



Too Soon: Farewell to Consul General Tajima

by Robert Kumaki

We bid a sad farewell to Consul General Hiroshi Tajima. CG Tajima has been recently called back to Tokyo following a bit less than two years in Chicago.

In his brief time here, he immersed himself wholeheartedly into the businesses, regional governments, and Japanese/Japanese American community. Guided by his grassroots approach, CG Tajima often interacted with the USJC, even offering his Official Residence as the kick-off reception site for the Midwest Region's *Kanpai Chicago!* event.

His unbridled support for US-Japan relations took him from meeting with Governors of all 10 states in his region to local community picnics. We wish him well in his next posting.



photos by Robert Kumaki



photo by Consul Sanae Kanno



photo by Michael Tanimura



2023 Kagami Biraki

photos by Felix Lanier



Consul General Hiroshi Tajima welcomed Midwest USJC into his home, most memorably for the *Kanpai Chicago!* opening reception (above). He attended numerous community events, including Kagami Biraki at the Japanese American Service Committee (far left), and the annual Chicago Japanese Community Picnic (at left, with his daughter).

From Anna Ninoyu: Sound Bytes



To Hellos and Farewells

I find myself reflecting on the transient nature of hellos and farewells that permeate our lives. It is remarkable how these simple words, exchanged in a matter of seconds, can encapsulate the entire spectrum of human emotions. They possess the power to ignite hope, create connections and leave lasting imprints on our spirits. Yet, they also carry the weight of impermanence, reminding us that nothing in life is truly constant.

As I think back on the countless hellos I have shared, I am filled with a sense of awe at the transformative potential they hold. Each hello has been a doorway to new possibilities, an invitation to step into the unknown. However, intertwined with these hellos are the inevitable farewells. It is a reminder that all things, no matter how cherished, have their appointed time.

We say farewell to Consul General Hiroshi Tajima after 2 years in Chicago, in which time he actively encouraged and led several engagements and collaborations between the Japanese and the Japanese American communities. During our Asian American Coalition of Chicago Lunar New Year Gala Planning Committee lunch, the kabuki performer in him revealed creative insights for the gala production and staging; then his diplomatic side emphasized

the importance of sharing both our common and diverse ancestry.

He brought together the Japanese American community leaders during Ambassador Koji Tomita's visit. We shared our history, and discussed present concerns and pathways to thrive together socially and economically in an ever-changing political environment. It was a privilege to converse on prescient topics such as education and business and to have the opportunity to listen to others in our community. Consul General Tajima will be missed for all that he has championed for us, and we welcome the next Consul General and the doorways to new possibilities.

We say hello to **Sawako Kojima** and **Haruka Thiel** as new U.S.-Japan Council members. And Aloha to **Kanta Yoshino**, who has relocated to Chicago from Hawaii's USJC Region. They will join our "Familia," as Lisa Sakai said to describe our Chicago USJC Outfit.

I am proud to announce two members who have agreed to take on a more formal role for our growing and active region. Before my tenure as regional

chair, **Mike Tanimura** tirelessly highlighted the Midwest Region in the quarterly newsletter. Since *Kanpai Chicago!*, our newsletter has become the USJC national standard that other regions aspire to create. To ensure we continue our communications across all USJC regions past my tenure, I have appointed Mike as the Midwest Region's Chief of Communications.

Last but not least, I am excited to announce **Daniela One** as the new Midwest Regional Vice Chair. Daniela comes with deep knowledge of Japan, received her master's degree in economics at Kyoto University with her thesis in Womenomics, volunteered for the Japan Tsunami Relief humanitarian effort after 3/11, was ambassador to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, worked as the economic specialist for the Consul General of Japan in Chicago, led several USJC regional events, and is an entrepreneur for Ignite, a premier gaming lounge in Skokie, Illinois. I look forward to joining our forces to plan for the coming years for our Midwest Region.

As a final word, our Midwest Region is built on a foundation of our people-to-people connections, a core value of USJC. I think I speak for everyone that being a part of this organization has had a profound impact on our professional careers and personal lives. My sincerest gratitude to every member: your engagement and generosity is what makes our region exceptional and unique. For the ebbs and flows of hellos and farewells, the end is just the beginning of a human connection that shapes and illuminates our journey.



photo by Counsul Sanae Kanno

GNO•2: 2x the Fun, Conversation & Turnout



by *Daniela One*

On June 29, we hosted the highly anticipated second "Girls' Night Out" (GNO) dinner at The Gundis, Chicago's first Kurdish cuisine establishment. GNO•2 provided a valuable platform for fostering relationships and facilitating meaningful discussions between women in Midwest USJC and the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago.

"It was very nice to get to know USJC female leaders better," said Consul Sanae Kanno. "Thank you very much for inviting Consulate staff. I cannot wait for next GNO!"

Consul Rie Arai said, "Just like in the U.S., Japanese women, regardless of their age, often hold a similar get-together called Joshi-Kai 女子会, namely girls' night out. I enjoyed conversations as well as watching how women in the U.S socialize and finding the similarities

and differences between how women in Japan interact."

While adhering to the principle of confidentiality within the event (what happens at GNO dinners, stays at GNO dinners), it is worth highlighting the engaging conversations and laughter that ensued amid the casual atmosphere.

We extend our gratitude to **Lisa Sakai** for her exemplary organizational skills

and dedication in ensuring the ongoing success of the GNO dinners. **Marion Friebus-Flaman's** thoughtful initiative to provide conversation starters further enhanced the evening's interactions and collaboration. Such events serve as essential pillars in our ongoing commitment to nurturing people-to-people connections and strengthen U.S.-Japan relations.

Help Midwest USJC Support Events

Midwest USJC is a member of the Chicago Japanese American Council (CJAC). Two major events CJAC is sponsoring are coming up in August (see page 9) and your help is needed.

On Saturday, Aug. 5 is the annual Chicago Japanese Picnic (see pages 10 & 11 for detailed info and map). Please go to the [on-line volunteer sign-up](#) to

help out with set-up, games, or food.

On Saturday, Aug. 19 is Japan Festival at the Cultural Center. Volunteers are needed to assist attendees at the festival as well as assisting performers, exhibitors, and vendors. Please go to the [on-line sign-up form](#) and use Username: volunteer, Password: JFest23!.

Thank you!

Welcome to Our Newest Midwest USJC Members

Sawako Kojima

Sawako Kojima is a Shin-Issei born and raised in Tokyo, Japan. After graduating from Japan Women's University (BA in Education, Minor in Japanese language education), she was sent to North Carolina by the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnerships for the JALEX program to teach Japanese to K-12 students. After three years, she moved back to Japan and earned her MA in International Cooperation Studies from Kyorin University.



She returned to the U.S. a few years later and started working as a program coordinator for the Japan Information Center, Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago. Over two decades, she has advanced its cultural diplomacy objectives through many cultural and educational programs. Her passion is to promote Japanese language and culture, especially Japanese food and Sake. She is a certified Kikisake-shi (sake sommelier). She resides in Evanston with her husband, two sons (one in Iowa, proud Hawkeyes mom) and a cat.

Haruka Thiel

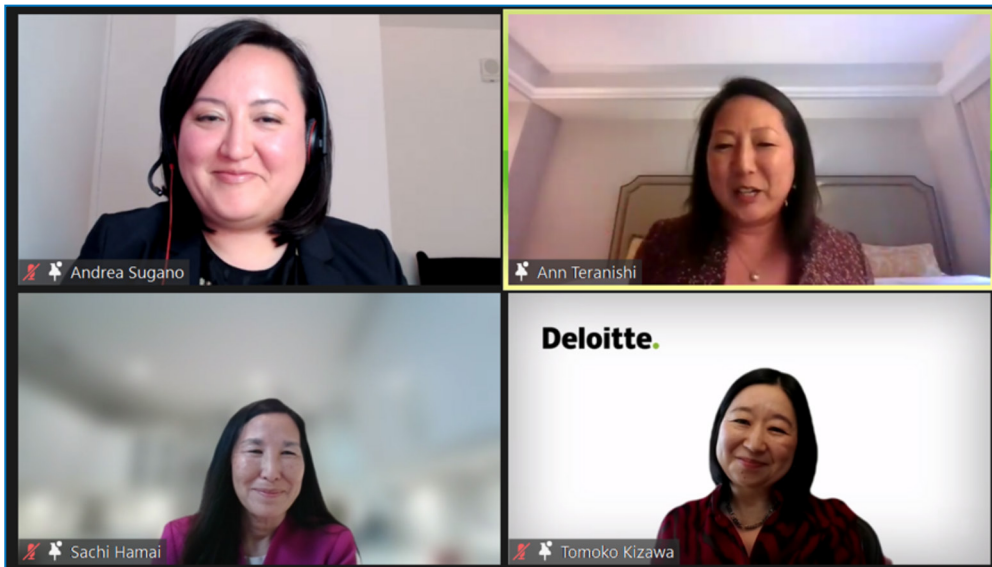
Haruka Thiel, originally from Tokyo and now residing in Chicago, is passionate about bridging Japan and the world. Growing up in Singapore and New York, she has developed a deep desire to foster connections between cultures.

Currently, Haruka holds the position of Senior Marketing Assistant at Mitsui & Co. (U.S.A.), Inc., a global trading, investment, and service enterprise. Prior to Mitsui, she honed her skills at another reputable Japanese company, Sumitomo Corporation in Tokyo. Additionally, Haruka excels as a writer and translator for Cosmopolitan Japan, an international web magazine.

Beyond her professional pursuits, Haruka finds joy in hiking, trying new restaurants, attending concerts, and embarking on adventures with her dog. With her passion for connecting Japan to the world, Haruka aspires to contribute to building meaningful connections that can strengthen the U.S.-Japan relationship.



Midwest Figures in Women + Forum Presentation



On May 17, **Andrea Sugano** hosted the USJC Women + Forum panel “Leadership Journeys”, which featured frank discussion from distinguished USJC Council Leaders in various working sectors. **Tomoko Kizawa**, Partner at Deloitte and Touche, shared her career journey and offered guidance and strategies on how women can grow their careers. She discussed how she developed her leadership style, and ways to empower other women in the workplace.

The New Vice (and Future) Chair of Midwest USJC

“I am truly honored and grateful to accept **Anna Ninoyu**’s nomination as a Vice Chair for the Midwest Region,” said **Daniela One**. “Anna’s leadership in our Region sets an exemplary standard, and I am genuinely enthusiastic about collaborating with her to maintain our commitment to this esteemed organization. Our shared goal is to enhance the bonds between the United States (Midwest) and Japan through people to people connections, and I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to work alongside Anna to achieve this objective.”

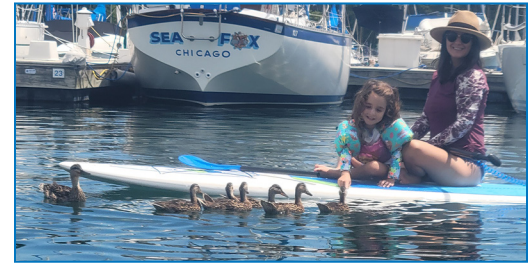


Once Daniela returned to Chicago, she served as a Young Professional Ambassador with Chicago Council on Global Affairs, made valuable contributions as a member of the Young Professional Board for the Center of Economic Progress and as a Board Member at the

Esports Trade Association. In 2015, Daniela was selected to be a delegate on the Tomodachi Mitsui Leadership Program and has since remained an active member of the US-Japan Council.

Beyond the professional pursuits, Daniela loves to immerse herself in new life experiences: she is certified to teach Ikebana (beginning level) in the Sogetsu School after completing a two-

year intensive course in Kyoto, learned about Japanese culinary traditions by taking Japanese cooking classes in Kyoto for over a year, completed the Second City Improv Program (with **Andrea Sugano**) and these days you can find her improving on her paddle boarding skills at Montrose Harbor with her small family (Iris and Flav).



Daniela currently holds the position of Controller at Ignite Gaming, serving the growing video game community in the Chicagoland area. Prior to joining Ignite Gaming, Daniela worked as an Economic Specialist at the Japanese Consulate for nearly five years.

Daniela has a Master’s Degree in Economics from Kyoto University and has always been committed to giving back to the community. In 2011, she volunteered with a self-organized group in Tohoku to clean homes affected by the aftermath of the 3/11 Tsunami.

Through her multifaceted background, combining expertise in economics, community engagement, and cultural exploration, Daniela continually strives

to make a meaningful impact in various spheres of life.

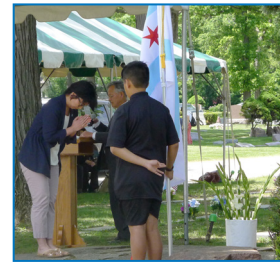


Midwest Members Take Part in Community Affairs



(left) Chicago was honored to receive Ambassador of Japan to the United States, HE Koji Tomita (seated, third from left). In town to help celebrate the 93rd anniversary of the Japan America Society of Chicago, Ambassador Tomita met with Japanese American community members and USJC Council Leaders **Bob Kumaki, Mike Takada, Anna Ninoyu and Megan Nakano.**

(below left) The Chicago Japanese American community held a reunion of sorts with former Consul General and Ambassador to Bangladesh, now Ambassador for Public Diplomacy HE Naoki Ito (seated, third from left) at a dinner at the Official Residence of Consul General Hiroshi Tajima. In attendance were Council Leaders **Bob Kumaki, Dayne Kono, George Kobayashi, Mike Tanimura, Megan Nakano, Mike Takada, and Lisa Sakai.**



Many Midwest USJC members took part in the annual Chicago Japanese American Memorial Day event at Montrose Cemetery. **Anna Ninoyu** represented Midwest USJC in laying a flower offering at the Japanese Mausoleum; and **Bob Kumaki** represented the Japanese American Service Committee.

The Midwest Forum, now in its 28th year, is an annual event held by the Consulate General of Japan in Chicago. Unique among Consular offices, the Midwest Forum brings together Consulate Staff, Honorary Consuls, the Japan Foundation, Japan America Societies and other Japanese and Japanese American organizations in the office's 10-State Region to share ideas and issues, programs and events, and recognition of the relationship between the Consulate and the community.

For the first time, this year's Forum included discussions on Japanese American history, identity and issues and the desire for increased involvement in Japan-related topics by both the Consulate and the JA community, especially a re-connection with Japanese culture and business. Other topics included support of US-Japan Sister Cities programs, Japanese language education, local and regional events, US-Japan exchange programs and regional Japanese gardens.

This year's Forum was attended by USJC Council Leaders **Mike Tanimura, Dayne**

Kono, Marion Friebus-Flaman (below, at left), **Mike Takada** (right, at right), **Vickie Sakurada-Schaepler, Joe Galligan,** and our newest member and Consulate Staff **Sawako Kojima** (below right). The Forum was moderated for the sixth year by Council Leader **Bob Kumaki.**



photos by Robert Kumaki

MEMBER NEWS



Megan Nakano (shown here talking with Consul General Tajima at Kanpai Chicago!) was honored on May 9 by Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, as he recognized the achievements of leaders in the AAPI community. Megan, Executive Director of the Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, was honored for her Outstanding Service in Business.



Trent is joined by Kirk Zeller, Council Leader for the U.S.-Japan Council.

May 8, 2023
Share



Kirk Zeller got a last-minute request in May to go on the show *Trent on the Loos* to talk about the *Preserving a Legacy: Japanese in Nebraska* exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum. “We talked most of the time about Father Kano, the only Japanese American in Nebraska to be put in the internment camps,” said Kirk. “His farm was near where I live.” The full interview can be seen at [BEK News - Ep 353-Kirk Zeller](#).



photos by Felix Lanier



The Japanese American Service Committee’s *Cranes & Cocktails* fundraiser on May 18 was a fun and resounding success, raising over \$100k for the second year in a row! Board President **Stacy Uchida** (middle left) gathered pledges through sheer exuberance. Other USJCers on the Board include **Marion Friebus-Flaman** and **Bob Kumaki**. CEO **Michael Takada** (top) said that having so many new people in attendance meant JASC was on the right track in maintaining relevance. (Many USJCers were in attendance at the event.)

MEMBER NEWS

by Joe Galligan

The 2023 JAACL Chicago Kansha Project took place June 8-11, with 10 Japanese Americans, ages 18-25, visiting the historic Little Tokyo neighborhood in Los Angeles and Manzanar National Historic Site for an immersive educational experience. I was one of the facilitators for the trip, and **Layla McDermott** was a participant. It was a privilege to be part of the Kansha Project Alumni Leadership Board and to be there to help shape the Kansha experience for this year's cohort. It was a special feeling to watch the group bond together and to see how everyone used their own creative talents in their culmination projects. I hope to help make sure that future generations have the opportunity to experience the Kansha Project in the coming years.

In Little Tokyo, the group visited the Japanese American National Museum, took a walking tour of the neighborhood, and attended lectures and workshops on topics of Japanese American history, multiracial identity, storytelling, and activism. While at Manzanar, the group received a tour from the wonderful staff at the National Parks Service and participated in a service project, helping with the restoration of Merritt Park, a Japanese garden that was built by the Japanese Americans who were incarcerated there. Each participant on this trip was tasked with completing their own creative project as a reflection on their experience.

Layla said, “Kansha was an absolutely incredible experience. I never learned about incarceration at school or from family, and the educational experience made a huge impact on me. Learning about the history of Little Tokyo, the Go for Broke initiative and the preservation efforts going on at Manzanar and Amache was the opportunity of a lifetime. I also appreciated the opportunity to connect with other Japanese Americans who were in college or just recently graduated, as we got to talk about what we would like to see as young people in the community back in Chicago.”

For those interested in learning more about the Kansha Project, or supporting the program, please visit the [JAACL Chicago website](#). The Kansha Project Alumni Leadership Board is currently hoping to raise \$15,000 for next year's trip, so please donate if you would like to show support!



Joe Galligan (the tall fellow in the black cap) and Layla McDermott (at left above) each garnered indelible life experiences during the Kansha Project.

Michael Takada was officially informed in May that he is a recipient of The Order of the Rising Sun with Gold and Silver Rays for the 2023 Spring Decoration, which is conferred by the Emperor of Japan. The award is given in recognition of Michael's service in the Japanese American community and for his outstanding contribution to the Japan-US relationship. Here he is with Consul General Tajima and Bob Kumaki at the Buddhist Temple of Chicago's Natsu Matsuri on July 9. *Congratulations!*



UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, August 5 – Chicago Japanese Community Picnic

Community-wide get-together with roasted pig, burgers, yaki soba and Japanese beer on tap at LaBagh Woods in Chicago. Karaoke, kid's games and more! Bring a dish to share at our potluck picnic buffet. Plenty of room to play, eat, drink, talk and enjoy! See pages 10-11 for more info and map. FREE!



Saturday, August 12 – BON Fest Chicago

The Japanese Art Foundation and Japanese Culture Center in partnership with the Chicago Park District, Shubukai, and Tsukasa Taiko invite you to BON Fest Chicago at the Garden of the Phoenix in Jackson Park, Chicago. Go to [BON Fest](#) for details. FREE!



Wednesday, August 16 – Toro Nagashi Lantern Ceremony

The Japanese Arts Foundation is proud to welcome you to the inaugural Toro Nagashi lantern ceremony, in Jackson Park's Garden of the Phoenix. We invite you to join us in this meaningful ceremony to process the loss of loved ones, and to strengthen our bonds as a community. Go to [Toro Nagashi](#) for details. FREE!



Saturday, August 19 – Japan Festival

The Japan Festival Chicago is an annual event that celebrates Japanese culture, cuisine, and art. It offers a day of immersive experiences where attendees can enjoy traditional and contemporary cultural arts. Go to [Japan Festival](#) for details and also see page 12. FREE!



Friday, August 25 – Japanese Horrorfest

Join Japanese Arts Foundation for a weekend celebrating Japanese horror full of spooky Suntory Highballs, gorey mochi donuts from our friends at Gaijin, visceral drag performances, horror film talks from experts, an unforgettable photo booth, and of course good times! Go to [Horror Fest](#) for details and to register.



Japanese Community Picnic

Saturday, August 5, 2023 – 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
LaBagh Woods Grove #1, Chicago (see map on back)

The entire **Chicago Japanese community** and **Friends** are invited to share in a day of games, food, sports, sunshine, good times and more food!

Bring a dish that's big enough for your family (plus a little more) and share with everyone at our community food table buffet.

We'll supply roast pig, hotdogs, hamburgers and other great eats. Grills, charcoal and limited beverages will be provided. **BYOB** allowed (beer, wine, etc.) – but no glass containers.



The non-stop fun begins at 11 a.m. and includes:

- games for kids and adults
- Karaoke (11 a.m. - 4 p.m.)
- horseback riding
- volleyball, softball and tug-of-war

This event is FREE!
Please join us and share in the fun!



Photos from 2022 picnic courtesy of Felix Lanier, Tohkon Judo Academy.

Organized by the member organizations of the Chicago Japanese American Council, Tohkon Judo Academy and community friends.

LaBagh Woods

Picnic Groves

LaBagh Woods Grove #1, Chicago

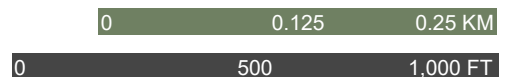
Entrance is on Cicero Ave. just north of Foster Ave. (circled in red below left). Go to [Google Maps](#) and type *LaBagh Woods* if you would like directions.

Grove has large parking lot and rest room building.



Picnic Grove

- Grove Number
- Capacity
- Parking Entrance
- Athletic Field
- Accessible Shelter*
- Picnic Shelter
- Paved Trail
- Unpaved Trail
- Comfort Station



REV 12/20

*Learn more about accessible picnic shelters at fpdcc.com/picnics



Japan Festival Chicago

Exposure to Japanese Culture, Cuisine & Art

Sat. August 19th
11:00am – 5:00pm

Chicago Cultural Center

78 E. Washington St., Chicago, IL 60602

Preston Bradley Hall: Exhibits

Claudia Cassidy Theater: Performance

Free Admission

Get a Taste of Japanese Culture



Alumni of Japan's Takarazuka Revue
Japanese all-female musical theatre troupe



Special Guests

Team Kawachiondo from LA
Japanese folk dance



Karate, Kendo, Cosplay,
Tea Ceremony, and more...
Please scan the QR code for
more details and schedule.

