

NEWS RELEASE



**Consulate-General
of Japan in Chicago**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Foreign Minister's Commendations for FY2022

On August 4, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendations for 2022. This year, commendations will be awarded to 197 individuals and 48 organizations.

Within the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago's jurisdiction, the following five individuals and one group have been selected for their contributions in strengthening the relations between the United States and Japan.

1. Individuals

- (1) Dr. Shinichiro Imai, M. and T. Tanaka Family Distinguished Professor in Aging Research, Washington University School of Medicine, Department of Developmental Biology, Department of Medicine

Dr. Imai has been a board member of the St. Louis Japan Society since 2008. He has served as its president since 2018, and was the organizer of the New Year's Party that first introduced the "Tuna Butchering Show". In addition, Dr. Imai has promoted interactions between Japanese and Japanese-American communities in St. Louis by delivering expert lectures on topics such as science, economics, and pensions, as well as the dissemination of new COVID-19 information and awareness-raising projects. As the first Keio University Ambassador for the McDonnell International Scholars Academy Foundation, he has also supported relations between international students at Japanese and U.S. universities.

- (2) Mr. Ralph Inforzato, Chief Executive Director of JETRO Chicago

Since joining the Chicago JETRO office in 1984, Mr. Inforzato has been engaged in research and business promotion activities that serve to further strengthen relations between the Midwest and Japan. Specifically, Mr. Inforzato has been involved in promoting new investment opportunities to Japan and new business partnerships in the automotive and biotechnology industries. He has also promoted U.S.-Japan business development projects in robotics, with particular notability in the "Monozukuri Program" which educates North American companies about the philosophy within Japanese manufacturing practices. Mr. Inforzato has also contributed to numerous U.S.-Japan technical cooperation and business partnerships through his grassroots travel and developmental efforts. These grassroots efforts further foster and nurture the importance and development of the U.S.-Japan economic relationship through engagement directly with state governors and business leaders throughout the 12 Midwestern states.

(3) Mr. David Johnson, President of the Japan America Society of Chicago

Mr. Johnson has had a long period of involvement with the Japan America Society of Chicago (JASC). He stabilized JASC's operations and expanded its activities as a Board Member, Development Committee Chair, Finance Committee Chair and President. He served as President of JASC between 2016 and 2022. Under his leadership, JASC hosted numerous informative events, such as the 2016 Anniversary Celebration Dinner where Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer spoke on US-Japan trade and the 2017 Anniversary Celebration Dinner where Nobel Prize laureate Dr. Ei-ichi Negishi of Purdue University spoke about his personal history. Under his leadership, JASC has continued to maintain and expand its programs and activities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic by swiftly adapting to the usage of online events.

(4) Mr. Michael David Takada, Chief Executive Officer of the Japanese American Service Committee

Mr. Takada is an active member of the Japanese-American community. He has long served the Japanese American Service Committee (JASC) as a volunteer, Committee member, Vice President of Finance, CEO, and as President. Under his leadership as CEO, JASC has provided day-care services for the elderly and Japanese courses for a wide range of learners and has implemented various Japanese cultural programs. Mr. Takada also visited Japan in 2017 under the Japanese American Leadership Delegation Program. He had served as Chairman for the Chicago Japanese American Council between 2017 and 2021. His work has greatly contributed to strengthening relations between Japanese and Japanese American communities.

(5) Mr. Manabu Yoshiike, Chair of the Chicago Japanese American Council

Mr. Yoshiike joined the Chicago Japanese Club (CJC) in 2012 and served as the Japan Festival Executive Committee Chairman in 2013 and as President between 2015 and 2019. He played a substantial role in organizing the Japan Festival by raising funds and implementing Japanese cultural activities, such as tea ceremonies and flower arrangements. He has volunteered in many cultural, social and informative seminars and programs for the community, including seminars on the U.S. healthcare system and the Japanese pension system. As a *shin-issei*, Mr. Yoshiike has worked to strengthen and foster close ties between many different Japanese and Japanese American communities. This year he became the new Chairman of the Chicago Japanese American Council.

2. Group

The Japan America Society of Minnesota

This year marks the 50th anniversary for the Japan America Society of Minnesota (JASM). JASM serves to promote friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States. The organization offers extensive Japan-related programs and events that target a wide-range audience from students to professionals, such as the Japanese Obon Festival at Como Park in St. Paul and the business roundtables. JASM provides young U.S. students a chance to learn and study in Japan under the Mondale Scholarship—named after former Ambassador Mondale. Recently, the organization has

been expanding its reach beyond Minnesota and is contributing to the U.S.-Japan friendship in other areas of the Midwest.

For more information, please contact the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago at 312-280-0400.

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