M | $130 NM per season

SPORTS
COMMUNITY VOLLEYBALL
Create a team for your nonprofit, service or interest organization and join us for a volleyball league filled with fun, food and friends! Each team must consist of either board, staff members or volunteers in your organization. Please contact the Programs Department at programsevents@jcccnc.org if interested in forming a team.

Tuesdays, 7-10 p.m.
Cost: $45 M | $55 NM per season

ARTS AND CULTURE
BEYOND BASICS ART CLASS
This weekly art class is designed for 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
$11 M | $14 NM drop-in

WASHI NINGYO
Engage in the art of Japanese paper doll making and create your own 3D Japanese washi (traditional Japanese paper) dolls. In this class made for all skill levels, participants will learn the basics, or perfect their skills in doll making. First-time participants must register by phone by the first Saturday of the month. Class fees include all materials. Class is for ages 18+

Instructor: Yurie Nakamura/Rochelle Lum
Second Saturday, 10 a.m.-noon
Cost: $30 M | $40 NM monthly
$11 M | $14 NM drop-in

DANCE
YOSAKOI DANCING WITH ITO YOSAKOI DANCE GROUP
Join the Ito Yosakoi Dance Group’s weekly class to learn the lively, energetic style of Yosakoi dancing! Yosakoi dancing features choreographed group dances with traditional movements mixed with modern, uptempo music. 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.

Fridays, 7-9 p.m.
In-person: $25 M | $30 NM monthly
Cost: $8 M | $9 NM drop-in
Virtual: $12 M | $17 NM monthly
$3 M | $5 NM drop-in

MUSIC
CHORALE MAY
Be part of a male chorus group and sing a variety of songs, mainly in Japanese with some English.

Instructor: Ruriko Miura
When: Second and Fourth Tuesdays, 7-9 p.m.
Cost: $25 M | $31 NM monthly
$15 M | $18 NM drop-in

UKULELE: ADVANCED
This class is for experienced ukulele players that focuses primarily on Hawaiian song traditions, as well as chords and rhythmic strumming techniques.

Instructor: Don Sadler
Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Cost: $50 M | $70 NM monthly
$17 M | $22 NM drop-in

KOTO
Learn the koto, the classical stringed Japanese instrument. Group lessons for the koto are held weekly on Monday evenings and every other week on evenings for up to five students. Private lessons for individual students also available. Koto instruments are available to borrow directly from the Center and instructor. Students must provide their own finger picks (about $40-$60). Students may rent a koto for 1 hour practice sessions for an additional $10.

Instructor: Kazuma Ishikawa
Monday Group 1 Lessons 8-9 p.m.
Every other Thursday Group 2 Lessons 8-9 p.m.
Wednesday Private Lessons 7-8 p.m or 8-9 p.m.
Thursday Private Lessons 7-8 p.m or 8-9 p.m (alternating weeks)
Location: The Center
Group Lesson Cost: $30 M | $35 NM
Private Lessons Cost: $35 M | $40 NM
Practice room 1 hour rental | $20/hr
Subject to availability. Please e-mail us at programsevents@jcccnc.org to make a reservation.

HYBRID CLASSES
STUDENTS MAY CHOOSE TO ATTEND IN-PERSON OR ONLINE

KEY
M = Members | NM = Non-Members
Opportunities to Connect with the Community

**HAPA ZOME ECO PRINTING WORKSHOP**
Instructor: Lisa Rogers
Sun. Oct. 1 | 1-2:30 p.m.
Location: The Center
Cost: $55 M | $65 NM
Register: bit.ly/hapazomeworkshop

Be inspired by nature to create art! Join us at the Center for a hands-on workshop led by educator and natural dyer Lisa Rogers and explore the basics of eco printing with leaves based on the Japanese practices of *hapa zome* (leaf printing) and *tataki zome*, flower pounding. This workshop will cover different techniques, including tannins and iron and pounding leaf prints. Participants will gather leaves to use in their leaf print designs from Japantown’s Issei Memorial Garden down the street from the Center, and create their leaf print designs on a pre-mordanted canvas tote bag to take home and use. Participants are also welcome to bring their own leaves from home to use as well. This class is limited to 12 participants. No materials or experience is needed. Workshop fee includes all necessary materials and instruction. Workshop suitable for ages 12 and up.

**SHAMISEN**
Learn the classical Japanese 3-stringed shamisen with Master Hidekyoharu Fujimoto! Group lessons for the shamisen are held on Monday evenings for up to 5 students. Private lessons for individual students also available. Rental shamisen instruments are available to borrow directly from the instructor.
Instructor: Hidekyoharu Fujimoto
Monday Group Lessons 7-8 p.m.
Wednesday Private Lessons 7-8 p.m. or 8-9 p.m.
Thursday Private Lessons 7-8 p.m. or 8-9 p.m. (alternating weeks)
Location: The Center
Group Lesson Cost: $30 M | $35 NM
Private Lessons Cost: $35 M | $40 NM
Practice room 1 hour rental | $20/hr
Subject to availability. Please e-mail us at programsevents@jcccnc.org to make a reservation.

**ENSEMBLE SHIKI**
Let’s enjoy singing a wide variety of songs from Japan and worldwide in this mixed chorus. Instructed in Japanese. All levels of singers are welcome. Shiki means four seasons in Japanese. They usually perform at their annual and holiday concerts, Japanese cultural festivals, and other events.
Instructor: Ruriko Miura
Two weekends (Saturday or Sunday) every month, 3-5 p.m.
Cost: $25 M | $31 NM monthly
$15 M | $18 NM drop-In

**TEZUKURI HANDCRAFTS: OPEN SEWING STUDIO**
Instructor: Katie Furukawa
Every other Tue. beginning Oct. 10
6-8:30 p.m.
Location: The Center
Cost: $40 M | $45 NM
Register: bit.ly/jccncopensewing

Join us for Open Sewing - a no-pressure time to hang out and sew. Help with your projects will be available, if needed. Everyone can share pressing equipment, large cutting areas, plenty of table space, and great company! Drinks will be provided. A minimum of 3 students and maximum of 6 students per session ensures that you will receive the attention that you need.

**ONLINE CLASSES**

**UKULELE: INTERMEDIATE**
Designed for ukulele players with 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 Ukulele 101 workshop held twice a year to cover tuning, chords and basic techniques.)
Instructor: Don Sadler
Saturdays, 11-12:30 p.m.
Cost: $50 M | $70 NM monthly
$12 M | $17 NM drop-in

**SENIOR CHAIR AEROBICS**
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.
Instructor: Kaeko Inori
Thursdays, 10-10:45 a.m.
Cost: $16 M | $20 NM monthly
$4 M | $5 NM drop-in

Fall 2023
HITO HATA: RAISE THE BANNER FILM SCREENING
Director: Robert A. Nakamura and Duane Kubo
Thursday, Oct. 19 | 6-10 p.m.
Location: The Center
Cost: Free Admission

A landmark project directed by Robert A. Nakamura and Duane Kubo, HITO HATA: RAISE THE BANNER (1980) is the first feature-length film made by and about Asian Pacific Americans. Capturing the contributions and hardships of Japanese Americans from the turn-of-the-20th century, the film centers on Oda (the late veteran actor/director Mako), a feisty issei (first generation Japanese American) and elderly single laborer living in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo. Through a series of flashbacks, the story traces Oda’s life as a laborer on the transcontinental railroad to his struggle to save the home of Little Tokyo’s residents when the community is threatened with redevelopment. An epic Japanese American drama, HITO HATA draws on the talents and support of Asian American filmmakers, writers, theater professionals and literally hundreds of people from the Asian Pacific American community who served as extras, provided locations, props, and moral as well as financial support.

Introduction to Sewing Workshop
The Center held its first of our monthly Tezukuri Handcraft sewing workshops with instructor Katie Furukawa of Old River Design Co. We are so grateful to The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation for providing our community with our new sewing machines and supplies.

May 7
Introduction to Sewing Workshop
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May 13
Sushi Rolling 101
Chef Mark Gyotoku shared with us his expertise on preparing and making delicious sushi at his Sushi Rolling 101 workshop. Attendees had a blast rolling their own sushi, and an even better time eating their sushi creations!

May 28
Saishoku no Miryoku Vegan Tasting
Twenty guests enjoyed an astounding number of amazing vegan dishes at Chef Alan Hirahara’s Saishoku no Miryoku – “The Appeal of Vegan Cuisine” multi-course tasting. A huge thank you to Chef Alan, who donated the ingredients and his time to make this special dinner possible.

June 3
Okaeri Pre-Pride Potluck
At the start of Pride month, the Center and Okaeri, a Nikkei LGBTQ+ community group, hosted a community potluck for members of our LGBTQ+ community members and allies to connect and celebrate.

June 11
Community Kitchen Kushiage Party!
Our Community Kitchen volunteer committee coordinated another fantastic quarterly Community Kitchen dinner, where they taught members of the community how to make a dinner of fried kushiage skewers, spring rolls, spinach ohitashi, Japanese potato salad, sekihan rice and anmitsu dessert.

July 6
Your Family, Your History Share Your Stories!
Our monthly genealogy workshop series with genealogist Linda Harms Okazaki culminated in presentations by course participants of the family history photo books they created from their research and writing over the past nine months. Many were able to trace their family lineage beyond their issei ancestors all the way back to their ancestral roots in Japan. The fantastic photos, documents, stories and memories that course participants discovered amazed us.
Swinging into Summer at the 28th Annual Nikkei Open Golf Tournament

On Saturday, June 3, 2023, the Center hosted the 28th Annual Nikkei Open Golf Tournament at the unparalleled Half Moon Bay Golf Links Ocean Course.

After fueling up at the morning breakfast station, a field of 144 golfers enjoyed the breathtaking views of the Northern California coastline and idyllic weather that consisted of clear skies and a slight breeze that added to a great day of golf and friendly community competition. Golfers competed in a best ball tournament format with closest-to-the-pin contests on par three holes and a $10,000 hole-in-one contest that unfortunately went unclaimed. As always, foursomes came prepared with clever names to make their team stand out among the competition. “Bogey Boyz,” “Hit Another,” “Never saw it,” and “Bachi Boys” were among a few of the favorites of the team names this year.

The Center would like to thank the many sponsors, volunteers and golfers for making this year’s tournament successful. Funds from this year’s event will help support the Center’s youth and senior programs. We look forward to seeing you at next year’s 29th Annual Nikkei Open.

Thank you to our 2023 tee and raffle prize sponsors:

Half Moon Bay Golf Links
Jo Ann O. Wong
John and Diane Noguchi
Metropolitan Golf Links
Nakashima Golf
Nisei
Nomura & Co. Inc
Presidio Bowl
Sapporo
Sherman and Dori Chan

Photo left: Stuart Gwynn, Curtis Nakano, Alyssa Baker and Michael Baker

Photo right: Kenny Tran, Kevin Wong, Cary Kato and Tony Nakamoto
Center Fest 2023: Dancing the Night Away in J-Town

In keeping with the Center’s theme of “Celebrating Generations,” Center Fest brought together an intergenerational crowd of supporters and friends, both old and new, to the Center. Everyone had a blast dancing the night away to the sounds of Bay Area-based, Platinum Status, a live ten piece band that delivered electrifying performances throughout the night. If you were watching closely, you might have caught the President of the Center’s Board of Directors, Scott Okamoto, on the trombone!

To capture all of the evening’s moments, we had a 360° live photo booth and local photographer, David Toshiyuki, capturing all the smiles. Beautiful bentos from Yuji Ishikata were for sale throughout the evening and Ohana Floral Sweets brought their delectable array of handcrafted, floral-decorated mochi. Four lucky raffle winners won tickets to Sake Day 2023. Volunteer bartenders poured specialty cocktails in honor of the Nikkei generations all night long until the last call!

As the night progressed, the energy continued to rise, and DJ Darryl closed out the night with an epic set full of Bay Area party hits. It was truly a night to remember, and a party worthy of 50 years!

Thank you to Center Fest’s Host Committee, who made this party possible and the generous volunteers who made the evening run smoothly.
Meet the Center’s 2023 Kase Interns

The Center is proud to introduce our 2023 Kase Nikkei Community Scholarship Program interns, who hail from an array of diverse interests, backgrounds and majors, but who all share personal connections to Nihonmachi and growing in San Francisco. Through this internship, they have played a crucial role in developing major Center projects, such as identifying and colorizing rarely seen pre-WWII photos of Japantown and the Issei community; finalizing the Japantown History Walk App; developing new programs and assisting with vital administrative work across all departments. Say hello to these hardworking interns if you see them around Japantown!

CAROLYNE JEAN IKEDA
San Francisco | Stanford ’24, Psychology (major), Biology (minor)

Carolyne was born and raised in the West Portal district of San Francisco. She currently attends Stanford University, and is the co-President of their Japanese Student Union. She also volunteers as an EMT on campus and hopes to apply to medical school in the future, with an interest in clinical psychology and neuroscience. Carolyne has also spent this past spring in Kyoto, Japan as part of a study abroad program, and hopes that through the Kase program, she can use her experiences to integrate herself into the local community here. She believes one important facet of the Japantown community is taking care of our elders. Carolyne began Kendo lessons at the Center at age 11, which she continued throughout her life as a former member of the Northern California Kendo Federation, and current President of Stanford’s Kendo Club. Carolyne’s favorite Japanese food to eat and make is okonomiyaki, which she especially enjoys with her family. Some of her most meaningful memories in Japantown growing up include going to Kinokuniya Bookstore, Soko Hardware, Nijiya and getting ramen with her family.

TOMI TOSHIYE SUZUKI EIJIMA
San Francisco | Occidental ‘23, Cognitive Science (major), Art History (minor)

Tomi was born and raised in San Francisco, in the Mount Davidson area. She is interested in a career in speech-language pathology, working with children and seniors. She has spent a lot of time in Japantown as a youth, participating in Associates Basketball summer camps, is a former BCSF YAO Ardenette, and completed the Shinzen Goodwill Program through the Center. She has also done a pilgrimage to the Topaz Concentration Camp with her church, Buena Vista United Methodist Church. Tomi decided to become a Kase Program intern to reconnect with her roots in SF J-town after living in SoCal for college. She hopes that the Kase Program can provide opportunities for her to actively engage in conversations about Asian American identity while preserving Japanese cultural heritage. Tomi’s favorite Japanese food is chicken karaage from Japan’s 7/11 stores. Her earliest memories of Japantown are of her attending Nihonmachi Little Friends Preschool (NLF). She remembers making breakfast with her Sensei, playing Momotaro in the NLF dance performance, her mother saying that NLF days are the best days of her life, and her father taking her to Benkyodo, Super Mira and Yasukochi’s Sweet Stop for an afternoon snack.

JESSICA R. LEON
San Francisco | University of California San Diego ’26, Japanese/Political Science (double major)

Jessica was born and raised in the Sunset District of San Francisco. She is interested in local government and politics, and is a member of UCSD’s Japanese Student Association. For three years in high school, Jessica also participated in JCYC’s Japantown Youth Leader program, and studied abroad in Tokyo, Japan in 2019. She was also the elected president of the Japanese National Honors Society for Lowell High School, and was awarded a certificate for excellence in Japanese language. Through the Kase program, she hopes to be even more involved and be able to create projects that help address community needs. She is most concerned about small businesses in Jtown that have been affected by the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. Jessica’s favorite Japanese food is udon,
but she likes all kinds of noodles. Her favorite memories of Japantown growing up revolve around going to the Cherry Blossom Festival with her friends where they would eat good food, shop and support the local businesses.

GRACE MIYE LIM
San Francisco | University of California Davis ’25, Psychology (major)

Grace has grown up in the Richmond District, attending the Buddhist Church of San Francisco (BCSF) since she was a child. Through the BCSF, she has been part of Dharma School, Girl Scouts, Junior Youth Buddhist Association, and Youth Athletic Organization’s Ardenettes basketball team. Grace has many cherished memories and experiences of volunteer and community work in Japantown through the church. As a psychology major, she is interested in research and communications, and hopes that the Kase Program will give her both professional experience and an even greater connection to the community. She hopes her future work and study will help destigmatize the nuanced issue of mental health within the Asian American populace.

Grace’s favorite Japanese food is onigiri, because it is what her mother would make for her school lunch every day growing up. Her best memories growing up in Japantown include marching for multiple years in the Cherry Blossom and Pride parades (as a Girl Scout and BCSF member), playing Ardenettes basketball for ten years, and sleeping over at the temple, visiting the Jodo Shinshu Center, and making ojuzus in Summer Dharma School.

We, the 2023 Kase Program, are excited to present our summer project, The Colors of Japantown: An Exploration into Pre-WWII Japantown. This project marks our ten weeks of work under the creative supervision of Executive Director Paul Osaki. We wanted to create a photographic record of pre-World War II Japantown— in color. Japantown was a thriving community occupying 30 blocks in San Francisco’s Western Addition before the forced evacuation and incarceration of Japanese Americans in 1942. The pictures speak to the vibrancy of this community.

In order to find photographs, we searched a variety of archives, both online and in-person, and we made day trips to several locations, including the National Japanese American Historical Society, the San Francisco Public Library and the Buddhist Church of San Francisco. We compiled a collection of story-telling black and white photos (circa 1906-1942) and brought these photographs to life with innovative colorizing software.

We created this book intending to preserve this era of Japanese American history. Through colorizing these photographs, we aim to give readers a glimpse of pre-WWII Japantown and spark their interest in learning more about the community.
Energetic Crowds Gathered for 2023 Children’s Day Festival

In observance of the Japanese national holiday of Kodomo no Hi (Children’s Day), the Center hosted the annual community-wide festival celebrating the health and happiness of all children in Japantown’s Peace Plaza on Saturday, May 6.

Local TV news station KRON4 highlighted the Children’s Day Festival as one of “the four fun things to do in the Bay Area this weekend” which brought many newcomers to Japantown to check out the event and the cultural heritage of the neighborhood. While the day started with inclement morning weather as dozens of high school student volunteers set up the festival booths and games, the skies cleared up in time so that over 1,500 children and families could enjoy the festival’s performances and fun activities.

Observed in Japan every year on May 5th, Kodomo no Hi was traditionally celebrated as Tango no Sekku, Japanese Boys’ Day, until the Japanese government declared the day a national holiday in 1948 and renamed it to Children’s Day, as it is now known. Japanese cultural traditions and practices of the Children’s Day holiday include festive decorations of samurai armor symbolizing the strength and bravery of young boys, as well as the hanging of colorful carp-shaped kites called koinobori and streamers that represent the mythical strength and vitality of Japanese koi fish. Japan also celebrates Girls’ Day, Hinamatsuri, on March 3rd of every year with its own festivities.

The Children’s Day Festival was one of the few large-scale events to kick off the summer schedule of events happening in Japantown’s Peace Plaza and the JCCNC in celebration of the Center’s 50th Anniversary. Alongside the colorful koinobori carp streamers that decorated Japantown’s Peace Plaza, festival goers also enjoyed craft activity booths where children made their own paper koinobori and other small craft projects. Sakura Arts of America sponsored the festival’s annual Sakura Children’s Art Contest, assisted by the 2023 Northern California Cherry Blossom Queen Court who announced several rounds of contest winners throughout the event on the Peace Plaza Stage.

For young children, Kodomo no Hi is a memorable day where they can learn and celebrate Japanese culture with their friends, families or even perform on stage in front of the community for the first time. The Center is honored to host this open admission event to Bay Area families. The Center would like to acknowledge generous festival sponsorships from The Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Charitable Foundation, Japantown East and West Malls and Japantown Community Benefit District, Inc., Japan Airlines, GoGo Squeez and Sakura Arts of America, as well as coordination and volunteer support and donations from Japanese Community Youth Council (JCYC), San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department and Japan Video and Media, Inc.

The Center Welcomes Another Large Turnout at 2023 Colma Cemetery Clean Up

It was a dreary morning on May 20, 2023, but more than 200 volunteers showed up to clean the Japanese Cemetery on Hillside Blvd. in Colma. Although it was wet, volunteers of all ages came out to pull weeds, rake leaves, clean headstones and clean inside the columbarium. As people showed up they couldn’t wait to get started. As the day went on, the weather improved and the sun came out. During lunch, Diane Matsuda shared a brief history and review of the cemetery. Consul General Yasushi Noguchi spoke to give his gratitude to everyone that came. After lunch, 500 carnations were placed throughout the cemetery and the cemetery looked beautiful!

We would like to thank the following organizations for bringing groups:

Boy Scout Troop 12, Troop 29 and Troop 58
Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco
Eden Township JACL
Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Northern California
Nakayoshi
SF Mitakai
Meet Your Nihonmachi Small Businesses:
Chato

Chato is a family-run, traditional Japanese tea shop with owners whose love for and history with tea is generational. Located on the second floor across from the Kinokuniya Bookstore, their shop provides authentic brewing essentials direct from high-quality growers and producers in Japan. One does not need to be an expert in tea making to appreciate the business’s dedication to the history and culture behind this central ritual of the Nikkei community. In this installment of Meet Your Nihonmachi, we introduce you to owner Sachiko, who helms the shop with her dedicated team of tea enthusiasts, along with her mother, who is often helping at the store.

Where did your love of tea come from and who first inspired your passion for tea?

Our love for tea has been passed down through the generations in both of our families. In particular, my passion for Japanese tea stems from fond childhood memories of drinking sencha with my grandmother. I have the kyusu that my grandmother used to prepare our tea more than 45 years ago, and we still use it at the shop today.

What do you hope people learn or appreciate about tea after coming into Chato?

We would like to demonstrate that preparing tea for everyday enjoyment is a beautiful aspect of Japanese culture that is delicious and doesn’t have to be complicated. We want to convey an appreciation for the process that goes into producing each tea and inspire an interest in trying all the various types of Japanese tea that we offer. We hope that people find something new to appreciate about the world of Japanese tea, no matter where they are in their personal tea journey.

Can you share a brief history of Chato?

We opened Chato in 2016 because we noticed there were no brick and mortar Japanese tea shops in Japantown. We wanted to make authentic, good quality products accessible to the community. What makes Chato special is that we only partner with small tea producers in renowned tea growing regions of Shizuoka, Kagoshima, Uji and Fukuoka to provide Japanese tea and brewing essentials for beginners, experts and everyone in between. In addition, my mother is involved in our family business, lending more than four decades of Japantown business ownership experience and expertise about Japanese pottery, including teaware.

What do you hope for the future of Japantown and Chato?

Our hope is for Japantown to continue to thrive and serve as a welcoming place for all people to gather and appreciate the rich legacy and beauty of the Japanese and Japanese American experience.

Why did you want to become a Center Membership Business Partner?

We became a Center Member Business Partner because we want to support the Center’s mission to provide community connections and celebrate and promote Japanese culture by sharing the joy of Japanese tea.

Chato

Center members save 10% on all purchases
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November 17 - 24, 2023

From SF Giants tickets to curated wines and spirits to beautifully crafted Japanese home goods and attire, the Center has that special something for everyone on your list! Bidding opens at 12:00 PM on November 17. All proceeds support the Center’s cultural initiatives and programming.

Thank you for your support this holiday season!
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Honoring the Special People in our Lives

Community Tribute Gifts

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to those who remember the Center when making unsolicited community gifts. These gifts remind us how important the Center is to many in the community who appreciate the work that we do. 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 February 1, 2023 to July 31, 2023 are listed below.

In Memory of

HOWARD CHOI
Mr. Kenneth Kawabata, $100

MARJORIE FLETCHER
Mrs. Shirley Murakami, $1000
Ms. Teresa Ono, $350
Ms. Elaine Low, $100
Mr. Allen and Mrs. Pat Okamoto, $100
Mr. Paul Osaki, $100

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Mr. Arthur Ikuma, $50
Mr. Kenneth Kawabata, $50

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Ms. Kathy Rosenberg-Wohl, $250
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Ms. Edith Ho, $100
Ms. Patricia Kim-Gable, $100
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Ms. Lori Hillman Polachek, $100
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Ms. Sara Levy, $36
Ms. Nancy Sheftel-Gomes $25

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Mrs. Laura Blanch, $100

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Ms. Meridee Moore, $500
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Mrs. Donna Ong-Kimura and Mr. Lowell Kimura, $100
Mrs. Barbara Marumoto, $100
Ms. Marilyn C. Oshiro, $100

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Mr. Joe and Mrs. Lillian Kurata, $250

ROBERT LIEBUNUA
Mr. Michael Berke, $100

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Dr. Craig Lum, $1,000

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Ms. Ibuki Lee, $50
Mr. Andrew S. Nakahata and Ms. Alice Fong, $50
Mr. Dash Nakahata, $50
Mr. Pax Nakahata, $50
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Mr. Kenneth Kawabata, $100

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Ms. Lori Matoba and Mr. Jeff Wun, $50

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Mr. Paul Osaki, $100
Mr. Arthur Ikuma, $50

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Mrs. Irene M. Wu, $100

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Check with your employer to see if they will match donations to nonprofits in your name or match donations you make at 1x, 2x, or more. Many government and civic agencies also allow giving through the United Way, which is available in most states or the U.S. See what charitable giving options your employer may provide.

MORE FUN WAYS...

Donate an item, service or tickets to one of our upcoming auctions or start a Facebook fundraiser to support the Center (Facebook takes no service fees). Or always valuable is the gift of time - volunteer at one of our future events.
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