

Midwest USJC Picnics Like It's 2021!



Courtesy of JCCC

The annual Chicago Japanese Community Picnic was back in all its fun and food-filled excess this August!

Sponsored by the member organizations of the Chicago Japanese American Council (CJAC), of which Midwest USJC is a new member, the event brings together Japanese and Japanese Americans in a relaxing and informal way (no business suits in sight!).

"It is a great way to build person-to-person relations," picnic chairman **Michael Tanimura** (JALD 2012) said. He, along with CJAC chairman **Michael Takada** (JALD 2017), Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Chicago (JCCC) executive director Tetsuro Mitani, and Tohkon Judo Academy president and founder Douglas Tono, plan and organize the affair annually. They are always looking for input and volunteers to maximize the food and fun. You can contact either of the Mikes if you have ideas or questions.



See pages 2 & 3 for more photos.



Courtesy of JCCC

From Lisa Sakai: The Straight Stuff



I am pleased to say that we have a large number of foodies in our Midwest Region. I know this is true because I realized that all of our monthly meetings, programs and

events usually take place over a meal. Being a foodie in Chicago is not a bad thing. It is also very easy to do because we have almost every type of ethnic cuisine you could want in this city. Falafel for lunch and sushi for dinner is not uncommon.

However, rather than say we are obsessed with our next meal, I prefer to think that the Midwest Region has actually been practicing its own version of “Culinary Diplomacy” – the idea that food and cuisine can be used to promote cross cultural understanding.

A perfect example of this can be seen in the pictures of the Japanese Community Picnic held in August at Busse Woods. The Midwest USJC was invited to be a co-sponsor this year, providing both the roast pig (thank you **Anna Ninoyu**) AND donating funds to support the picnic (thank you to everyone who donated – especially those out-of-town members who gave so generously even though they could not attend.) It was an event designed to bring the Japanese Nationals and Japanese American groups together over food and games, and judging by the number of empty plates and participants in the 2-person getta races, that goal was easily attained.

Besides the roast pig, the JCCC served yakisoba, the Japan Club provided flavored ices, Tohkon Judo cooked hot dogs and hamburgers and members

of the community brought dishes to be shared on a communal food table. Friendships were made, ties were strengthened, and the only time it got slightly tense was when people thought they ran out of yakisoba!

If food is what draws us together, then food is the tool we should use. (Go with your strengths has always been my motto.) Several years ago, the Midwest Region sponsored a series of events under the title “Bento Talks.” The three events covered a myriad of topics: 1. Culinary Entrepreneurships, 2. On Japanese Design and Craftmanship in Chocolates, Luxury Goods and

Architecture and 3. Diversity & Inclusion at Work. Using a panel of speakers and a round-table format, attendees got to hear and participate in the discussions over a shared meal. It was a very successful series and one I’d like to see us continue. I’m not sure what the topic will be yet, but I hope to see a fourth Bento Talk coming to a food court near you!

“If you really want to make a friend go to someone’s house and eat with him...the people who give you their food give you their heart.”

— Cesar Chavez



Michael Tanimura



Lisa Sakai

Michigan JALD Meet with New CG Yusuke Shindo

by Toshiki Masaki, JALD 2015

On August 24, three Michigan-based JALD Alumni – **Kyle Nakamoto** (2018), **Laurie Van Pelt** (2017) and **Toshiki Masaki** (2015) attended the dinner hosted by Consul General Yusuke Shindo at his official residence. CG Shindo, along with Deputy CG Hiromi Otsuki, organized this gathering to learn about experiences during our respective JALD trips as well as the sense of the JA community in Detroit/southeast Michigan. (Shindo-san was assigned to L.A. Consulate during the early 2010s so he was very much familiar with the JALD program itself.)

His invitation was a tremendous honor and privilege for the three JALD alumni, especially so soon after his arrival to the Detroit Consulate from his previous posting at the Japanese Embassy in Pakistan. We were treated to his on-the-



Toshiki, CG Shindo, Laurie, Kyle and Deputy CG Otsuki.

ground insight and analysis of the event that happened just a week prior – the announcement of U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and we ended the evening feeling so much more knowledgeable about the situation.



Kathryn Ibata-Ahrens (JALD 2011) wrote, "It was so nice to see everyone today, and a special thanks to Lisa for organizing our USJC contributions and get-together. Ann and Chris did double duty as pig roast donors and expert filleting of it. Hiromi and Harper shared their picnic blanket space with us. Mike Tanimura was a one-man-show of fun for all the children, leading Suikawari and so many other games."



Lisa Sakai



other photos courtesy of JCCC

MEMBER NEWS

Stacy Uchida Brown (ELP 2014, top row center) moderated the second event of the ELP Kaiwa Series called “Every Last Penny: Building your Financial Future.” Panelists Candice Nakagawa, Director and Senior Private Wealth Advisor at Union Bank in Los Angeles, and Staci Toji (ELP 2017) who runs her own law firm, focused on estate planning. An array of personal finance topics were covered, including homeownership, saving for retirement, creating trusts and wills, and caring for parents as they age. ELPs not only learned the basics of financial planning, but had an open conversation around having tough conversations with loved ones about finances. Stacy expressed thanks to USJC board members Dennis Sugino and David Kenji Chang (ELP 2015) for the creation of this program, and Gary Moriwaki and Akiko Yu Kamata for their support.



The Japanese Arts Foundation (JAF) and **Stephen Toyoda's** Japanese Culture Center (JCC) helped coordinate two new events in Chicago's historic Garden of the Phoenix in Jackson Park: Bon Fest Chicago (in July) and a Tsukimi (Moon Viewing in September). While this year's events were primarily virtual, both events hope to be in-person celebrations of Japanese culture in the future.

An on-line stream of the Bon Fest can be viewed on the [JAF's Twitch Channel](#) or the [JCC's Facebook](#). The Tsukimi stream should be available later in October.

At left, Grandmaster Yoshinojo Fujima (Rika Lin, at right) with other Shubukai dancers. Center, the pavilion at the Garden of the Phoenix. Right, Saira Chambers, director of the JCC and executive director of JAF; Tatsu Aoki, composer, performer cultural advocate and executive director of Asian Improv aRts MidWest; and Omar Francis Sensei of the Urasenke tradition of tea, who teaches tea ceremony at the JCC.

Congratulations to **Vickie Sakurada Schaepler** (JALD 2019), who has been named a recipient of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' commendation! This award recognizes the contributions of individuals who strengthen relations between the United States and Japan. Vickie is Coordinator of the Japanese Hall and History Project at the Legacies of the Plains Museum, in Gering, Nebraska. She has been involved in all aspects of the project, such as relocating the Hall, fundraising, collecting documents and artifacts, and leading a team of interested volunteers who have made the project a reality.

MEMBER NEWS



A warm welcome to Yuga (優雅) Cosmos Reed, born August 27 to **Hiromi Nakazawa** and Harper Reed. He weighs 7 lbs. 2.6 oz. and Hiromi says he is healthy and happy and brought lot of joys to his parents and family!

Yuna Elise celebrated her one-year-old birthday on September 8, along with her parents Lena Lui and **Kai Mitsushio**. Kai said, "I'm now convinced that if I can survive one year as a parent, anybody can do it!"



Stacy Uchida Brown and family moved from Kansas to Austin, Texas in July. Sydney Sue (19 months) is learning about her roots at her first Cubs game in August.



Pam and **Rob Ohno** had the opportunity to visit Lake Louise and Banff National Park as part of his trip overseeing the Mackenzie Tour, PGA TOUR Canada. Rob said, "The beauty was spectacular!"

Aila Gomi started a new job. She is a Material Scientist with Advanced Drainage Systems, based out of Columbus, Ohio. Aila said, "It is a great opportunity to learn about water drainage pipes and how to increase recycled plastic usage and water sustainability. I am very excited for this role and to help promote greater sustainability with the plastic manufacturing industry."

"The move was prompted by the opportunity. ADS has a strong background in innovation through structural design, but is new to innovation through material science. I was hired on as the fourth person to the material team and will be involved with helping build a laboratory facility in Columbus."

"Sustainability as a whole is very important to me," Aila continued. "Working in the plastics industry, which has a bad reputation, it is amazing to be part of a company that targets to reach 1 billion pounds of recycled material each year and whose products help provide access to clean water."

Kai Mitsushio said that his company G2 has many job openings now due to their growth and recent \$157M Series D funding round. In fact, the business software and technology sector they are in is also experiencing lots of growth. "It seems like all of my clients (other B2B software companies) are also all hiring for many positions," Kai said. "I'd be happy to assist if any USJC members are looking for work, or interested in learning about G2 or the overall business software and tech industry." Link to <https://grnh.se/7601b6701> to see G2's current job openings.