

## President's Message

By Karen Wheeler



Dear Friends:

It is time to stretch a hand way up, bend our arm down and back, and give ourselves a solid pat on the back! A "pat on the back" is one customary way Americans give credit to those who have earned it. August is over. The Kashiwa Student Ambassadors have come to Torrance, enjoyed their visit, won us over as lifelong friends, and safely travelled home again. Congratulations and big pats on the back are owed to our August Activities Committee, and everyone in TSCA who worked to make this happen. Check out the great photos on pages 7,8,9 and 10.

Another noteworthy event in August was a visit to Torrance by a Japanese youth baseball team, coached by none other than the father of Shohei Ohtani. See the article by TSCA member Akira Tsurukame on page 5.

Our Monthly Association meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, at 7 pm in the West Annex of City Hall. They are open to our entire membership, and all are welcome. If you attend the September meeting, you will be in for a treat. The Torrance Student Ambassadors of 2025 will be presenting their reports of their trip. Each report has a focus as unique as its presenter. They are informative, entertaining, and occasionally funny.

In October and November, it is the season of annual elections for openings on the Board of Directors, and election of Executive Board Members. Members will receive ballots by mail in a few weeks, thanks to our Recruitment Chair, Bryce Yamauchi.

In partnership with the Katy Geissert Library, we are offering a reading of Kamishibai to the public twice during the Fall, September 20, and October 4. You may have seen this traditional literary form at our Bunka Sai Festival — a small wooden stage displaying illustrations, and two narrators telling the story that the images depict, in both English and Japanese. Check out our Calendar of Events for details, and the flier on page 11. We hope to see you there.

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# Calendar of Events

## Sept and Oct

### SEPTEMBER 2025

#### **September 16**

Monthly Association Meeting  
7-9pm, West Annex Commission Rm

#### **September 20**

Kamishibai: Japanese Paper Theater  
10am, Katy Geissert Civic Center Library

### OCTOBER 2025

#### **October 4**

Kamishibai: Japanese Paper Theater  
10am, Katy Geissert Civic Center Library

#### **October 21**

Monthly Association Meeting  
7-9pm, West Annex Commission Rm

### President's Message, con't

The English Teacher Selection Committee is again on the hunt for someone who would like to teach English to high school students in Kashiwa, Japan. This would fill the opening when teacher Chris Pigao steps down in August 2026. Please see the TSCA website for all the details. Our newest teacher Yuko Wilson has just started her term. She and Chris have provided a report, on page 4. We wish her a great academic year ahead.

The Adult Leader Selection Committee will be searching for a leader who will be ready to take our Delegation of Torrance Student Ambassadors to Kashiwa in July 2026. This is an amazing opportunity to not only see Japan, but to witness young people experience a life-changing journey as they meet people, learn about Japanese culture, and grow in confidence and maturity. The flyer you need to refer to for details available on the TSCA website.

The Student Selection Committee is also gearing up to accept applications from Torrance Residents, grades 10-12, who would like to become Student Ambassadors for 2026. This is not a summer vacation to Japan. Ambassadors are a team of up to eight members who will be prepared in advance to represent Torrance in Kashiwa, as well as welcome Kashiwa's student ambassadors when they visit Torrance in August. The flyer you need is on the TSCA website – applications are due on November 17.

Keep on reading! You will find other items of note in the ConGRADulations section, as well as membership news, the Calendar of Events, etc. After all that, feel free to give yourself one more pat on the back. You deserve it, for your ongoing interest and involvement in TSCA. Thank you!

## Torrance Sister City Association

### **PRESIDENT**

Karen Wheeler

### **VICE PRESIDENT**

Alyssa Yamauchi

### **SECRETARY**

Aimee Arreygue

### **TREASURER**

Stephanie Ewing-Warner

### *Newsletter Editor*

Eve Rappoport

### **Comments or submissions?**

Please send an email to  
[tscanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:tscanewsletter@gmail.com)

## New and Renewed Members

Compiled by Alyssa Yamauchi, Membership Chair

### **2 - INDIVIDUAL (\$20)**

Miyashita, Judy

Yazzie, Chihiro

# ConGRADulations to TSCA Alumni, David Gelbaum!

## by Aileen Willoughby

In August 2025, we heard exciting news from David Gelbaum, TSCA 1993 Torrance student delegate and 2014 adult leader. He achieved his Masters in Music Education from American Band College of Central Washington University, a program he began three years ago. While attaining a graduate degree is an accomplishment in itself, David pursued this intensive program at age 50, in his 28th year as a music teacher, and while teaching full-time. He sat alongside many of his 185 teaching colleagues in the program who were considerably younger than he was and who had just a few years of teaching experience. His program required two projects each year—one research project and one project with direct applications in his classroom lessons. Though work was grueling at times, he appreciated the professional musicians and composers who offered great insight and information in the clinics that were offered in the program.

As he reflected on how his TSCA experiences have impacted him, he gave one example of a student band exchange he arranged with a Master's program colleague's Northern California middle school students and his own music students at Jefferson Middle School (Torrance Unified Schools). He felt he would not have even considered an idea so broad and embracing had it not been for the cultural growth he experienced as a student delegate and adult leader. David still connects with many of the student delegates that were part of his 2014 group. A special shout-out to one of his 2014 student delegates, James Peck, who comes to Bunka-Sai each year to volunteer, even riding the train from his San Diego college to help out for the event.

Back in 1993 when David was a young high school TSCA student delegate, he recalled that there were three host families instead of the current two. He fondly remembers the Kashiwa adults arranging a special opportunity for him to play a tuba (he is a very talented multi-instrumentalist) with the Kashiwa Municipal High School Band. He has kept in touch with many of his Kashiwa friends and families, and one even attended his wedding. What advice does he have for future student delegates? They will be given royal treatment and feel like kings and queens. Since his participation in the TSCA student exchange program was immensely valuable to him, he continues to give back to TSCA through his continuing involvement and volunteerism. His positive experiences even encouraged his mother, Ilene Gelbaum, to become an Adult Leader in 1997.

So how does David still help out? If you have seen the stage performances at Bunka-Sai, David is the one who sits hidden behind the curtain on the stage, managing the sound for the stage programs—truly, an unsung HERO. Since his time as an adult leader, he has helped TSCA manage its sound equipment, even building up its inventory through the years. Now his son, Dylan, enjoys sitting with his dad and helping out with the Bunka-Sai sound system.

So, for those past student delegates, their parents, former adult leaders, and former Kashiwa teachers, there is a need for volunteers to sustain our organization—one of the best sister city programs in the nation—for another fifty years, and there is a golden opportunity to give back to TSCA. Please volunteer at Bunka-Sai and other events or consider a TSCA board position. Our most recent English teacher in Kashiwa, Yuko Wilson, is just now settling into her apartment in Kashiwa. She was a former Torrance student delegate in 2019 and will begin an exciting year as a TSCA English teacher in Kashiwa.

Omedetou gozaimasu, David!



1993 - Kashiwa Odori



2025 - David with Dad Mark Gelbaum



David with his tuba and program

# ALUMNI NEWS



Best wishes to **Jeremy Gray** (student delegate, 2017) as he begins his medical school journey at Nova Southeastern University's Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine (MD Program) in Florida. This

4-year curriculum kicked off with a White Coat Ceremony in August, where each student was presented with a white coat, signifying the start of medical school. Students also recited the modern Hippocratic Oath, which are promises to uphold medical principles, practice without discrimination, respect patient autonomy, share knowledge, and use medical knowledge ethically.

*Wishing Jeremy all the best!*

## TSCA's New English Teacher Heads to Kashiwa by Alyssa Yamauchi Photos by Lori Chong Eurich

At the Welcome Reception and Potluck Dinner for the Kashiwa Delegation on August 4, Torrance Sister City Association (TSCA)'s new English teacher—and former 2019 TSCA Student Ambassador—Yuko Wilson met her future co-worker and fellow English teacher, Chris Pigao, for the first time in person. Chris, who was home for a short break, has since returned to Kashiwa, where they and Yuko will teach side by side at Kashiwa Municipal High School (Ichikashi).

Yuko departed on August 19 to begin her new role as one of two Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) at Ichikashi. Upon arrival in Japan, she was welcomed at Narita International Airport (NRT) by Chris, now entering their fourth and final year in the position. They will serve as her mentor—offering support, guidance, and a familiar face as she settles into her new home and school.

We wish Yuko, who is fluent in Japanese, all the best as she embarks on this exciting new chapter — *ganbatte!* (Good luck / Do your best!).





## Children Learning Life Through Baseball – Like Father, Like Son

**By Akira Tsurukame**, a longtime and valuable TSCA member who has contributed his expertise as a professional travel agent and as a volunteer interpreter for many Kashiwa and Torrance mayors, beginning with Former Mayor Ken Miller.

It is baseball season, and whether played or watched, the sport brings great excitement and joy. On August 5, the City of Torrance welcomed 20 players of the Japanese baseball team *Kanegasaki Little Seniors* of Ōshū City (Iwate Prefecture) —Torrance's Friendship City partner since last October 2024. This three-day youth baseball friendship tournament was co-organized by the City and the local Torrance youth team, *310 Baseball*. The goodwill matches between the young athletes of the two cities took place on August 8 at North Torrance High School, August 9 at Kendall Field, and August 10 at South Torrance High School.

In Japan, the Ōshū community hoped their young athletes would not only compete with Torrance's youth but also build friendships and mutual respect. To make the 10-day trip to the U.S. (August 5–14) possible, the city of Ōshū launched a crowdfunding campaign supported by citizens and local businesses. While in Torrance, a combined effort of City officials, the *310 Baseball team*, Torrance Unified School District, Torrance Chamber of Commerce, and many residents helped organize the free games and host the Japanese players in homestays.

The players from Ōshū were impressed by the Torrance players' athleticism, individual talent, and powerful hitting speed. Meanwhile, Torrance players were struck by the Japanese team's politeness and the respect they showed for their gloves and bats. The Kanegasaki Little Seniors' motto is, "*Give It Your All, Every Moment.*" From the very first game, they showed that spirit—playing with full effort until the last out. Even when leading by a wide margin in the final inning, the Japanese players defended fiercely, chasing every ball. Inspired by their determination, members of *310 Baseball*—despite facing defeat—stood up and applauded. The Japanese team's manager is, coincidentally, Toru Ohtani, 63, father of Shohei Ohtani (age 31).

Before the tournament began, both teams visited Dodger Stadium on August 6 to watch the Dodgers take on the Cardinals. The Dodgers lost 3–5, but Shohei Ohtani pitched four innings, allowing only two hits and one run while striking out eight. At the plate, he hit his 39th home run of the season—also marking his 1,000th career hit. After the game, Shohei spoke with the young players from his hometown, answering their many questions. His father, Toru, presented him with a special gift: an album filled with messages from the kids, addressed to their hometown hero. Later, father and son played catch—just as they had done years ago—Shohei throwing, and his father catching. Through that simple exchange, Toru reminded his son of the importance of always working hard, a lesson he had instilled in him since childhood. Even as a global superstar, Shohei listened earnestly. Meeting Mr. Toru Ohtani in person, I was struck not only by his strong build and large hands—which helped explain Shohei's own physique—but also by the humility and relentless drive clearly passed down from father to son.

On August 14, after ten days of homestays, friendship games, and the unforgettable experience of watching Major League Baseball, the 20 boys boarded their flight home from LAX. They carried with them fond memories of the warmth of Torrance families, the comfort of homes with multiple cars and spacious rooms, the charming sight of hummingbirds, and the beautiful California weather.



Photo with Kanegasaki Little Seniors' Manager Toru Ohtani and Akira Tsurukame

When I first started at Kashiwa Municipal High School, I remember sitting down at my desk and typing out the words “*Time works in such mysterious ways.*”

The following year, I wrote “*time is a flat circle*” followed by “*time is slowly rearing its head in my direction*”. In a strange turn-of-events, I simply have no analogies or anecdotes to write for you all because life always has unexpected changes that occur. Yet here I am for another year experiencing our annual School Cultural Festival!

On September 12th and 13th, Ichikashi held its yearly tradition of our school’s Bunka-Sai. Like many features that I have mentioned in the past like Maid Cafes, makeshift rides or mazes, and dreaded Haunted Mansions, in which I would be remiss to say that our 3rd year international class takes the first place for “Most Scariest.” This year, we were able to expand into staple festival food stands such as French Fries, Crispy Pasta Sticks, and even Yakitori sold outside by the PTA. All the students had so much fun checking out the other classes, watching the Sports Class create a 20-minute dance routine extravaganza, and also surprises here and there like the teachers choreographing their own dance and wearing unique costumes. Luckily, we were able to enjoy our Saturday in the quad area, since the rain had passed from the days prior to the event.

In lieu of the teachers putting on a surprise performance, my fellow bandmate teachers Tamaoki-Sensei, Momoki-Sensei, and myself performed alongside Yusuke Saito-Sensei and Kubota-Sensei, who surprised everyone with their amazing drum and bass skills respectively. I always had this silly dream to perform at Bunka-Sai on the Main Stage. Being a teacher and club advisor, the priority goes to our 3rd year students in the Rock Band Club. As luck would have it, a slot opened for us. I made every moment of that performance count, performing 3 songs - Green Day’s “*Basket Case*”, Asian Kung-Fu Generation’s “*Rewrite*”, and the Oasis classic “*Don’t Look Back in Anger*.” I’ve played many gigs and performances in my life, but to me, I gave all my energy into singing those songs. My new partner-in-crime and fellow ALT, Yuko, had asked me how I was feeling, and I said, “*To be honest with you, it all felt like a blur.*”

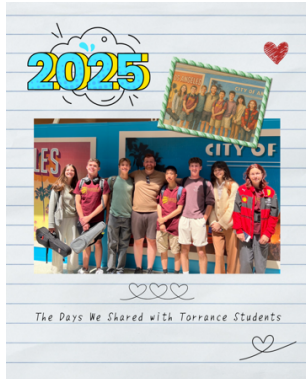
As I wrote for the past 4 years, there's something magical about Bunka-Sai that can't be explained through words. It's the camaraderie that makes these past 2 days so enjoyable. This was the first major school event that I experienced and will always be my earliest memories of my time here. With this *hopefully* being my final year at Ichikashi, I want to make the most of the opportunities given. Time is slowly fleeting for me. My days are limited; I’m making the most out of everything & leaving my mark.



(Live Photo taken by 1st Year’s Chiaki Tsuruchi)



# Making Memories in Kashiwa and Torrance















Torrance Public Library and  
Torrance Sister City Association Present

# Kamishibai

Japanese Paper Theater



**Katy Geissert Civic Center Library**  
**Saturday, September 20**  
**Saturday, October 4**  
**at 10 a.m.**

Two  
Events



Bilingual Program presented in both  
English and Japanese.

City of  
**TORRANCE**  
California

City of Torrance Community Services Department  
Creating and Enriching Community Through People, Programs and Partnerships  
This program is generously funded by the Friends of the Torrance Library  
[www.Library.TorranceCA.Gov](http://www.Library.TorranceCA.Gov)



----- 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 Blvd.  
Torrance, CA. 90503