



Midwest USJC Back Live and In-Person!

A date to remember! June 29 marked the return of Midwest USJC in-person gatherings, and we were back at it in typical Chicago style: a tour and tasting at Wolf Point Distilling, followed by beer, pretzels, pork and our business meeting at Kaiser Tiger beer garden.

Master distiller and founder Pavlos Dafnis and head of operations and co-founder Victoria Polvino gave us a tour of their distillery, which became fully operational in August 2020. We learned about the fermentation process for their different liquors, and were all awed by the 3-story still and storage room.

During our tour we were able to taste the newly distilled, 119 proof, clear unaged “white whiskey” or “white dog”, after which we filled and capped two barrels. Wolf Point Distilling follows the traditional Kentucky Bourbon formula using brand new charred white oak barrels to age the distilled liquid for at least 3-4 years. Unique to this aging process is the distillery’s proximity to the CTA on Lake Street. As the white dog is expanding and contracting in the barrels during the extreme temperatures of Chicago’s summers and winters, the Pink and Green Line trains passing overhead create additional vibrations to coax the complex oak flavors into the Wolf Point Straight Bourbon Whiskey.

It was just a short walk to Kaiser Tiger for more drink, food and our meeting. We did not lose anyone on the way, and cooler heads actually got us to order salads along with the pork and fries.

(See page 2 for more photos.)



Victoria Polvino



Daiki Ishiyama



Many of us tried the 119 proof “white dog”: smooth, with a warm mouth feel and long tail.

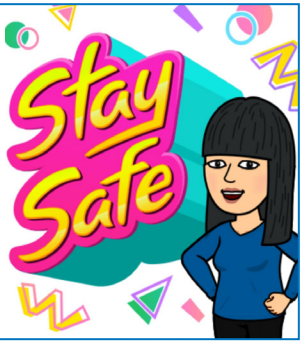
Daiki Ishiyama



Kris Gorospe

With lead distiller Steve Dethrow looking on, Anna Ninoyu (thank you Anna for arranging the evening!) bungs the Midwest USJC barrel of whiskey, which we signed. Now, we just have to wait a few years . . .

From Lisa Sakai: The Straight Stuff



Mask free. As free as the wind blows. As free as the grass grows. Mask free to follow your covid guidelines.

Okay, maybe not as lyrical as the original *Born Free*

song, but Yay! The world is opening up again!

Unfortunately, the world opening up is not all kittens and roses. The relaxing of Covid restrictions is offset by the continuing problem of anti-Asian hate. Recently, a Japanese national told me the story of walking down Michigan Avenue and having an egg thrown at him. Thank God it was only an egg! To combat the increase in anti-Asian hate across the country, Asian American Advancing Justice Chicago hosted a series of bystander intervention trainings in April and May that several Midwest members took part in. If you get a chance, I highly recommend you take the training. The training talked about the “5 D’s of Bystander Intervention”:

Distract – interrupt the harasser and ask a question, spill a drink or pretend to know the target to draw them away from the situation.

Delegate – bring in a third party, find a staff person or someone in authority and get them to intervene.

Direct – call out the negative behavior, ask the target if they are okay, enlist other watchers to back you up.

Delay – if the situation is too dangerous or you feel outnumbered, walk away and report it to authorities at a later time.

Document – take pictures or video of the incident.

I am a firm believer in the “if you see something, say something” rule and the above 5 D’s are an excellent guide. However, before jumping in, please always remember to stay safe first.

On a lighter note, in June, we held our very first in-person USJC meeting since the shut-down in March 2020. It was wonderful to see everyone and it made me realize how important our people-to-people connections are. Vice Chair **Anna Ninoyu** put together a fun tour of Wolf Creek Distillery (including a

tasting of their products) followed by a dinner at nearby Kaiser Tiger. The energy level was palpably higher than a zoom meeting. While I am grateful for the technology that allowed us to stay connected and work/live remotely (Zoom, Team Meetings, Factime, etc.), nothing, absolutely nothing, replaces face-to-face time with people.

“What a sad era when it is easier to smash an atom than prejudice.”

— Albert Einstein

Happy to Be Together Again



Michael Tanimura



all other photos by
Daiki Ishiyama

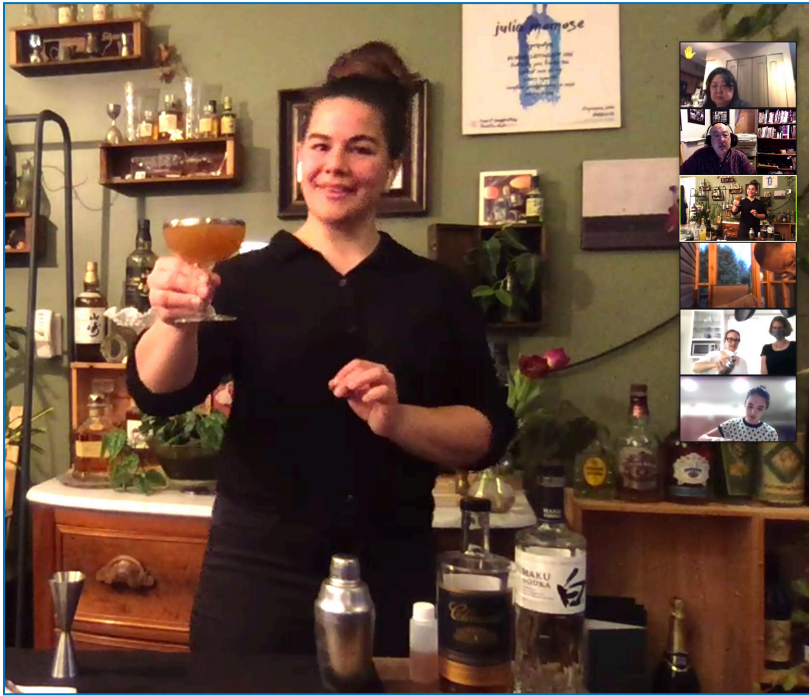


See, mom!
Salad.



Pork wrapped in bacon, then deep-fried. The perfect accompaniment to German beer.

Who's Ready for a Cocktail?



Julia is the creative director of Kumiko, an acclaimed Japanese bar in Chicago. Last year, Kumiko made it on The World's 50 Best Bars list, *Time's* World's Greatest Place list, and *Food & Wine's* Best New Restaurant list.

"My wife Lena and I loved the event! It was honestly a Manic Monday between both of us working and trying to get an 8-month-old to go to sleep around 7:30. By early evening we thought the last thing we needed was to be in a cocktail class. But by the time we sipped the daiquiri, all the stress melted away and we were just having fun! Thanks so much **Mia** and **Anna** for organizing this amazing experience!"

— Kai Mitsushio

On Monday, May 3, over 30 participants spent a marvelous evening with Julia Momose from Kumiko, a bar focused on Japanese ingredients, dishes, and spirits.

Members from across the country joined us, including a large representation from the Southern California region, and USJC President and CEO **Suzanne Basalla**.

We learned two cocktails: the Yuzu Martini and the Moonlight Daiquiri, featuring Fukucho "Moon on the Water" Junmai Ginjo. We learned about the craft of cocktail-making including techniques such as stirring and shaking, the importance of chilling the glass, the role of ice, and more.

Julia shared her journey with us, starting with her experience visiting a bar for the first time in Kyoto, where she grew up. The cocktail-making class was a fun way to spend a Monday evening and meet with friends and fellow USJC members from both the Midwest region and across the country.

"Julia's background in Japan and knowledge of Japanese ingredients made her cocktail presentation more than just a mixology class," said **Dayne Kono** (JALD 2010). "Woven in with her recipes were her amazing stories about growing up in Japan and how she became interested in cocktails after observing the fastidious Japanese bartender culture in an exclusive private club in Kyoto."

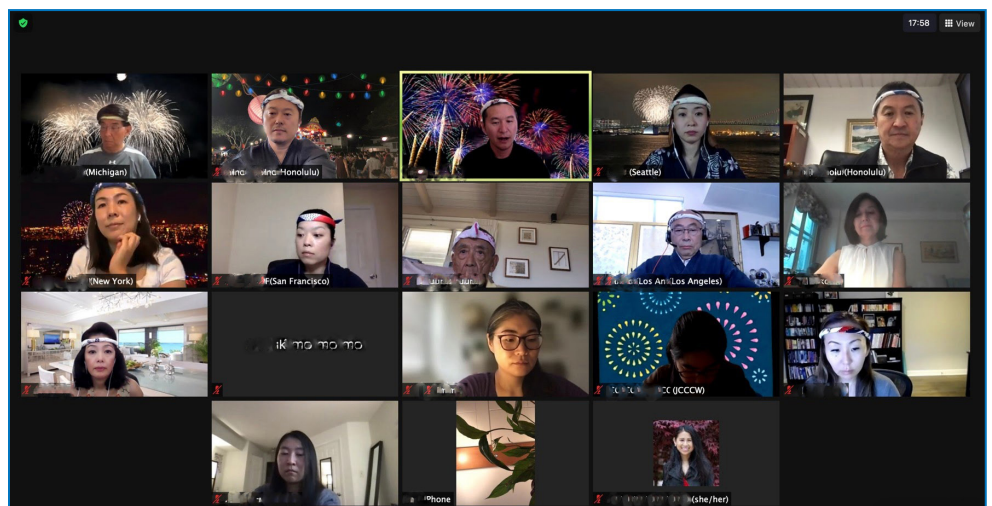
Shin-Issei Affinity Group Holds Natsu-Matsuri

by *Toshiki Masaki, JALD 2015*

On June 10, Shin-Issei Affinity Group held its Natsu-matsuri (summer festival) virtual networking event.

Twenty one people attended the event. To encourage engagement by everyone, they were divided into four breakout rooms – Shin-Issei Career; Shin-Issei Identity & Life; Sports; and Travel & Food.

The next event is planned for September, tentatively with an Otsukimi or Moon Viewing theme.

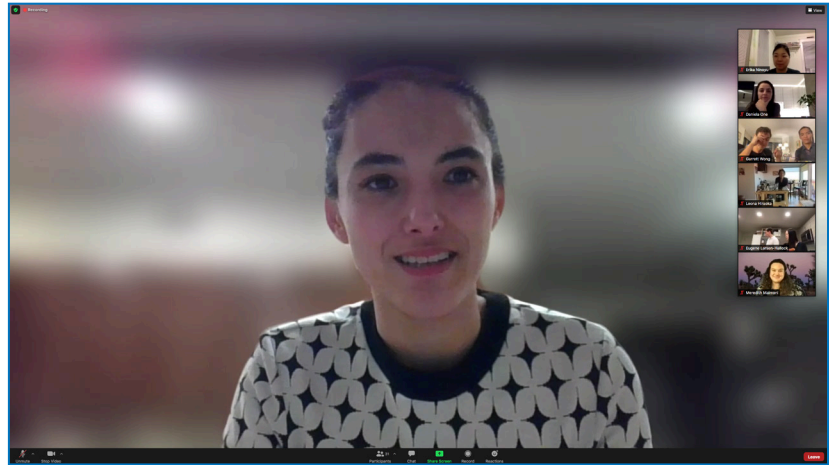


To highlight the summer festival theme, participants were encouraged to wear Tenugui or cotton bandana and use firework photos or pictures on their Zoom backgrounds.

MEMBER NEWS



Aila Gomi had an opportunity to travel this quarter! Since her family is fully vaccinated, she and her husband flew out to visit my parents in San Jose. They went wine tasting in Napa, drove the beautiful 17-mile drive at Pebble Beach, and got to kayak on Monterey Bay. They even got to see sea lions, harbor seals, and even some otters! Out on the beach are Aila, her husband Ian Farre peeking over her shoulder, and her parents Lynda Gomi and Kaxu Gomi.



Mia Guild (here introducing Julia Momose on Zoom) will be starting her MBA this fall at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. But before that she will be volunteering at the Olympics in Tokyo (after two weeks of quarantine)! She is a Japanese citizen so was able to enter the country for this exciting opportunity.

After four wonderful years, **Ella McCann** has moved from Chicago Sister Cities International to Loyola University Chicago's Baumhart Center as Manager, External Relations & Strategic Partnerships. In this role, Ella will be responsible for scaling the center's network, creating alumni programming and sharing the center with Chicago, the nation and eventually the world (including Japan, of course).



Kai Mitsushio, Strategic Customer Success Manager/Japan Partnerships for G2, is justifiably proud that the technology "start-up" announced it's \$157M Series D funding round last week. It is big news not only for G2, but also Chicago as the new funding puts G2's valuation at \$1.1 billion.

That makes G2 a "unicorn company", a big milestone for tech companies. It reflects well on Chicago as a tech/startup hub as G2 was founded and is still headquartered here. G2 is commonly known as the "Yelp" or "TripAdvisor" for B2B Software. G2 was featured on the big Nasdaq billboard in Times Square recently.



MEMBER NEWS

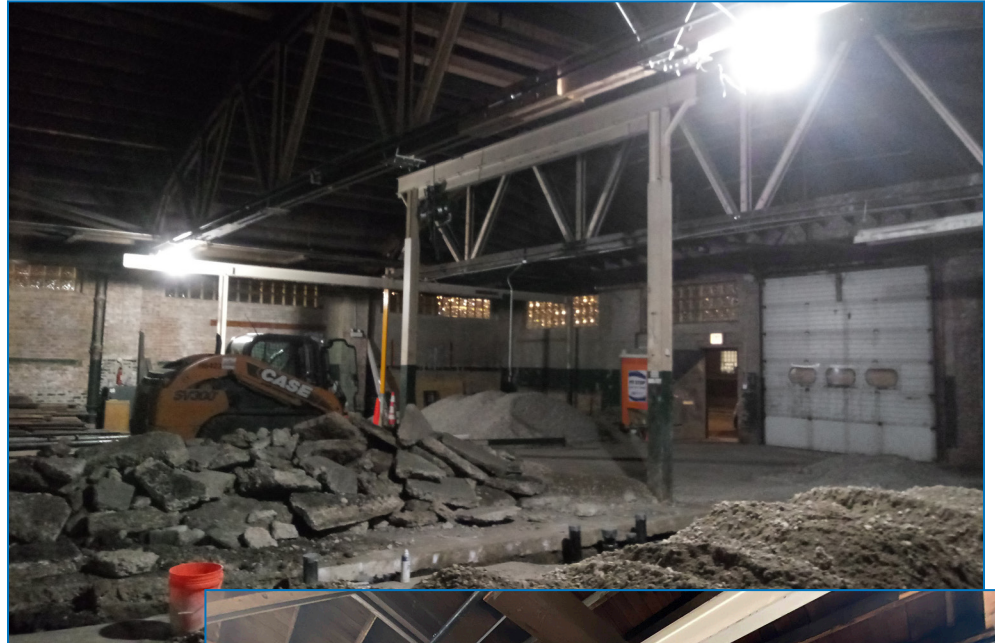
From Brick to Bottle: The Story of a Distillery and an Architect

We were able to hold our inaugural post-pandemic Midwest USJC in-person gathering at Wolf Point Distilling because our Vice Chair **Anna Ninoyu**, AIA, designed the facility.

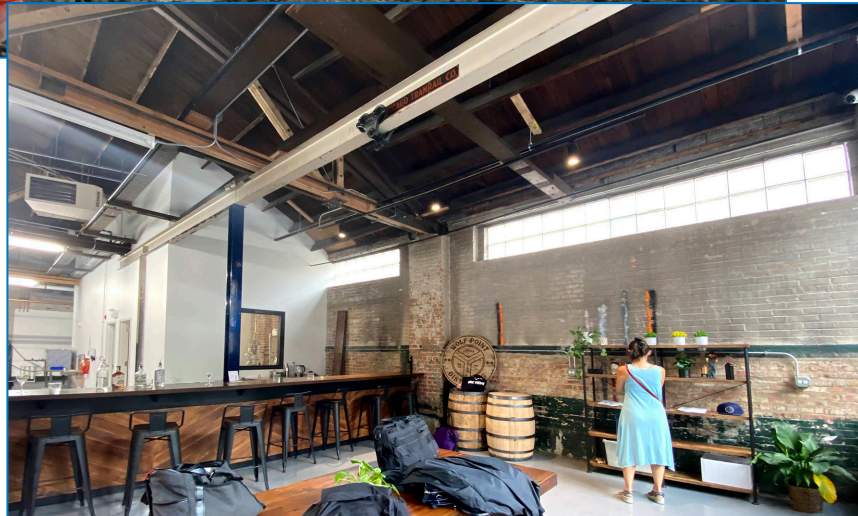
A year ago, the distillery was a distressed industrial building that had housed a roofing material and supply company. With a high concentration of Michelin star restaurants within walking distance, Google and McDonald headquarters nearby, this building was a diamond in the rough. With a vision and sheer will, Wolf Point Distilling collaborated with the architects of METIS Design (Anna and her husband and business partner Kris Gorospe) to make their start-up facility a reality in this adaptive reuse and rehabilitation project.

Anna was inspired by the owners of Wolf Point and their vision to resurrect some of Chicago's venerable stories sublimating each spirit into a hand crafted bottle. With this vision and the weight of a century-old industrial building with exposed heavy timber truss and thick masonry walls, a fully equipped distillery from grain to bottle was designed and achieved.

METIS also found moments to contrast the heaviness of the building with an ultra-lightweight steel stair leading up to the mezzanine office. This idea reinterprets the function of a distillery: taking heavy grains, processing them, cooking them, fermenting them, distilling and blending to create "spirits" that are seemingly lighter than air. Projects where the owners and the architects cook up ideas together end with a beautiful and smooth blend.



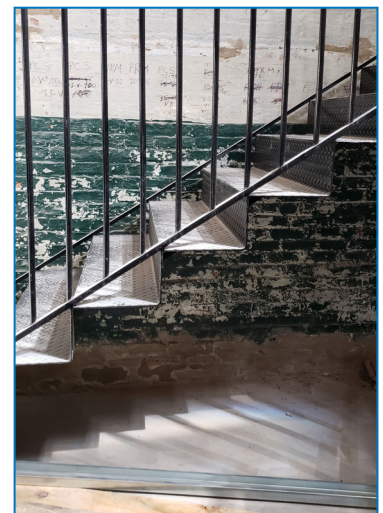
Daiki Ishiyama



Daiki Ishiyama



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METIS Design



Garden of the Phoenix Rises Again

by *Stephen Toyoda*

After some severe weather and rain over the weekend, at 7 a.m. on June 28 a group of volunteers from Midwest USJC, Japanese Culture Center, JETAA Chicago, Midwest Buddhist Temple, and Slack received confirmation to venture off to volunteer a lot of sweat and energy at the Garden of the Phoenix in Jackson Park.

The Garden of the Phoenix was established in 1893 by the United States

and Japan as a symbol of friendship, and was intended to be a place to learn about Japan and experience its culture.

Michael Dimitroff, from the Chicago Park District, welcomed us and helped guide us to the Wooden Island where we moved soil (and gravel!), pulled azaleas, moved and planted irises, and helped bolster the walking path. The weather fortunately held and we were able to accomplish all of the work tasked to us with time to spare.

The Park District wanted to share this feedback with us:

“Please thank everyone again two-fold! They all just rolled up their sleeves and got dirty with it! Impressive output with a fun attitude.

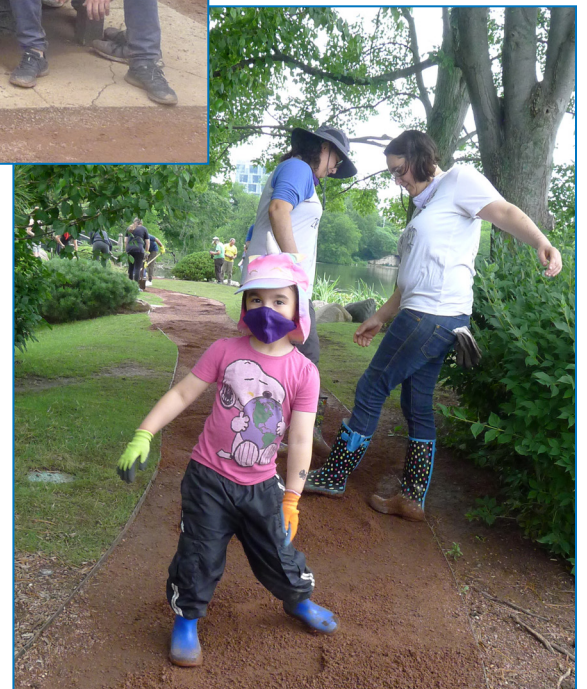
“They were some of the BEST volunteers we've had in a loooooong time, and so nice, too! Plus, having a unicorn was like the icing on the cake! Thank you for an incredibly productive day.”



The whole crew after a hard day's work, including **Michael Tanimura's** marvelous unicorn granddaughter, Quinlan.



photos by
Michael Tanimura



UPCOMING EVENTS



Saira Chambers, director at the Japanese Cultural Center (JCC), has worked with the Chicago Park District (CPD) and the Garden of the Phoenix Foundation since her years in the Education/School Programs division of the Art Institute of Chicago. Now back with the JCC (Stephen Toyoda's organization) and Japanese Arts Foundation, the relationships she cultivated remain alive. The Garden of the Phoenix will be the site of a virtual BON Fest on Saturday, July 31. (Go to <https://japaneseculturecenter.com/bonfest/> for details.) Streaming live from the Garden will be taiko drumming, bon odori dancing, and other festivities. You can even take a virtual bon odori lesson to prepare for the festival!

JCC is planning to have an annual in-person BON Fest at the Garden of the Phoenix starting next year. The Garden of the Phoenix will also be the site of a large Tsukimi (Moon Viewing) event on Saturday, September 13 of this year.

Chicago Japanese Community Picnic

As an official member of the Chicago Japanese American Council (CJAC), Midwest USJC is supporting Chicagoland's annual picnic that brings together all people of Japanese ancestry (and many others) for a relaxing day of food, drink, and fun!

Plan to join us on Saturday, August 7 at Busse Woods Grove #27 with a dish to share at the buffet table. Roast pig, burgers, sausages, Japanese beer on tap, soft drinks, kakigori, yaki soba and more are provided by the CJAC picnic committee. There will be horses to ride, karaoke to be sung, and games for adults and kids.

The picnic flyer with map is appended on the following two pages. If you have any questions, please email **Michael Tanimura** (mike@sicreative.com), chair of the event.



photos by
Felix Lanier

