

SAKURA

SPRING 2024



AARON MURAKI

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Aloha HJJCC Members,

We are in the home stretch, as there are only a couple of months left in the fiscal year! Our Spring Sakura newsletter includes some exciting events such as volunteering at Hawaii's Plantation Village, our quarterly HJJCC member golf outing, hosting our International Sister City from Kobe, and concluding a busy 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival.

We feature the 71st Cherry Blossom Festival Court, who completed their year as Court members. We would like to thank the members of the 71st Cherry Blossom Festival Court for their dedication and for doing an amazing job representing the Festival and the Japanese community here in Hawaii, on the mainland, and in Japan.

We also wrapped up the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival where the new Court members were crowned at Festival Ball. We would like to thank and congratulate our 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival General Co-Chairs, Kristin Alm and Garrett Matsumoto, as well as the members of their Steering Committee on a fantastic Festival! We are very grateful for all your hard work and sacrifice!

As we shift our focus from CBF, our Board of Directors are working hard planning events to finish off the year. Please be on the lookout for our emails and follow us on social media to stay updated. As always, thank you for supporting the HJJCC and we hope to see you all at our upcoming events!

Mahalolo!
Aaron Muraki
74th HJJCC President



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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

BY DAVID TORIGOE, VP OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Our Community Development committee continues to find members opportunities to serve in the community.

For the month of February, we volunteered at Hawaii's Plantation Village's New Year Celebration. We helped at the KC Waffle Dog stand and got to enjoy watching the different cultural programs at the festival. Then in April, we volunteered at the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce's Chopsticks and Wine event. We helped with set up, check-in, and the silent auction.

On behalf of the Community Development Committee, thank you for volunteering. We will continue to plan some more fun and fulfilling community service events this summer. We already have a busy May planned with a joint community service event with the HJCC at the Hawaii Foodbank, and with the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii's Irasshai event. Hope to see you all there!

If you are interested in joining the Community Development Committee where you can help plan Community Service events, or if you have an event that needs volunteers in the future, please reach out to community.service@hjcc.com.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

BY KIRSTIE MAESHIRO-TAKIGUCHI, VP OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In March, we hosted our first visiting sister chapter from Kobe, Japan, to Hawaii. As they arrived at the airport, President Aaron and IR Committee members gave a warm welcome to JCI Kobe President Moritani and Kobe members. We had a welcome lunch at Nami Kaze with the 71st Cherry Blossom Festival Court and enjoyed an outstanding tasting menu of Japanese and local dishes created by Owner and Chef, Jason Peel. Following lunch, we had two official meetings with State and City officials. At Honolulu Hale, we met with Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of Culture and the Arts, Kaili Trask O'Connell, and her assistant in charge of sister city relations, Angela Miguel. We also had the opportunity to meet with Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke and had a tour of her historical office. In the evening, we continued the fun with a nijikai at TJ's Sports Bar. The atmosphere was filled with excitement as both of our members got to know each other over more delicious local grinds and many, many kanpai, or cheers, of drinks!



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (CONT'D)

The following day, the Kobe JC members put on their formal attire and attended the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Ball at Sheraton Waikiki, the highly anticipated culminating event where the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Queen and Court was crowned. President Moritani participated in the program with a grand speech to the 650 attendees and presented beautiful pearl necklaces to the 72nd Court as a symbol of friendship between JCI Kobe and the HJJCC. After Festival Ball concluded, we headed across the street to Buho Cocina y Cantina for nijikai. It was another night of great memories of bonding, filling our tummies with more delectable food, and taking on the dance floor.

We started off the next day with a refreshing Sunday morning hike at Manoa Falls. We worked up a big appetite and had lunch at the Giovanni's food stall at H Mart. That evening, we had a farewell party at the Waikiki Resort Hotel with the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Court and HJJCC members. We reminisced about all the fun activities and moments we shared over the weekend with a slideshow of photos and videos and played a hashi picking tournament with each other. We ended the night with a lively nijikai of karaoke at Blue Ribbon Bar & Grill.

Even though the Kobe JC's trip was short, it was definitely one for the books! It was great to see new friendships form, already formed friendships continue to flourish, and the bond between our sister chapters grow stronger. We look forward to seeing them during the HJJCC Goodwill Tour in October!

Our last, but certainly not least, sister chapter from Odawara will be visiting Hawaii from June 20 - 23, 2024. This year is the 40th Anniversary of the HJJCC and JCI Odawara sister chapter relationship and we want to celebrate to the fullest! We will be sending out hosting event details and the sign-up/RSVP spreadsheet soon. We hope to see you at the IR hosting events!

If you're interested in joining the International Relations Committee to help plan and participate in the sister city hostings, please email international.relations@hjjcc.com.



MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

BY KACIE HIROTSU, VP OF MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

These last three months flew by! We focused all our energy on helping to promote and support the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival events like Opening Ceremonies, Public Appearances, Contestant Reception, the Golf Tournament, and Festival Ball. We encouraged members to participate and attend these events for the opportunity to understand and experience one of the HJJCC's biggest initiatives.

Since the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival came to a close at the end of March, we are refocusing our efforts to putting on a few more membership events before the end of the fiscal year. We are teaming up with the Sakura Hawaii Association and the Urasenke Hawaii Foundation to put on a cultural event for our members to Experience the Way of Tea. This will be held at the Seiko-an Tea House at the Japanese Cultural Center on Saturday, May 4th. Additionally, our General Membership Meeting (GMM) is coming up on Friday, May 24th, where we will be electing our 2024-2025 Board members, welcoming new members, and going over updates and upcoming events. Thank you to everyone who RSVP'd to attend our Urasenke event and GMM, and please keep a look out for one more surprise event that will be announced soon!



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

JANUARY

Chris Anjo
Shelly Imamura
Allen Komori
Sean Lee
Marissa Matsuyama
Scott Motobu
Jaylin Petersen
Jayrald Rabago
Kristyn Sugibayashi
Erin Todoki
Korey Tsubota
Matthew Yen

FEBRUARY

Leila Mitsunaga
Andrew Pang
Claire Fukuoka
Hailey Takayesu
Nathan Ichiriu
Garrett Lau
Terrence Kawano
Kelcie Nagata
Cara Kagawa
Rayshi Hong
Renni Fay Iwasa

MARCH

Kristina Ono
Matt Takayesu
Ryan Sakai
Motomi Otsubo
Yoshihiro Takahashi
Jenna Nakagawa
Randi Lau
Trey Saito
Michael Iwashita
Dunavan Hahn
Caden Morishige
Wolfgang Sakamaki
Danielle Arakaki
Chirstyn Okuno

APRIL

Ashley Higa
Garrett Matsumoto
Joseph Furutani
Ruth Taketa
Amy Perez
Tari-Lynn Manin
Alyssa Kano
Colby Yamamoto

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

BY ERIC IMADA, VP OF MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

We are excited to invite everyone to join us for our annual fundraiser, NIJIKAI 2024!

Prepare for an exciting evening in neon Tokyo with live entertainment, food from your favorite restaurants, and a variety of hosted beverages! NIJIKAI 2024 will be held on Friday, June 28, 2024, at the Generations Ballroom on the 5th floor of the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii. A portion of this year's proceeds will go toward supporting programs for our nonprofit recipient, Special Olympics Hawaii!

Get your tickets now at the Advance sale price of \$85. Prices increase to \$100 after June 14th, so don't delay in securing your attendance to NIJIKAI 2024! Please note that NIJIKAI 2024 is a 21+ event.



Tickets can be purchased from HJJCC Board of Directors, Nijikai Committee members, and online at hjjcc.com/nijikai2024. Thank you for your support and we hope to see you on June 28th!

72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

BY KRISTIN ALM AND GARRETT MATSUMOTO,
72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL CO-GENERAL CHAIRS

This has been another memorable Cherry Blossom Festival year, filled with numerous events. Since Opening Ceremonies in January, four public appearances have been held at Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, Windward Mall, Pearlridge Center and Ala Moana Center. Along with the Contestants showcasing their poise and public speaking skills, various clubs and organizations also held cultural demonstrations. Our annual Golf Tournament and Contestant Reception were held in February at Hawaii Prince Golf Club and the District, respectively. Thank you to the various establishments for allowing us to hold our events at your venue, and to everyone who attended to support the Contestants.



72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (CONT'D)

On March 16th, we were so proud of the 72nd Queen Contestants at the culminating event of their Cherry Blossom Festival journey, Festival Ball. The event was held at the Sheraton Waikiki Hawaii Ballrooms and showcased the results of seven months of hard work and dedication, as contestants participated in a variety of cultural classes, visual and communication classes, and weekly rehearsals. Thank you to Diamond Sponsor, Kyo-ya Company, LLC, for your hospitality.

The program began with energetic Taiko performances, both from the 72nd Queen Contestants and by members of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble. During the Western phase, the Contestants rocked the stage, dancing a choreographed opening number, followed by one-minute speeches from each Contestant about topics they hold dear to their hearts in elegant evening gowns. In the Eastern Phase, the Contestants wore furisode kimonos sponsored by Gold Sponsor, Watabe Wedding Corporation, that were personally selected to match their personalities. As the Contestants presented their kimonos on stage, Diamond Sponsor, KZOO Radio, also provided Japanese translations of their kimono descriptions for the audience. Each Contestant then answered an impromptu question to showcase their reasoning and communication skills.

The winner of the Violet Niimi Oishi Scholarship was also announced. This award is traditionally presented by Dr. Scott Oishi, who donates this scholarship award in honor of his mother, Violet Niimi, the first Cherry Blossom Festival Queen, to help a Contestant reach their academic goals. The scholarship recipient is selected based on their educational excellence, essay submission, and community service involvement. This year's award was presented by Dr. Oishi's son, Benn Oishi, and awarded to Katelyn Stenger. Thank you Dr. Oishi for your generosity and for helping the awardees reach their academic goals.



72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (CONT'D)

The 71st Cherry Blossom Queen and Court made their last appearance on stage as they represented the Festival, the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce, and the state of Hawaii throughout the year with grace, humility, and heart. At the conclusion of our program, the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Queen and Court were crowned. The 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Queen and Court were selected by a panel of judges composed of distinguished professionals and leaders in our community.

Congratulations to the 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Contestants for an amazing night and year! We are incredibly proud of everything you accomplished together through this experience, and we can't wait to see what you will continue to accomplish in the future!

We were so excited to welcome and host our sister festivals, Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival from San Francisco, and Nisei Week Japanese Festival from Los Angeles. Our Hospitality committee enjoyed hosting our guests at many local eateries and activities during their stay. We are so grateful for the opportunity to strengthen our bonds and the continued friendship with our sister festivals.

Our Closing Ceremonies was held on Saturday, March 30th, to celebrate the conclusion of the 72nd Festival. We expressed our gratitude and thanks to our Festival Sponsors, Donors, Cultural Instructors, Board of Directors, and Steering Committee Members. The 72nd Contestants shared their journey with a slideshow of their memorable experiences. They were also awarded their Mrs. Yajima Cultural Award which allows each Contestant to continue their interest and education in a Japanese cultural activity.

As we close yet another chapter of the Cherry Blossom Festival, we leave this year with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. The Festival would not be possible without the support of our sponsors, donors, honorary advisors, cultural instructors and you, the HJJCC membership. Thank you to our HJJCC Board of Directors and Cherry Blossom Festival Steering Committee for your hard work and dedication. We extend a warm mahalo to all of you for your omoiyari, your thoughtfulness and support. As we look to the future, we are grateful to have your continued support.



72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL QUEEN & COURT

71ST CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL

BY GINA MAEDA, 71ST CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL QUEEN'S ADVISOR

The last two months of the 71st Cherry Blossom Festival Court's year ended similarly to how it began - in a whirlwind of events and exciting moments! In January, they welcomed sponsors, donors, friends, and family to the 72nd CBF Opening Ceremony at the Japanese Cultural Center. They cheered on the new Queen Contestants and were able to participate in New Year's Ohana Festival activities too! They completed the month with the first two public appearances of the 72nd CBF at Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center and Windward Mall. The court made fun signs and cutouts to encourage the contestants as they took to the stage!

In February, the 71st CBF Court helped Diamond Sponsor JAL celebrate 70 years in Hawaii at historic Washington Place. They checked in guests and greeted them with lei and smiles! They also assisted with a special kanpai and were treated to a guided tour of Washington Place. Everyone learned so much about the significance of the site and truly enjoyed the beautiful evening!

Also in February was the annual CBF golf tournament and Contestant Reception! The 72nd CBF golf tournament was held at the Hawaii Prince course, and the court emceed the awards banquet and handed out prizes. All the teams seemed to leave happy after another fun tournament! The following weekend, the 72nd CBF Contestant Reception was held at the District, where the court organized three games for the contestants and HJJCC Board of Directors. The contestants were split into two teams for two different games - one where they had to make a furisode kimono out of provided random materials, and another one where each team had to flip the most cups either up or down, depending on what direction their team was assigned. There were some very creative and hilarious strategies! The third game was pictionary with the 71st CBF Court versus President Aaron and his BOD! It was tough, but the 71st Court came out on top! Finally, the last two public appearances at Pearlridge and Ala Moana closed out the month. The court was incredibly impressed by how graceful and composed the contestants were on stage.

In March, Princess and Miss Congeniality Jennifer Kumura held her community service project - a program for kupuna residents at Hale Pulama Mau and Kahala Nui. The program recruited Kenny and Chizuko Endo of the Taiko Center of the Pacific, who not only performed a piece together, but also performed Sakura Daiko with the 71st CBF Court. Sakura Daiko is the piece that Kenny Endo composed for the Cherry Blossom Festival that the Court performed one year ago at their Festival Ball! Also part of the program was the court's hula Mele Ohana and First Princess Chirstyn Okuno's rendition of local favorite Nada Sou Sou. Jennifer also constructed activity pages for the seniors to work on together with the Court, and taught audiences how to kachashi in usual Okinawan fashion!



71ST CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (CONT'D)

For Girls Day, Gold Sponsor Gyotaku Restaurants invited the 71st CBF Court to their King Street and Pearl City locations to hand out pink and white chichi dango mochi to guests. It was a heartwarming time connecting with patrons and their families! Later that week, Silver Sponsor JTB invited the Court to participate in the Honolulu Festival at the Friendship Gala and Grand Parade. The Court greeted guests and enjoyed the gala program, as well as rode a JTB trolley in the parade! It was so fun to see the variety of groups from Japan and all over!

In between the Honolulu Festival Friendship Gala and Grand Parade, Princess and Miss Popularity Emily Johnson held her community service project with Malama Maunalua. Malama Maunalua is a non-profit dedicated to revitalizing Maunalua Bay in Hawaii Kai by removing invasive algae and allowing native fish and plants to return. Together with other community volunteers, the Court removed 1,450 pounds of invasive algae!

The week of Festival Ball, Diamond Sponsor KZOO Radio invited the Queen and Court to the station for one final interview to share the Court's favorite memories and advice from their year of service. What a touching time reminiscing about the past while looking forward to the future!

Finally, it was time for Festival Ball weekend! That Friday, the 71st CBF Court welcomed HJJCC sister chapter JCI Kobe, sharing a delicious lunch together at Nami Kaze. Later that evening, the Court welcomed their sister courts from San Francisco and Los Angeles at a welcome dinner at 801 South. It was a long overdue reunion for the tri-courts!

The next day was Festival Ball! Everyone was full of excitement and nerves as they got ready. Amidst all the anticipation of the evening, Queen Samantha Marumoto also saw her furisode kimono for the first time and shared that joy with her court! The court shared a heartfelt message of gratitude during their on-stage farewell, while precious photos played in the background. Backstage, they linked hands and hugged for the last time as the 71st CBF Court.

The following day, the tri-courts met again for their third Leadership Forum - discussing various topics relevant to their generation of Japanese-American women. Sharing stories and ideas, they collaborated on a vision for future projects to perpetuate their heritage. Later that night, the 71st Court attended the farewell dinner for JCI Kobe, participating in their first event as past court members! They ran one final game for the Jaycees - picking up and moving M&M candies with chopsticks!



71ST CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL (CONT'D)

The following night was the Aloha Party for the sister courts and CBF Hospitality Committees. The 72nd CBF Court was able to officially meet their sister court members! The 71st Court held one last game of telephone-charades, which led to loud laughter and smiles all around! It was a perfect way to end the weekend.

As the 71st CBF Court ends their year, they have repeatedly expressed gratitude for the countless volunteers, sponsors, donors, and supporters they have met along the way. So many people created a truly memorable time for these five young ladies, who not only represented the HJJCC and local Japanese community with poise and compassion, but who have also formed new friendships and developed new skills. Hontou arigatou gozaimasu!



72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL QUEEN & COURT

BY RUTH SHONTELL, 72ND CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL QUEEN'S ADVISOR

The 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Court had their first official appearance the day after Festival Ball! They attended their first International Relations event and were introduced to the HJJCC sister chapter, JCI Kobe. They bonded over food, stories, and helped judge the HJJCC versus JCI Kobe "sort the M&M by color" game - with chopsticks!! They also got to personally thank JCI Kobe President Moritani and members for generously gifting the Court's pearl necklaces. While only a short visit, the Court was excited to meet their first sister chapter and to have done their first omiyage exchange with JCI Kobe!

In addition to meeting the Kobe JCs, the Court was able to meet, bond, and say "aloha" to the Cherry Blossom Festival sister festivals - the 2023 Northern California Cherry Blossom and 2023 Nisei Week Courts. Hosted by the CBF Hospitality Committee, the Aloha Party was the perfect time to meet their sister city courts, play a few games like telephone charades, and participate in our traditional omiyage exchange. The 72nd Cherry Blossom Festival Court was beyond excited to start forming bonds that will continue to grow over the next few months!



SPORTS COMMITTEE

BY CURT UEDA, SPORTS DIRECTOR

The Sports Committee's goal is to create opportunities for members to meet and socialize in a sports-related setting. Since our last newsletter, we held two events: our HJCC x HJCC Joint Mixer and quarterly Member Golf at Royal Kunia Country Club.

The HJCC x HJCC Joint Mixer was held on March 6th at the Stan Sheriff Center to watch the UH men's basketball game against CSUN. A total of 67 HJCC, HJCC, and guests were able to enjoy networking and food and drinks in the hospitality room, as well as witness UH's close two-point victory over CSUN.

The HJCC Member Golf event at Royal Kunia Country Club was held on Sunday, March 24th. 17 members were able to enjoy a day of competition and fun on the course.

Please be on the lookout for our upcoming announcement about the next Member Golf outing in June!



JAPANESE CULTURE

BY ASHLEY ISHIMURA, DIRECTOR AT LARGE

SPRING IN JAPAN

When you hear "spring" in Japan, one of the first things that will come to mind may be sakura or cherry blossoms. Why is sakura so meaningful in Japanese culture?

Cherry blossoms have various meanings in Japanese culture, but a primary one is "life is fleeting." Cherry blossoms are beautiful to see when they are fully bloomed, however, the trees and flowers are short-lived. Cherry blossoms only bloom for a few weeks before withering and falling. Just like the blooming period of sakura, we are reminded that life is short and precious at the same time. It also symbolizes renewal and hope as the return of spring.

People in Japan cherish sakura during their flowering period and even have "watching blossom" parties, also known as hanami. Yozakura is hanami at night, where people view the beautiful cherry blossom trees at night.

If you are planning to visit Japan in the spring, you may be in for an adventure if searching for sakura! Sakura bloom at different times throughout the nation due to climate differences. While their bloom may be short-lived in one place, you can go on an adventure and search for cherry blossoms in another city!

