



JACL-DC NEWS

Publication of the Washington D.C. Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League

www.jacl-dc.org

CALENDAR

KEIRO KAI

September 13, 2014
North Bethesda Middle School

JACL ANNUAL GALA

October 9, 2014
Washington DC

MOCHITSUKI

December 6, 2014
North Bethesda Middle School

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

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We returned from the JACL convention invigorated by the fellowship of JACL members nationwide and renewed with pride in our Chapter. At the convention, we found a forward-looking organization as strongly committed as ever to the civil rights of everyone living in our country, with a focus on expanding our network to the larger AAPI community. Together and separately we experienced local Japanese American hospitality at the San Jose Buddhist Church Obon; tasted homemade tofu and mochi in Japantown; and toured the Japanese American Museum of San Jose. We departed from the Norman Y. Mineta San Jose International Airport, happy to have reconnected with other delegates and JACL leaders.



At the convention fellow participants consulted us for ideas on how to keep a chapter vigorous, relevant, and healthy. After reviewing the latest membership data, we were proud to see that the DC Chapter is among the top ten chapters in size of all JACL chapters in the country, and growing. We are growing because of our collaboration with other AAPI and Japanese organizations and the Embassy of Japan. Particularly noteworthy is our growth in families and youth membership — a result of our outreach, leadership opportunities for young people, and events that promote sharing of cultural traditions from grandparents to children to grandchildren. This growth pattern will set up our organization for the next generation.

We hope you will attend our next event of culture-sharing and networking, our annual Keiro Kai which will again be held at the North Bethesda Middle School on September 13. This is a time when we honor our elders and acknowledge their legacy. Look for more details on this family event in an upcoming email and flyer.

As co-chair of the national Legacy Fund Grants Committee, I was privileged to present nine grant awards at the convention's Awards Luncheon. A special tribute was paid at this luncheon to long-time JACL activist Grayce Uyehara, who was well-known to many DC chapter members and who helped establish the Legacy Fund. The Legacy Fund campaign focused on the need to combat anti-Asian sentiments and provide education about Japanese Americans' incarceration experience. Grant recipients for 2015 included: the Chicago Chapter's *Kansha Project*; the Mile High Chapter's *Min Yasui Medal of Freedom Campaign Project*; the National Youth/Student Council's *2015 Youth Delegate Campaign*; the NCWNP District Council's *Japanese Culture Activities Book Project*; the New Mexico Chapter's *Confinement in the Land of Enchantment: Japanese Americans in New Mexico during World War II Project*; the Philadelphia Chapter's *Biography of Kiyoshi Kuromiya Project*; and the Seattle Chapter's *API LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Project*.

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VOICES FROM THE KAKEHASHI PROJECT

From July 14-24, 2014, 43 Japanese American university and graduate students participated in the KAKEHASHI Project, a ten-day tour of Japan hosted by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and coordinated by Japan Foundation, The Laurasian Institution and National JACL. In July, 23 students traveled to Tokyo and Kyoto and 20 students traveled to Tokyo and Fukushima.

The DC Chapter is proud to have had two of our own members selected to participate. Here Kate Hollingshead (Fukushima group) and Jenna Mukai (Kyoto group) share their experiences:

Consul General Masato Watanabe in San Francisco hosted the July delegation before departure



JENNA MUKAI: KAKEHASHI PROJECT – KYOTO



*Jenna Mukai & Yuina Kajiki
from Doshisha University*

I am American. I am Korean. I am Japanese. I am what I am because of you. The saying, “okage sama de” has a special meaning to me because it allows me to be a part of the Japanese American community while simultaneously staying in touch with my Korean and American roots. The wonderful opportunity presented to me by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the KAKEHASHI Project truly made me feel even more connected to my family’s heritage as well as my adoptive heritage.

When I was still a baby, my Japanese American parents adopted me from Korea. Growing up, I hated for them to tell people I was adopted or that I was Korean because I so desperately wanted to be part of the family. I was immersed into the Japanese culture through Japanese language lessons, the food, and through learning about Japanese history as it integrated into Japanese American history. As I grew older and began to mature, I stopped hating when people were told I was adopted because I was able to accept that while I may look Korean on the outside, I had the heart of a Japanese American.

Going to Japan to learn more about the Japanese culture and to socialize with other university students made me realize how lucky I was to be chosen for such an important trip. The friendships I made with my fellow participants as well as the Japanese students will serve as a memory and a reminder that being Japanese American is more than what you look like on the outside.

All throughout Japan, many themes were observed every day. The “do” at the end of words such as “kendo” means the way of or the practice and was evident everywhere we went. I was able to see the virtue of patience through the art of calligraphy and through fan painting. One difference evident immediately between the Japanese culture and the American culture was the fact that Americans are focused on mass production whereas the Japanese people are focused more on quality over quantity. They are more interested in perfecting one thing over time than in creating many things, which might not reach their full potential.

Another virtue, even though it is a simple virtue, is the fact that the Japanese people have perfected the ability to find pure beauty in the simplest things imaginable. This beauty is apparent in temple gardens and the tea ceremony and the presentation of food in a bento box. This really touched me and made me realize just how many things we overlook in America. We visited several temples and shrines in Japan and they were prime examples of how the Japanese people were so dedicated in maintaining and restoring their ancient traditions and buildings while still maintaining the ability to grow with the times.

Through a session in Zen meditation, I was able to gain some much-needed insight about myself and even how to incorporate meditation into my everyday life. As a Human Development Major, this particular activity helped teach me more about how the human brain functions and the importance of “no mind”. “No mind” does not refer to the act of dumping all your thoughts out and becoming empty. Rather, it refers to the art of being able to focus more on calming thoughts or pictures perceived in your mind.

I realized that what you look like on the outside might not reflect how you feel on the inside. Through this trip to Japan, I was finally able to find how I fit into society. Now I can proudly say that yes, I am Korean American, but that I am also Japanese American. “Okage sama de.” I am what I am because of you.

KATE HOLLINGSHEAD: KAKEHASHI PROJECT – FUKUSHIMA

Kate Hollingshead in Fukushima

I had the honor of being selected for the Kakehashi Program July trip to Japan this year. Our trip began with an orientation in San Francisco including the privilege of dining at the residence of the Consul General of Japan. We flew to Japan the following morning and spent our first day hearing from Japanese university professors regarding Japan's foreign relations and the Japanese American experience during WWII. These lectures provided foundational information and context for our trip. Of particular interest was the discussion on the Japanese American internment, as I have heard first-hand accounts from my Nisei grandparents' experiences at Manzanar and Poston. In addition we received a short lesson in conversational Japanese. I knew very little Japanese, mostly just a few words here and there, so I enjoyed practicing my Japanese in Japan and also with my family when I returned home to the US.

On day two we rode the Shinkansen to Fukushima and made a visit to Saiei Orimono, a silk weaving company. The president of the company and his son shared with us that after the earthquake and tsunami, they not only continued business operations, but also assisted others and improved their business. This incredible motivation and drive was inspiring.

We also visited the Fukushima Prefectural Office to hear about the current relief efforts, status of the disaster's affects, as well as tourism in Fukushima. The relief effort is a major priority to the Fukushima government, and research and action are occurring. I enjoyed hearing how much faith these officials had in Fukushima. Not only in the prefecture itself with all its natural beauty and resources, but also in its people. The officials called the people of Fukushima a "warm hearted people" which I found to be true on this trip. While there are still areas in Fukushima that are uninhabitable due to the nuclear power plant accident, it was evident that there is hope for the future and that Fukushima's people love their prefecture. There is much beauty to be seen in Fukushima and I shared this news when I returned home. I want to help change the misconceptions about Fukushima.

We visited Fukushima University, which was one of my favorite activities on the trip. Professor Satoru Mimura provided extremely interesting background about the disaster that I had not heard before. He made a compelling comparison between the evacuees of the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident and the interned Japanese Americans during WWII. Both of these groups were forced to leave their homes with short notice carrying only two suitcases, not knowing exactly what would happen to them, while being discriminated against by their fellow countrymen. People tend to look at different disasters or tragedies as being very unique and thinking that only they can understand the experience they went through, when in reality, while their experiences are all different, they also have many things in common. I think this can bring a kind of connectedness and understanding among people who have experienced different hardships.

We experienced every day life with some Fukushima residents. We visited two small family businesses, a hydroponic lettuce farm and a cucumber farm. The lettuce farm uses such an innovative technique for growing that avoids the contaminated soil, does not use insecticide, and requires only water. The cucumber farmer was very hospitable and it was impressive that he and his wife alone ran the business. The lettuce and cucumbers, as well as the other produce we ate in Fukushima, were fresh and delicious.

Night festival activities occurred in Tenei village outside of the ryokan in which we stayed. A woman watching the festivities, Masako-san, approached me and asked where I was from. I learned that she is originally from Tokyo and has an 8-year-old son, Kai-chan. Masako-san and I exchanged information so that we could keep in touch. She asked that I come back to Fukushima and stay with her family in the future. This reminded me of how in the Fukushima Prefectural Office one of the officials said that Fukushima's residents are a "warm hearted people." Traveling to Fukushima was an amazing experience and I hope to use my connections and friendships made there in a return visit in the future with friends or family.

Upon our return to Tokyo we went to the migration museum. I enjoyed hearing more about mixed Japanese people and their experiences in America as well as in other countries. I felt very connected to the information that our lecturer shared with us and am interested in learning more about Hapa people and Nikkei people in general. As a yonsei with nisei grandparents who were in the internment camps, I am only familiar with that specific Japanese American experience and not of shinisei or the Japanese immigrant experience in other countries.

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MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY



On a beautiful and sunny day, the JAACL DC Chapter and JAVA were sponsors for the 66th Annual Memorial Day Service at the Arlington National Cemetery Columbarium. Over 100 people joined in honoring our fallen heroes and hearing inspiring remarks from US Coast Guard Rear Admiral Joseph Vojvodich and Spark Matsunaga Elementary School 5th grader Miss Jurnee Padgett who spoke about "Honoring the Past, Transforming the Future." Admiral Vojvodich spoke about the commitment and solemn oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies" that all wear a uniform take to heart. Vojvodich emphasized fulfilling an obligation that we have to the fallen in seeking to be worthy of their example and to the lessons they have taught us.

Jurnee's remarks focused on the fact that while she and her family did not have a close family connection to the military, it did not mean that people could not find a way to serve. Jurnee spoke about her mother who volunteers at a local Hospice and how her great grandparents have volunteered on numerous community boards. Jurnee also mentioned that she learned about the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII and how despite the wartime prejudices, the 442 RCT went on to prove their loyalty to the US and become the most decorated unit of its size in US history.

After the remarks, the attendees broke out into groups and laid flowers at the tombs of Japanese Americans interned at Arlington while others attended the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown. We want to give special thanks to Turner Kobayashi and his family who have continued to coordinate all aspects of the event for the past 66 years. A special thanks also goes to LT Jason Osuga who stepped in as both organizer and Master of Ceremonies for this event. Jason and his family will be leaving the area in late summer to assume a naval posting in San Diego. We wish Jason and his family all the best and thank them all of their contributions.

JACL-DC & OCA-DC JOINT PICNIC

On Saturday, June 21, despite a cloudy and sometimes rainy day, the JAACL DC Chapter and the OCA DC Chapter held their first annual picnic at Wheaton Regional Park in Silver Spring, MD. 80+ members of both organizations came out to enjoy the delicious food and make and renew old friendships. JAACL Board Member Georgette Furukawa-Martinez did a fabulous job of organizing this event and her delicious kalua pork and BBQ kalbi were some of the most popular dishes. As always, there was plenty of BBQ chicken supplied by Martha Watanabe, Steve Shimomoura, and Eric Roberts. Another highlight was the always popular raffle where everyone wins and gets to take home a prize. Special thanks to Emma Wong, Stan Lou, Sonia Segarra Law, and Corissa Kiyon from OCA for helping to coordinate this event. We are sure next year will be even bigger and better.

Thank you!

To all the people you donated items to the raffle:

OCA-DC
AARP
Barbara Ikejiri
Gordon & Linda Aoyagi
The Crafty Ladies
Mei Wah



“ I LOVE MY TRANSGENDER BROTHER ”

Huffington Post article by Marsha Aizumi



As the mother of a transgender son, I often wonder how my younger straight son truly felt as our family was navigating through some of our most challenging years. When you have the combination of one child who is struggling, parents who are struggling and another child who is quiet and sensitive, I often thought how is my younger son feeling.

So I would have a conversation with him that looked something like this: "Hey, honey, I wanted to check in with you to see how you are doing. Are you getting the support you need from us?" "Yes", he replies softly. "I also wanted to make sure that you know Papa and I love you just as much as your brother, although we have had to focus on his transition and some of the things that he is going through. Do you know that we

love you just as much?" "Yes." "Is there anything you need from Papa and I to feel more supported?" "No" "Is there anything else we need to talk about?" "No"

Over the years, we would have similar conversations, because Stefen never came to me with any concerns or issues and so I would feel the need to reach out to him. But the conversations were always the same. My long comments and his one word answer.

However, just recently, he asked me to help him with his personal essay to transfer to a four year university. Writing he shared is not his strength so he could use some support. I jumped at the opportunity to be able to support him. The prompt was to write about something that was not part of his college application that he would like to share.

Naturally, the first thought that came to my mind was to write about his experience with his transgender brother. Wouldn't that make his application stand out? Would Stefen be comfortable doing this? I proceeded cautiously and to my delight he said that he would do his essay on this topic. His brother is also attending the same university and had just had an article written on him, so Stefen felt like writing this personal statement would not violate his brother's privacy. We decided to check to make sure. Aiden said no problem.

After discussing the personal statement, this is what my son wrote:

One thing that I did not say in my application that I think is important for you to know is my older brother is transgender. For about seventeen years of my life my brother was my sister, but our relationship has remained the same regardless of the situation. He actually first came out as a lesbian. When I initially found out that my sister was a lesbian I was 12 years old and had no idea what that meant. As I got older and found out more details, I was not shocked by this "coming out" because of the masculine traits she had already possessed. Five years later, when I was a senior in high school, my sister decided to transition into being male. I found out about her wish to transition through a letter explaining what was going to happen. After reading the letter I was not sad, but happy that my sister could finally be her true self as male. I also felt proud because it takes a person with a great deal of strength to endure what my brother went through since he first came out, to deciding to transition into the person he really is. The relationship I have with my brother is different than most. We don't talk a lot or hang out together. I am a person of very few words but he knows that I will support him with any of his decisions as long as it will make him happy. My brother is a student at your school and I am thankful for a university that allows my brother to feel not only safe but respected for who he is. The reason I wish to attend your school is not only because of its high academic standings but because of its willingness to create a place of learning and acceptance for all people.

Halfway through the statement my eyes were welling up and by the end of my reading, tears were rolling down my cheeks. A question I had about how my younger son truly felt about his brother and those difficult years, seemed to be answered in a little over 300 words.

My sons, both of them, have taught me so much about life. I have learned about daring greatly from Aiden who had the strength to announce to me and others... This is who I am. I always see him as my role model for courage and integrity. I have learned from Stefen about the power of acceptance. Stefen has always been my role model for compassion and accepting people just as they are. I am very lucky because all I have to do is watch my children. They have given me a blueprint for a life of success: courage, acceptance and love. I have decided when I grow up I want to be just like my sons...

*Marsha Aizumi is an educational consultant and speaker, and the author of **Two Spirits, One Heart**. She received high honors at the JACL convention in 2014 for her Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender (LBGT) advocacy.*

BITS & PIECES**KATE HOLLINGSHEAD** *continued from page 3***Service**

Robert Nakamoto's funeral service will be held at 2 pm on Friday, September 5, 2014 at Arlington National Cemetery. Please meet at 1:30 at the Administration Bldg and park in the parking lot. While approaching the main cemetery entrance (Close to the Women's Memorial), let the guards know you are there for the Robert Nakamoto service and they will direct you to turn left to the Administration Bldg parking lot. Service will be held in the Columbarium.



Bob Nakamoto and Foreign Minister Maehara

On behalf of the family, they invite the organization that meant so much to Bob throughout his lifetime. Please feel free to notify other senior members of the JA community, former colleagues and friends alike. Thank you for all your continued support during these last few tough months.

Congratulations

Jason Yuki Osuga, promoted to LCDR, on August 1 next to the USS Boxer in San Diego with family and friends.



We visited the Meiji Shrine and Harajuku. I really liked the experience of seeing "cool Japan" and the modern popular culture in Japan. We saw a variety of stores with a hugely diverse population of patrons visiting them. There were Nihonjin as well as tourists from all countries, and many people dressed up in the Harajuku type fashion. After dinner some of us went to spend time with four Tokyo University students. It was fun to interact with young Japanese people who had many commonalities with us and develop new friendships. They plan to visit the US and will hopefully see us when they visit. I plan to learn more Japanese so I can come back with my family and I hope to see them while in Japan.

Towards the end of the trip the group attended a shamisen workshop. I was very excited for this experience because I am a musician and enjoy listening to different types of music. One of my favorite parts of the workshop was hearing popular music on the shamisen. The juxtaposition of the traditional instrument and sound with the pop music songs was a representation of traditional and "cool" Japan. The people of Japan have incorporated traditional Japanese culture with modern popular culture in a way that does not detract from either.

In the evening a friend and I traveled by train and taxi to Harajuku where we walked around and experienced more Japanese culture. Navigating the metro system as well as communicating with a taxi driver was a fun experience and made me feel more comfortable with my ability to navigate Tokyo.

The hospitality in Japan is unmatched. There is a collective feeling of personal responsibility in that people keep their environment very clean and work together on this goal. I learned from this trip that Japanese people are very hardworking, humble, polite, innovative, and forward thinking. I saw that the people are always looking for ways to improve their already very efficient ways of doing things, and are constantly trying to learn more.

Learning about Fukushima and the progress made through their revitalization efforts after the nuclear power plant accident was inspiring. Hearing the professor share the situation in Fukushima and getting to talk with students involved in the relief effort was inspiring. It was nice to hear them demonstrate such optimism and eagerness to help victims and also to rebuild the systems they had in place in better ways such as their clean and sustainable energy efforts. In addition, the culture here fascinated me. There is a beautiful melding of traditional Japanese culture and more modern popular culture, a unique combination of old and new. I like that the traditional culture is still remembered and honored, and that people can still be innovative and incorporate new and exciting ideas into their cultural experience.

I want to use this trip as a foundation for building a bridge between Japan and the US. I am doing this through sharing my experiences with my community, furthering my knowledge on Japan, visiting Japan again with my family and friends, and maintaining relationships with the Japanese students I met during my trip as well as my fellow program participants. This trip made me feel much more connected to my Japanese roots. Coming to Japan made me feel as though I was making my issei great grandparents proud and fulfilling their legacy. I also now feel as though it is my duty to share my experience with not only my family and friends, but also with the JA community, especially including JACL.

Keiro Kai & Family Day

Saturday, September 13, 2014

12:00—2:30 p.m.

North Bethesda Middle School

8935 Broadmoor Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817

FEATURING:

Halau O Na Hali'a

Hula halau (hula school) and Hawaiian culture group

&

JACL - DC Top Chef: David Inoue

Sushi, Chicken/Beef Teriyaki, Rice, Drinks, Games, and

Entertainment for all ages!

JACL members come free

(become a member today at <http://www.jacl.org/member/index.php>)

Non-members \$10 per person or \$20 for family of four

Please RSVP by September 9, 2014 for planning purposes to:

Michelle Amano , 301-656-4739 or Michelle_amano@me.com

DC NEWS NOTES

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ABOUT THE JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE

Founded in 1929, the JACL is the oldest and largest Asian American civil rights organization in the United States. The JACL monitors and responds to issues that enhance or threaten the civil and human rights of all Americans and implements strategies to effect positive social change, particularly to the Asian Pacific American community.

<http://www.jacl.org/about/about.htm>



Photo by Joe Shymanski