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Madam Michiya Hanayagi Honored with the Okamoto Community Award at the Center's Tabemasho Event

San Francisco, CA *(October 7, 2024)* – The Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (the Center) was honored to host the Takeo and Kay Okamoto Community Award presentation to beloved dance instructor Madam Michiya Hanayagi at its recent Tabemaho fundraising event on Saturday, September 21, 2024. This award, sponsored by the Okamoto family, celebrates the legacy of Takeo's leadership and Kay's dedication to community service in San Francisco Japantown.





Madam Hanayagi, who is now 95 years old, was honored for her outstanding contributions to preserving and promoting traditional Japanese dance during the event. Attendees were treated to what was possibly her final public performance - *Kisho no Yanagi, Willow Trees over the Riverbank*. Her artistry and dedication to her craft profoundly impacted all present.

Upon notification that she would receive the award, Madam Hanayagi expressed her heartfelt gratitude. "I am incredibly grateful to receive the Takeo and Kay Okamoto Community Award. I want to thank the community, my students and their families for your endless support," she said. The award was presented by Takeo and Kay's Daughter, Barbara C. Marumoto, an early Hanayagi Sensei student.

A native of Nagoya, Japan, Madam Hanayagi began her journey in traditional and classical Japanese dance in early childhood. Her remarkable talent was recognized by the Headmaster of the Hanayagi School in Tokyo, who awarded her a certificate of teaching in 1947. In 1956, she established the Michiya Hanayagi Dance Studio in the United States, where she has since shared her passion for classical Japanese dance with a diverse community.

Throughout her illustrious career, Madam Hanayagi has participated in numerous San Francisco Bay Area cultural events, including the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival, Aki Matsuri, the Center's Children's Day Festival and the community Oshogatsu Festival. She has presented over 53 recitals and taught hundreds of dedicated dancers, including many of the Center's Yonsei and Gosei students, introducing them to the precious traditional art of odori from 1999-2014.

Her accolades include the Foreign Minister's Commendation in 2004 and the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, awarded by the Emperor of Japan in 2009. In 2008, she received the distinguished *Ryuho Sho* award from the Hanayagi School in Tokyo, highlighting her global impact on the art form.

"As we honor Madam Michiya Hanayagi for her 64 years of tireless dedication to teaching and sharing the beauty of Japanese classical dance, we express our deepest appreciation for her contributions to the Japanese American community and her commitment to preserving this treasured aspect of Japanese culture in the United States," said Paul Osaki, Executive Director of the Center.

Please visit jcccnc.org for more information about Madam Hanayagi receiving the Okamoto Award, view photos from the event, and to learn about the Center's cultural, educational, social and recreational programs.

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About the JCCCNC/the Center

Envisioned by the Japanese American community, the Center, a nonprofit community center based in San Francisco's historic Japantown, will be an everlasting foundation of our Japanese American ancestry, cultural heritage, histories and traditions. The JCCCNC strives to meet the evolving needs of the Japanese American community through programs, affordable services and facility usage.