

President's Message

By Karen Wheeler



Congratulations! We are half-way through 2024 and we have some excellent reasons to be grateful, to celebrate our accomplishments, and to look ahead to the rest of 2024. We have held another Bunka-Sai Festival. It was highly successful in raising funds, entertaining the community and sharing the creative output of vendors, cooks and artists as well. Heartfelt thanks to all who worked or contributed donations to make this event successful. Check out our photos in this Newsletter. We may have captured your smile! Mark your calendar now for next year's Bunka-Sai weekend — April 5-6, 2025.

We are preparing to host eight students from Kashiwa this August. Congratulations to them, and to everyone who will have the privilege of meeting and hosting them. If you would like to be a host family, the Application is here in the Newsletter. Our July Newsletter will feature details of some of their planned activities that our members can join by purchasing tickets, including the Dodger Game, a sunset sail on a tall ship, and even the circus! There will also be our annual Chili Cook-off and Square Dance, and the perennially poignant Sayonara Banquet, where we bid our new friends adieu.

Congratulations to our student ambassadors, who are already mastering certain skills to prepare them to visit

Kashiwa in July. They cover things like handling the humidity, exchanging business cards, learning Torrance facts and history, and making an introductory speech in Japanese.

As we have reached the end of another school year, we are happy to report that many of our alumni of the student exchange program are now graduating from high school and college. Congratulations! Of course we select students who are exemplary people, and they are the authors of their own stories, but we may also pat ourselves on the back, just a little bit, for the role TSCA has played in helping our alumni forge their future. So take a moment to look at the graduation photos in this Newsletter, with pride and satisfaction. Congratulations!

continued on page 2 >>>

If you haven't paid your 2024 membership dues yet, it's not too late! See the Membership form in this newsletter or pay online at https://torrancesistercity.org/membership_join.html
Thank you for your support!

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JUNE 10, 2024

Association Meeting (7 pm)
West Annex commission room

JULY 8, 2024

Association Meeting (7 pm)
Katy Geissert Library meeting room

JULY 9, 2024

Torrance delegation leaves for Kashiwa

August 5, 2024

Kashiwa delegation arrives in Torrance

August 5, 2024

Welcome Potluck Dinner (5:30 pm)
George Nakano Theater

August 21, 2024

Sayonara banquet; 5:30 pm. Toyota Meeting Hall.

*****Reminder: There is NO August Association Meeting*****

Torrance Sister City Association

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Karen Wheeler

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Werner Willoughby

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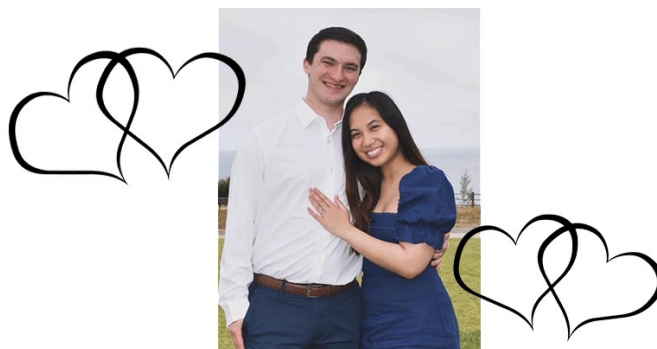
Please send an email to
tscanewsletter@gmail.com

And now, a special nod of gratitude to the volunteers whose leadership ensured the success of Bunka-Sai 2024:

2024 BUNKA-SAI Chairs

- BBQ - Bryce Yamauchi
- Yakisoba – Mariko Namimoto and Sumi Ueki
- Spam Musubi - Reiko Higa
- Curry and Rice – Felipe Segovia
- Cotton Candy - Franco Lee
- Coffee, Snacks – Shirley Tanaka
- Dango - Stephanie Ewing-Warner and Butch Ihde
- Health Dept - Werner Willoughby
- Shave Ice - Ed and Joan Shiosaki
- Canopies - Bryce Yamauchi
- Anime - Lori Eurich and Deanna Diederich
- Gift Booth - Karen Wheeler
- Publicity - Stephanie Ewing-Warner and Aime Campbell
- Program Ads - Deanna Diederich
- Donations - Shirley Tanaka
- Stage Performers - Aileen Willoughby
- Cultural Exhibits/Demonstrations - Aileen Willoughby
- Sound - David Gelbaum
- Silent Auction – Alina Nadsady
- Flags- Donna Dunlap
- Program/Fliers - Werner Willoughby and Donna Dunlap
- Vendors - John Ito
- Financial – Stephanie Ewing-Warner
- Signage/Decorations: Mallory Beard
- Kamishibai - Lori Eurich
- Supply Shopper- Brian Diederich
- Set up/Clean up- Steven Ihde, Werner Willoughby, Butch Ihde, John Ito
- Supplies/Equipment/Storage Earl Evans, Butch Ihde, Steven Ihde

✧ . ° : * ✧ . ° : *



Former exchange student James Peck just became engaged to Nicole Viray. He is an LAPD officer and volunteers faithfully at Bunka-Sai.

HOST FAMILIES NEEDED FOR 2025! See Page 6



ConGRADulations



Kyle Nishimura
Graduated from USC with his Doctorate of Occupational Therapy. His parents, Terri and Scott join him.

John-Milo Ernst
2024 Ambassador
I will be going to UC Berkeley and majoring in Chemical Engineering.



Jasmine Villarie
2023 Ambassador
Planning on going to UC San Diego to study Structural Engineering.



Hannah Nakamoto
2017 Ambassador
Earned a Bachelor's degree in Recreational Therapy from Brigham Young University, and will be attending San Jose State University for an Occupational Therapy degree in the fall.



Victoria Arreygue
Ambassador 2023
My plans for after high school are to attend Cal State Long Beach and major in Art.



Stephanie Mikamo
English Teacher 2014-17
Former Ichikashi English teacher earned a M.S. Education Counseling with a PPS Credential from University of La Verne

KASHIWA CONNECTIONS



My brother was a Kashiwa Delegate, and we were a Host Family three times. On my first visit to Kashiwa in April, our friends immediately made me feel like I knew them my whole life and was a part of their family. As a math teacher, my Principal-led tour of the Junior High was unforgettable!

Arigato,
Mike, Brother of Thomas Seraydarian, 2012 Ambassador

Fireflies are One of the Charms of Summer in Japan

Hisataka Takikawa, former chair of Torrance Committee/KIRA

Have you ever seen fireflies? They are beloved for their enchanting glow and are often associated with summertime and romantic evenings. Fireflies are the luminous insects living widely in Japan, especially in southern Honshu. They are commonly found in wooded areas, near clean water sources such as streams, rivers, and ponds. The appearance of adult fireflies tells the arrival of early summer, and Japanese people have been adoring the insects for many centuries, considering them as one of the charms of summer in Japan.

Firefly larvae live in clean running water. In Kashiwa, they have been bred in the wetlands next to Nakahara Elementary School, which is in my neighborhood. We can see fireflies emitting their lights. Torrance students used to enjoy watching those fireflies as part of the exchange program activities. The photos show the 2018 students, who enjoyed the fireflies flying in the dark sky at Nakahara, the southern part of Kashiwa. Mr. Ryuji Niwa, a member of Torrance Committee, has been taking care of the fireflies with his relatives for many years. He is the father of Mizuki Niwa, a 2015 Kashiwa student, and I was his adult leader then.

I feel sorry that recently we are unable to give the Torrance students a chance to watch fireflies flying with light because early July is too late for the viewing. However, some restaurants in Kashiwa offer the opportunity to enjoy dinner while viewing the mesmerizing spectacle of fireflies.

It is a pity that the firefly population in Japan has been declining due to habitat loss, pollution, and artificial light. Efforts are being made to conserve firefly habitats and to raise awareness about the importance of preserving these magical insects for future generations to enjoy.



2018 Torrance Students



Fireflies emit light from their lower abdomens



Many fireflies fly around in the dark



Host families joined the firefly viewing



Expand Your Cultural Horizons

Host a student from Kashiwa, Japan, for 1 week in August

August 5-13 or August 15-22, 2024

Share our American Culture with a student from Kashiwa for the experience of a lifetime!



"We really enjoyed hosting Miwa in our home. We still keep in touch with postcards and social media, and hope to visit her in Japan in the future." The Arreygue Family

"I couldn't have been more grateful for this program. We continue to keep in contact with Miwa as we have gained a family member in the process." The Chen-Ingram Family

The students stay with two host families during their 18-day stay in Torrance. All daytime activities are planned and hosted by the Torrance Sister City Association (TSCA). Host families are responsible for transporting their students to and from the West Annex at City Hall each morning and late afternoon. Some weeknight activities are planned and host families are welcome to join the fun! At all other times, the host families will arrange their own activities and meals with their exchange student in accordance with TSCA guidelines. Each host family will have one weekend to plan their own activities. Kashiwa students are able to communicate in English.

A host family orientation will be held on July 23, 2024.

QUESTIONS? Please contact Torrancesistercityinfo@gmail.com



TORRANCE SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION

HOST FAMILY INTEREST FORM

All first-time applicants will be screened by TSCA



Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Email _____ Emergency/Daytime Phone _____

We would prefer to host a Boy _____ Girl _____ Either _____

We would prefer to host a student from Aug 5-13 _____ Aug 15-22 _____ Either Week _____ Both Weeks _____

Number in Household _____ List pets, if any _____

Name of Adults _____ Occupation _____

_____ Occupation _____

Children _____ M/F Age _____ M/F Age _____

Children _____ M/F Age _____ M/F Age _____

Others _____

Our family has participated in these TSCA activities: Bunka-Sai ___ Student Exchange Program ___ Host family program ___ Other ___

Please mail form to Torrance Sister City Association, Attn: Host Family Program, 3031 Torrance Blvd. Torrance, CA 90503

English Teacher Report

By Chris Pigao

A Quick Stop to the Philippines



In the Spring of 2018, I finished my undergrad studies a semester early. During that time, I figured that it would be the best time to visit my family in the Philippines whom I hadn't seen in almost a decade at that point. It would also be the first time ever going to Japan, planning a week visit after visiting my family. Before my departure to Japan, I promised my family that I would visit once again "if I get a job teaching English in Japan." Sure enough, that goal came true and I fulfilled my promise. If you don't mind me straying away from my daily observations of life in Japan, I'd like to share my story visiting my motherland of the Philippines this past February.

Living near Kashiwa station, I learned how to get to Narita Airport using the local train lines. It's convenient and saves me a few yen or two to head to the airport. The flight to the Philippines is relatively short, clocking-in at around 3 1/2 to 4 hours. It's usually a quick trip; filled with vacationers who just visited Japan or OFW (Overseas Filipino Workers) coming back home for a while. Every time I land at MNL airport, I always make my way to Philippines' most famous food chain - Jollibee. As I await my family to pick me up, I indulge myself with Jolli-Spaghetti and ChickenJoy. Stepping outside of the airport for a quick minute, I was greeted with 25 degree Celsius weather - basking in the tropical weather that Japan does not have during winter. I met up with my Auntie Fe, who had just arrived from Toronto after a 15 hour flight. We spent the evening in Manila, sightseeing and going to the SM Mall of Asia - one of the largest malls in the world.

Now typically, our trip back to our family's hometown usually takes another 2 hours or so, an hour transfer flight to the nearest local airport and then another hour of driving through the roadways. We woke up early for our flight and headed to Batac in Illocos Norte, where my 1st degree cousins live. My cousin, Maria Sanaita, was having her wedding ceremony a few days after our arrival. My cousins and I would spend our childhood playing together in the ricefield, and now we all shared a collective laugh when we realized that we're "adulthood" now. It was such a sight to see my cousins succeeding in their respective careers in Law, Medicine, and myself continuing the family tradition of Education. I even met my new niece Liera, joking with her parents that "[I] didn't know that you two were expecting?!?"

With the weather so nice and the familiar vibes rekindled with my family, it set the stage for a wonderful wedding. My cousin had such a beautiful ceremony, with everyone in tears watching the couple walk down the aisle. My mother, who was back in Torrance at the time, felt a little less FOMO (fear of missing out) when I facetedimed her during the wedding ceremony. Everyone had such a wonderful time - spending the reception, indulging in the finest Filipino delicacies, and dancing the night away. Likewise, I was told that I was going to give a speech a couple days prior. I wrote a quick speech, acting as the international representative of the family. I echoed the sentiment "On behalf of all the family members from all parts of the world, congratulations to the newlyweds Jayson and Sanaita. We love you." Maybe working in the International Department and giving speeches worked in my favor after all.

After the wedding was done, I still had a few days left. Since most of my family were still in town and on vacation, my cousins also decided to throw a "dedication" party for my niece a couple days after. I spent the last days in Illocos Norte on the beach, watching the sunset with my cousins. Not knowing when the next big event

English Teacher Report (CONTINUED)



is, I stood there basking in that moment and philosophically thinking “this moment is all that matters. It will live forever.”

I boarded my connecting flight to Manila and spent the night there again. I said one last “see you later” to my cousin, Jesus, who I shared the most laughs with this whole trip. He kindly accompanied me to Manila. As I reflected at my terminal gate, I felt that melancholic tendency that I used to feel whenever I left the Philippines as a child: not knowing the next time I would be back; being sad that I won't see my cousin in-person; storing the new memories made inside my head (and now written in my journal because I'm getting forgetful these days). Alas, I'm much older now, and ready to face whatever comes next.

As of recently, I've seen a lot of Nisei & Sansei Japanese-Americans speak about living in Japan to experience their cultural roots firsthand. Important activities like homestays and family visits, these are important to help cultivate and understand a person's heritage. That way, you can share that knowledge and create mutual understandings of each other. In my case, following my goal to move to Japan came with that incentive - being closer to the motherland and rekindling my understanding of my heritage.

One last note, I would like to thank my cousins Maria Sanaita & Jayson (congratulations on the marriage); Jesus (for all the laughs, driving us around, and being our family's #1 chief); Auntie Fe & Maria Len (for booking my flights, thank you for always being our “Manang” or Older Sister / Oneechan); Aileen & Jonas!, & the Cadelina family. I apologize if I miss any other family members - we have a very big family. Until next time, “**Ingat!**”

Bunka-Sai 2024





Thank You!

We gratefully acknowledge the donors whose generosity contributed to the success of our Bunka-Sai Festival

Business donors:

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Center for Health and Fitness
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Giuliano's Delicatessen
Griego Hair Salon
Hollywood Wax Museum
Honey Baked Ham
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Mimi's Cafe
Mishima Foods USA
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North Italia
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Santa Ana Zoo
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South Bay Judo
South Coast Botanic Garden
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Members
Total Wine and More
Trader Joe's
Truxton's American Bistro
Villa Hermosa Plant Shop
Yamada Company Inc. (Gardena Store)
Yonamine Pearls
3D Crafts & Shadow Box

Individual members and donors:

*We appreciate all of your
generosity in donations.
Please watch for a list of
appreciation in our upcoming
July newsletter.*

Farewell to Mike Griffiths



Former president Werner Willoughby expressed sincere appreciation to Mike on behalf of the Association



TSCA members celebrated the retirement of Councilman Mike Griffiths on April 17 at the Toyota Meeting Hall where he was presented with a special recognition award for his support as liaison to TSCA from the council.



Anime Contest 2024 Winners



Anastasia

High School: First place (hand drawn)



Angelina

High School: First place (digital)



Elena

Middle School: First place (hand drawn)



Koharu

Middle School: First place (digital)

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS

2 - SUPPORTING(\$75+)

Lee, Jacquie
Seraydarian Family, Mark

10 - FAMILY (\$40)

Bissiri Family, David
Gerson, Jeremy, Jennifer, Aurora
and William
Inouye Family, Craig
Kalani Family, Sharon
Matsubara Family, Kathi
Nowatka, Helen and Paul
Rappoport Family, Eve

Shields, Perry and Cindy

Sprague, Brian and Tracy
Takahashi Family, Riva

7 - INDIVIDUAL (\$20)

Campbell, Amie
Laidoner, Gail
Lewis, Bridgett
Penick, Tiffany (Calhoun)
Richardson, Mark
Sheikh, Asam
Tsurukame, Akira

DONATIONS

\$100.00 Kircher, Ellen
\$10.00 Nowatka, Helen and Paul
\$10.00 Rappoport Family, Eve
\$10.00 Richardson, Mark

Except for the Lifetime Membership*
all dues are in effect from
January 1 to
December 31

Member Information

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ Email Address _____

My membership is: New Renewal

TSCA Directory Update:

New Address New Telephone Number New Email Address

I do not want to be listed in the TSCA Directory

TSCA Activities:

I am interested in participating in TSCA activities

Mail your check and this form to:

Torrance Sister City Association
c/o Community Services Department
3031 Torrance Blvd.
Torrance, CA 90503

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Supporting	\$75+
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor	\$125+
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$200+
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Membership*	\$2,000+

Enclosed is a donation to
TSCA (in addition to
annual dues) \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make your check payable to TSCA

TSCA meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, except in August and December, at the Civic center West Annex Commission from 7:00 p.m.
TorranceSisterCity.org

If you have any questions about your membership, please email Alyssa Yamauchi at tscamembership@gmail.com

www.torrancesistercity.org



Torrance Sister City Association

3031 Torrance Boulevard
Torrance, CA 90503