

## President's Message

By Karen Wheeler



Hello friends, and Happy Spring! In Torrance, the birds are waking us up every morning. They always seem to have something to sing about, and here at the Torrance Sister City Association, so do we!

We are happy to introduce the 2025 Kashiwa International Relations Association (KIRA) Student Ambassadors, and their adult leader. We look forward to meeting them in person this summer.



Back, L-R. Tomoro Ihara, Masaki Yamamoto, Kotaro Kimachi, Eita Masuda, Taiki Yoshioka  
Front, L-R. Sara Gonohe, Kanna Ota, Kayoko Yamazawa, Leah Shimura

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## President's Message, con't

Some well-deserved recognition was recently given to our own Werner Willoughby, past TSCA president and longtime organizer of the Bunka-Sai Festival. Mayor Chen and the City of Torrance Commission on Aging presented him with the 2025 Older American Award, in a ceremony at the May 5, 2025 City Council Meeting.



Werner Willoughby with his wife Aileen and Mayor Chen.



Werner Willoughby with TSCA supporters

Our Bunka-Sai Festival in April was successful in meeting our fundraising goals and offering exceptional food, entertainment, shopping and fun. Profuse thanks to all who volunteered, donated, and attended the festival. Check out the photos on pages 7 and 8 of this Newsletter. Also, be sure to admire the art created by this year's Anime Contest Winners, on page 9.

We have selected our next High School English Teacher who will begin a two-to-three-year position in Kashiwa in August. Yuko Wilson will be succeeding Pedro Abina, who will have completed two years of teaching. Teacher Chris Pigao will remain one more year and will help Yuko get situated in her new role. For more about Yuko, see page 4.



Torrance City Council Member Jon Kaji returned from a visit to Kashiwa with a special delivery to TSCA. KIRA-Torrance Committee, and the Kashiwa Lions Club, collected donations from kind individuals to help victims of the Los Angeles fires of January 2025. We will be forwarding these funds to Habitat for Humanity and the Pasadena Humane Society, both of which have on-going programs aimed at helping residents of Altadena, one of the areas most affected by the fires.

Please look through the rest of this Newsletter to see the new office holders of KIRA-Torrance Committee. The English Teacher report, Calendar of Events, and Membership updates also await your attention. Enjoy!

# Calendar of Events

## MAY 2025

### May 20

Monthly Association Meeting  
7-9 pm West Annex  
Commission Room

## JUNE 2025

### June 17 Monthly Association Meeting

7-9 pm West Annex  
Commission Room

## JULY 2025

### July 8 – 29

Student Ambassadors in  
Kashiwa

### July 15 Monthly Association Meeting

7-9 pm West Annex  
Commission Room

## AUGUST 2025

### August 4 Kashiwa Delegation arrives and

Welcome Potluck  
5:30 pm George Nakano  
Theater

### August 7 Square Dance

5:30 pm, Riviera United  
Methodist Church, 375 Palos  
Verde Blvd., Redondo Beach  
*Please note change in venue!*

### August 20 Sayonara Banquet

5:30 pm Toyota Meeting Hall

### August 21 Kashiwa Delegation

Returns to Japan

# New and Renewed Members and Donations

Compiled by Alyssa Yamauchi, Membership Chair

### 1 - BENEFACTOR (\$125+)

Kircher, Ellen

### 1 - SUPPORTING (\$75+)

Murphy, Carrie

### 3 - FAMILY (\$40)

Ghuman, Mandeep and Navdip Gill  
Lee, Leon and Wei-Ti Chen  
Segovia, Felipe and Rosa De La Cruz

### 3 - INDIVIDUAL (\$20)

Campbell, Amie  
Wang, Andrew  
Wilson, Yuko

### **DONATIONS:**

\$60 Lee, Wei-Ti Chen and Leon

In the spirit of Kashiwa's generosity toward victims of the LA fires, individual TSCA members and friends who would like to contribute a donation, as a Sister City effort with Kashiwa, you can! Please choose one of the following—

### **1. San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity, Re-Build LA**

[Rebuilding homes in Eaton Fire area.]

<https://sgvhabitat.charityproud.org/Donate/Index/35596>

Credit card donations accepted. In the field indicating "in Honor of" write KIRA/TSCA.

### **2. Pasadena Humane**

[Helping pets and pet owners affected by the Eaton Fire.]

<https://give.pasadenahumane.org/give/260105/#!/donation>

Credit card donation. In the field asking, "would you like to donate to a specific fundraiser or team?" Put "Save LA Wildfire Pets". Check the box indicating you would like to donate in honor of, or in memory of someone. Then, indicate that you are doing this in honor of the KIRA/TSCA

### **3. Pasadena Buddhist Temple**

[Repairing temple damaged by smoke in Eaton Fire.]

See the QR code at the website.

<https://www.pasadenabuddhisttemple.org/eaton-fire-info.html>

## New English Teacher Selected: Meet Yuko Wilson!

The English Teacher Selection Committee is pleased to announce the selection of Yuko Wilson as the next English teacher at Ichikashi (Kashiwa Municipal High School) to replace Pedro Abina leaving at the end of July. Yuko is a former student TSCA student ambassador and will receive her master's degree from UCLA in June. She also earned her B.S. at UCLA. Yuko is fluent in Japanese which will be a great asset to her teaching. Yuko will begin her new position in August and we are confident that she'll be a terrific addition to the English department. She looks forward to working with Chris Pigao our other English teacher at Ichikashi who will stay on for one additional year.

Special thanks to the English teacher selection committee members: Karen Wheeler, Stephanie Ewing Warner, Alyssa Yamauchi, Werner Willoughby, and Mark Roulette for their expertise and support in the selection process.

Lori Chong Eurich, Chair  
English Teacher Selection Committee



Yuko Wilson

Hello everyone,

My name is Yuko Wilson, I am very appreciative of this opportunity and would like to thank all of the TSCA and KIRA members that have supported me in this process. As a high schooler, I had the opportunity to join TSCA's 2019 student delegation and toured Ichikashi High School in Kashiwa. I have fond memories of the community in Kashiwa, and it feels surreal to return as a teacher this time.

I am currently a graduate student completing my Master in Social Welfare at UCLA. I was a school social worker at a TK-8th grade school in Inglewood, which fostered an interest in education and working with students. Additionally, I hold a leadership position in a Japanese Christian organization, which has grown my passion for working with youth from a Japanese cultural background. I most recently visited Japan for a study abroad program at International Christian University in Mitaka, which confirmed my decision to pursue a teaching position in Japan.

I am excited to meet the community in Kashiwa, and I look forward to supporting the students in having a positive and intercultural educational experience!

## An Essay by Pedro Abina, English Teacher in Kashiwa

When people think of Japan, they often imagine order, precision, and harmony—neat streets, punctual trains, and, of course, the iconic school uniforms. But beneath that carefully pressed blazer and regulation skirt lie something far more personal. Even though uniforms are standardized, Japanese students find quiet, creative ways to express their individuality through small, intentional changes. And for me, as an ALT navigating the challenges of language and cultural barriers, noticing these subtle differences became a key to connection.

In my early days here, I'll admit—I overestimated my ability to communicate. Being an ALT sometimes feels like a person with noise cancelling headphones trying to communicate to a person with tape over their mouth and vice versa. Simple ideas can get through, but more complex thoughts, emotions, and relationships often felt out of reach. I struggled to connect not just with students, but with teachers too.

But then, I began to notice the small things: a student wearing a bright red undershirt under their uniform. Another rolling their skirt just a bit higher than the rest. Some boys tailored their pants to fall differently or wore looser cardigans than what was technically allowed. Hairpins, earrings (sometimes hidden), the type of bag charm they carried—each of these deviations from the standard uniform wasn't random. They were declarations. When everyone wears the same base, even the smallest variation becomes meaningful. I realized these weren't just style choices. They were clues—expressions of identity, hints about interests, moods, or friendships.

As I paid attention to these details, students noticed me noticing. And that opened the door. "Nice socks." "Cool pin." "Is that your favorite band?" Suddenly we were talking—not always in perfect English or Japanese, but it didn't matter. Finding common ground in those tiny acts of self-expression took the pressure off. Communication stopped being a test and started becoming natural.

Now, the students who were first years when I arrived in 2023 are entering their final year. Watching them grow—not only in language, but in confidence and individuality—has been incredible. Their English has improved. My Japanese has too. But more importantly, we've learned how to meet each other halfway—not just through grammar and vocabulary, but through shared moments, small talk, fashion choices, and laughter.

In a culture that often emphasizes the group over the individual, these micro styling choices may seem small—but they hold big meaning. The uniform isn't just a symbol of order; it's also a canvas. And through those tiny changes, students show us who they really are.

**And now, a special nod of gratitude to the following volunteers  
whose leadership ensured the success of Bunka-Sai 2025!**

**2025 BUNKA-SAI Chairs**

BBQ - Bryce Yamauchi

Yakisoba – Mariko Namimoto and Mandeep Ghuman

Spam Musubi - Reiko Higa

Curry and Rice – Felipe Segovia

Cotton Candy - Leon Lee

Coffee and Snacks – Y's Men Club

Dango - Stephanie Ewing-Warner and Butch Ihde

Health Dept - Karen Wheeler and Greg Nadsady

Shave Ice - South Bay Judo Club (Ed and Joan Shiosaki)

Canopies - Bryce Yamauchi

Anime Contest - Lori Eurich and Deanna Diederich

Gift Booth - Karen Wheeler

Kamishibai - Lori Eurich

Publicity - Alyssa Yamauchi, Lori Eurich and Aileen Willoughby

Program Ads - Deanna Diederich

Donations - Alina Nadsady

Finance – Stephanie Ewing-Warner

Stage Performers - Aileen Willoughby

Cultural Exhibits/Demonstrations - Aileen Willoughby

Social Media - Amie Campbell

Sound - David Gelbaum

Silent Auction – Alina Nadsady

Flags - Donna Dunlap

Program/Fliers - Karen Wheeler

Vendors - John Ito

Volunteer Coordinator - Elisa Reynolds

Signage/Decorations - Clay Bakhoun

Supply Shopper - Brian Diederich

Set up/Clean up - Steven Ihde, Werner Willoughby, Butch Ihde, John Ito

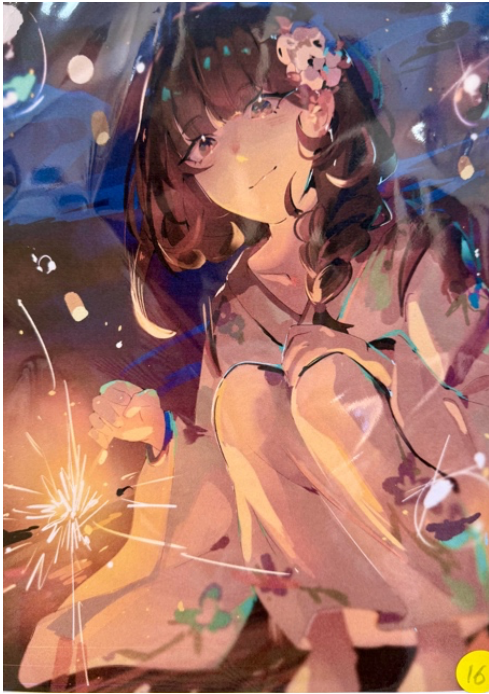


# BUNKA-SAI 2025





# ANIME CONTEST WINNERS 2025



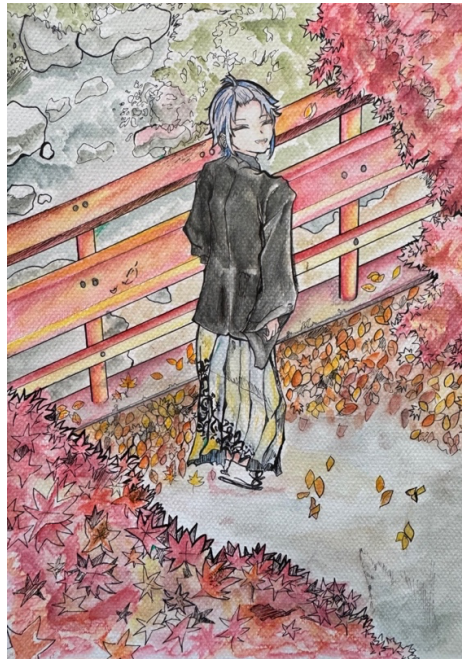
1st place  
High School - Digital Art  
Angelina S. (West HS)



1st place  
Middle School – Digital Art  
May U. (Calle Mayor)



1st place  
Middle School Hand Drawn  
Mayo N. (Jefferson Middle School)



1st Place  
High School Hand Drawn  
Azusa M. (Torrance HS)

----- Cut and return the below with your check payment. -----

## 2025 TSCA Membership Application Form

Mail your check and this form to: Torrance Sister City Association, c/o Community Services Dept, 3031 Torrance Blvd., Torrance, CA 90503



**TORRANCE  
SISTER CITY  
ASSOCIATION**

3031 Torrance Boulevard • Torrance, California 90503

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

- ☐ \$20 Individual    ☐ \$40 Family    ☐ \$75+ Supporting    ☐ \$125+ Benefactor  
☐ \$200+ Corporate    ☐ \$2,000+ Lifetime Membership\*

Donation to TSCA (in addition to annual dues): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I am Interested in TSCA activities, specifically: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ For the TSCA Directory, only include my: \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Enclosed: \$** \_\_\_\_\_

### Member Information

*Please complete your contact information directly below and to the right.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Contact Info

*\*\*TSCA Newsletters are sent to all members via email.*

Email\*\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have questions about membership, please send an email to: [tscamembership@gmail.com](mailto:tscamembership@gmail.com)



Torrance Sister City  
Association  
3031 Torrance Boulevard  
Torrance, CA 90503

