



MIDWEST REGION
U.S.-JAPAN
COUNCIL

News & Views

January 2023

Welcoming in 2023, USJC Style

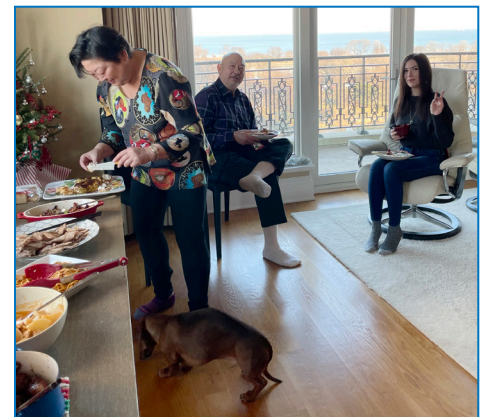
In what has become a (Covid-interrupted) annual event, Midwest USJC members, prospective members and colleagues welcomed the New Year in with a *Shinnenkai* at **Tomoko Kizawa's** beautiful Lincoln Park condo.

Oshogatsu was celebrated in contemporary Japanese American style with attendees bringing a variety of delicious potluck offerings. Using her decades-old, trusty automatic mochi maker, Tomoko made fresh mochi for her year-opening *ozoni*.

May this year continue to unfold with the same hospitality, warmth and camaraderie!



photos by Tomoko Kizawa



Don't worry Lisa: someone had to be the one to drop food on the floor for Daisuke, Tomoko's lovely dachshund!

Happy New Year!



From Anna Ninoyu: Sound Bytes



Happy Year of the Rabbit! We made it through a busy and eventful 2022 marked by a strong comeback and optimism, shown by the attendance and organizers of the USJC's Annual Conference, and perhaps our own experiences throughout the year. At times, we found moments of kindness, empathy and drive that is the yin to the yang of the Tiger. This year is a time to nurture and reflect on those moments and thrive.

Leading up to the conference there was uncertainty on whether we could even attend due to procedures in obtaining a visa that were in place at the time. However, it's as if some things are meant to be and Japan's COVID restrictions were reduced in the nick of time. With USJC's mission and our current geopolitical climate and Tokyo as host city, the theme "The Great Reconnect: Strengthening Alliances and Partnerships" was most appropriate. When virtual meetings and faceless email introductions became normal, the conference gave the opportunity for in-person meetings and traditional *meishi* exchange to return, as if the old ways are revitalized and became new again.

Speaking of traditions, during my trip I was reminded of Japan as a country of *shin* where spirit is very much alive and well. Each time I visit my mother's ancestral home, I get a dose of "shin" therapy, walking through our hinoki

forest in Aichi and paying homage to our 500-year-old history grounded in the roots of the trees and the life that it provides. It is a quiet energy, perceived when I slow down and appreciate the timelessness of nature. It is a reminder that our drive to reach new heights, take on challenges and risks is balanced by the depth and breadth of the roots that provide us stability for greater growth.

Our last year's goals where we endeavored to increase our engagement with regional members outside of the Greater Chicago Area for events, engaging the larger Asian-American and Pacific Islander community agencies at large to work together and widen our network, and deepening our relationship with the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago and Detroit deserve mention as well. The effort and passion of the members who helped pursue these goals are very admirable; one area where our Midwest group can show support would be an increase in volunteers for events, along with a conscious drive for new members. We've had an excellent start, thanks to **Tomoko Kizawa** for hosting our first *Shinnenkai* for 2023 at her beautiful home next to Lake Michigan, and **Dayne Kono** for hosting our first ski trip to Alpine Valley in Wisconsin. For our Midwest members have no fear, we still have a few upcoming events we invite you all to attend, please stay posted on forthcoming emails.

Thank you all to our members for your support and ideas to advance and keep our Midwest crew's morale high. As always, I welcome all your suggestions for events, volunteering opportunities, and additional goals you feel strongly our group should engage in. Thank you to USJC National for your continued support and the recognition of our efforts in pursuing our mutual

commitment to developing the next generation of leaders and inspiring our members to share in a stronger U.S.-Japan relationship.

As we start this New Year with fresh ideas, prospects, and hope, may we all have an open mind for the new, and respect and esteem for the old. *Oni wa soto, Fuku wa uchi*: problems out, fortunes in!



Congrats to Our 2022 ELP!

Fumi Kikuyama Maher, Corporate Sustainability Manager and Deputy DEI Lead for Hitachi America, was selected as the Midwest's Emerging Leader and attended the Annual Conference in Tokyo in October 2022.

Fumi is passionate about creating a sustainable society at the local and global levels. She drives multiple sustainability initiatives for Hitachi America, including carbon neutrality, circular economy, corporate social responsibility, and community support. She has served as a youth leader for multiple organizations and is a proud alumna of the University of Michigan and Kobe University. She lives in the Chicago suburbs with her husband and cat.

Annual Conference Reconnects and Re-energizes



Midwest members Aila Gomi, Tomoko Kizawa, George Kobayashi, Dayne Kono, Fumi Maher, Kyle Nakamoto, Anna Ninoyu, Ryota Sekine, Andrea Sugano, and Kirk Zeller were able to make the trip to Tokyo and take part in the Annual Conference. Some were also able to attend the sponsor reception at Ambassador Rahm Emanuel's residence. Tomoko (below), who said the conference atmosphere was one of energy and excitement, poses with Olympic medalist ice dancers Alex and Maia Shibutani.



Dayne (above center) reconnected with former Chicagoan Gary Yamashiroya (above right) and other members of the Hawaiian contingent, and he and Gary (right) also reconnected with former Chicago Consul Uichiro Nakano, who took them on a back alley tour of Shibuya.



photos courtesy of
Dayne Kono and
Tomoko Kizawa

ELP 50 Forges New Bonds, Redefines Future

by Ryota Sekine

ELP 50 exceeded all expectations. After a few years of virtual programming, our group finally reunited in person. Together, we visited the headquarters of Pasona Group, Uniqlo, NEC, Tokyu Corporation and others. I am most grateful for the late night chats and bus rides with my fellow ELPs and the new bonds created with people I met during the three days.

It is only the beginning of more adventures and conversations to come. As a result of the program, I've become more optimistic about the future of US-Japan relations. Thank you to all of our staff, sponsors, speakers and hosts for making it possible.

photos courtesy of
Ryota Sekine



ELP 50 members **Ryota Sekine** (above right) and at right **Kenji Negi**, **Andrea Sugano** and **Erika Ninoyu** (not from around here, but Anna's sister) in Tokyo. We are Midwest proud.



Naomi Hattori; **Lisa Sakai**; **Marianne Friebus-Flaman**; **Julianne Medrano**, consulate JET Program and MEXT Scholarship Coordinator; **Consul Rie Arai**; **Kathryn Ibata-Arens**; **Anna Ninoyu**, **Sawako Kojima**, Japan Information Center Education Program Coordinator; and **Hiromi Nakazawa** enjoying the chef's prix fixe course menu of Spanish tapas at Mercat a la Planxa for the Midwest USJC/Consulate **Girls Night Out**.

ed. note: Girls Night Out appears to have been a bit more reserved than the other gender's outing, but that may just be because this was the only photo submitted.

A small but exhilarated group attended the inaugural Midwest USJC/JCCC ski/snowboard outing. **Dayne Kono** and **Lisa Sakai** were joined by **Eisuke Natsuhara**, President of Arakawa Chemical (U.S.A.), Inc., and board member of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Chicago.





Daniela One

Chicago members were overjoyed that **Hiroyuki Fujita**, Midwest USJC member and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, The Ohio State University, and Chairman, Canon Healthcare USA, could take time out from a conference to join the November meeting at Minghin Cuisine.

Bonfire Banter Coming Soon

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey to help shape Midwest USJC's new series of on-line meetings. Aila Gomi, who is leading this series, will be meeting with Anna Ninoyu soon to review and discuss the results. They hope to kick off the Bonfire Banter series later this quarter.

Reserve April 28-30 for Chicago Kanpai!

Midwest USJC is planning a fun and fact-filled reason for members to make the trek to Chicago. See the last page pf this PDF for the tentative details. Final info coming soon!

MEMBER NEWS



Michael Takada, CEO, Japanese American Service Committee, announced that in early December JASC closed on the purchase of its new, "Forever Home," located at 5700 N. Lincoln Avenue in the Budlong Woods neighborhood of Chicago.

"Our new space will allow us to more than double our Adult Day Services program and other services for aging adults, while also improving space for the Legacy Center archives and library and for our cultural and community programming," he said.

JASC will continue operations out of its Uptown location through this summer and has enlisted the services of **Anna Ninoyu** and her firm METIS Design for the design and renovations at their new home.

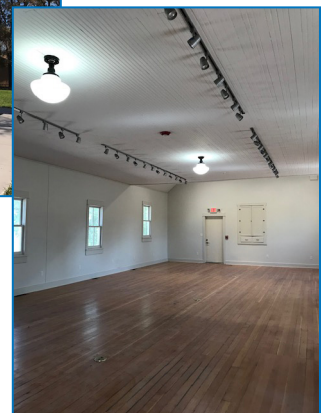
Vickie Sakurada Schaepler, Coordinator of the Japanese Hall and History Project at the Legacy of the Plains Museum in Gering, Nebraska, sent us the following update:

"Greetings from Nebraska! Our project encountered a major setback, when the exhibit company we hired closed their doors without notice in September. They had completed our main museum and did an exceptional job. We began working with them in August 2020 and had anticipated a grand opening this year.

We recently completed a new contract with a new company, Upland Exhibits out of Kansas. Working with some of the original designs, but having to complete them and do fabrication, they do not anticipate we will be able to open until 2024.

"We are excited to announce our History Nebraska Museum in Lincoln will be receiving the Smithsonian traveling exhibit *Righting a Wrong* on the incarceration camps. We will be working closely with their staff to tell the Nebraska side of the story," she said.

Vickie promises to keep us posted on the traveling exhibit and the opening of the Japanese Hall.



MEMBER NEWS



Consul-General Hiroshi Tajima presents **Michael Takada** with the Foreign Minister's Commendation in honor of his promotion of mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S.A.



The film *80 Years Later* explored the generational racial inheritance of trauma from the JA incarceration. It focused on members of one family, including **Jean Fujiu**, and featured her mother Kiyoko. (ed. note: Mrs. Fujiu was the first person I ever met who spoke about the emotional and psychological trauma of incarceration. In this film she does so eloquently and with impact. Try to see the film if you can.)

Rob Ohno left his role at the PGA TOUR at the end of 2022 after 24 years of service. He has accepted the role of President and CEO of the ANNIIKA Foundation. The Foundation supports and empowers young women globally through the game of golf. It conducts tournaments, clinics and other outreach initiatives over five different continents. Annika Sorenstam is considered the best female golfer of all time, and she wants to give back to future generations through the game.



Stacy Uchida Brown enlarged her family this year. Sophie Diane Uchida Brown was born in Austin, Texas on October 10. Not too young to travel, here she is with big sister Sydney Sue (who is almost 3), mom and dad (Rob Brown), celebrating Christmas in Iowa with her paternal grandparents. The 5-day trip turned into 10 days when their flight home on Southwest was canceled!

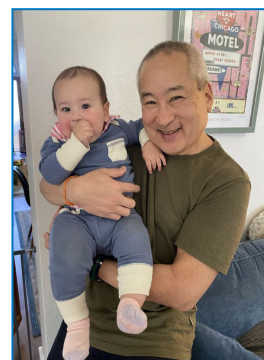
Naomi Hattori and her husband Jun-Jun Vichaikul excitedly welcomed Aiko Hattori Vichaikul on Sunday, November 27 at 2:39 am. She weighed 7lbs. and 4oz. Aiko spends most of her time making noises while she sleeps or drinking milk. Naomi says they're completely in love with her. Who wouldn't be!

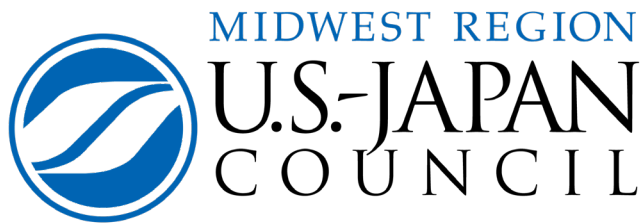


Kirk Zeller and his children Rumi, Rexton and Grant wish everyone a Happy 2023!



Proud papa **Michael Takada** with his second grandchild, 9-month-old Rai Patrick Mitchell. celebrated Christmas in Austin.





invites you to reserve
April 28-30, 2023 for

Kanpai Chicago!

Join USJC members, JALDs, ELPs, and others invested in the U.S.-Japan relationship for a fun and fact-filled weekend in Chicago!

Details are still being finalized, but highlights are noted in the Schedule at right.



We will be using Nobu Hotel as our event headquarters, and will provide transportation to the Consul General's residence (Friday), Garden of the Phoenix, Beam Suntory, and Nobu Hotel (Saturday), and Art Institute, Japan Information Center, and Nobu Hotel (Sunday).

Individual costs would include travel to and from Chicago, hotel accommodations, and food and drink – with the exclusions noted at right.

Finalized information and registration coming soon. ***Kanpai!***

Tentative Schedule

Friday, April 28, 2023

noon – pre-event Chicago Eats lunch at Billy Goat Tavern or Mr. Beef on Orleans

6:00 pm – networking and kick-off dinner at Consul General's residence; dinner to include sake pairing and after dinner party with DJ Van playing City Pop*

Saturday, April 29, 2023

morning – breakfast on-own at Nobu Hotel

11:00 am – Garden of the Phoenix, Jackson Park, for a tour and history of the site of Japan's first foray in soft power at the World's Columbia Exposition, 1893; bento lunch*

2:00 pm – tasting at Beam Suntory HQ in Merchandise Mart*

4:00 pm – break period

7:00 pm – walking bar/food crawl from Nobu Hotel to Kumiko, Momotaro, and other fantastic locations

late night – small groups to Nisei Lounge, Al's Beef, Konbini and Kanpai, Murasaki Sake Lounge



Sunday, April 30, 2023

9:30 am – optional break-out breakfasts, options posted prior to event, and include Manny's Deli, Lou Mitchell's, Ann Sather's, others

noon – Art Institute, Japan Gallery tour; deep dish pizza lunch at Japan Information Center*

**bus transportation and costs for these activities covered by Midwest USJC and event sponsors*