

NEWS RELEASE



**Consulate-General
of Japan in Chicago**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Foreign Minister's Commendations for 2024

On August 1st, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan announced the recipients of the Foreign Minister's Commendations for 2024. This year, commendations will be awarded to 187 individuals and 59 organizations.

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

1. Individuals

(1) Mr. Michael Wayne Tanimura, Former President, the Japanese American Service Committee

Mr. Tanimura became a board member of the Japanese American Service Community (JASC) in 2004 and served four-and-a-half years as president, beginning in 2008. As president, he supported a wide range of JASC activities, including oversight of senior housing operations, social welfare programs, various Japanese cultural programs, and Legacy Center operations. He has also chaired the Japanese Community Picnic since 2015, which has become a major community event, and has contributed to strengthening the bonds of the broader Nikkei community, including "new Issei" and "new Nisei" and Japanese residents. He has also contributed to the promotion of judo as a board member of the Tohkon Judo Academy since 1995.

(2) Ms. Kay Kawaguchi, Cultural and Community Affairs Coordinator, Japanese American Service Committee

Ms. Kawaguchi was first hired as a bilingual staff member at the Japanese American Service Committee in 1999, and for the past 25 years she has worked as an advisor and coordinator for cultural and community activities, leading the organization of Japanese language classes, Japanese cooking classes, Ikebana classes, and various other Japanese culture-related activities. Through her efforts she has significantly contributed to spreading awareness of Japanese culture and promoting mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan. Ms. Kawaguchi has also continuously provided support to Japanese people who do not speak English in receiving their social security benefits. Since 1982 she has worked as a Japanese-language reporter for the Japanese-American newspaper "The Chicago Shimpō", and has served as the newspaper's Vice President and editor-in-chief of the Japanese department since 1989, reporting on news in the local community and working hard to support the welfare of Japanese and Japanese-Americans.

(3) Ms. Sandra Ikuko Nichols, Former Uchina Goodwill Ambassador

Ms. Ikuko Nichols served as the Okinawa Prefecture's certified Uchina Ambassador for 20 years until 2023, and through her activities at the Okinawa Kenjinkai of Chicago, she has contributed greatly to the preservation and dissemination of a wide range of Okinawan culture through traditional Okinawan music, dance, martial arts, crafts, and food, as well as through cultivating the next generation of leadership. She has also contributed to the development of mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan through her dedicated support of the activities of the local Japanese American community, and her active cooperation in introducing Japanese and Okinawan culture at Japanese festivals and other events. Furthermore, as a Japanese language teacher at a public elementary school on the south side of Chicago for 10 years until 2004, she contributed to the promotion of understanding of Japan through the spread of Japanese language and culture to young people.

(4) Mr. John Tadao Teramoto, Curator Emeritus of Asian Art, Indianapolis Museum of Art,

For over 20 years, Mr. Teramoto worked as Curator at the Indianapolis Museum of Art as a specialist in Japanese art. In addition to his contributions to the Indianapolis Museum of Art's esteemed Japanese art collection, he opened many top-quality temporary and permanent Japanese art exhibitions, which helped to further the understanding of Japan among the Museum's patrons, whose numbers exceed 400,000 annually. Through his many lectures and written publications, Mr. Teramoto has contributed to a greater understanding of Japanese art among a wide audience, including the academic community. He has also supported the Japan-US friendship by helping coordinate touring exhibitions of Japanese art from the Indianapolis Museum of Art collection throughout Japan, including in Indiana's sister-state, Tochigi Prefecture.

(5) Ms. Sachie Stroder, Former President, the Heart of America Japan-America Society

Ms. Stroder first joined the Heart of America Japan-America Society in 1969, and has since served 4 years as director, 5 years as vice president, and two 2-year terms as president. While at the society, she led the organization of various cultural events and school visits, and worked hard to spread awareness of Japanese culture and promote mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan. From 2006, she served for 13 years as the Japan Chair on the Kansas Ethnic Enrichment Committee. In this role, she contributed many years to promoting Japanese culture to a wide-ranging audience by giving lectures on Japanese culture at the Japan Festival which attracts around 40,000 people annually, and introducing other aspects of Japanese culture like kimonos, chopsticks and Japanese toys to local youth.

(6) Dr. Andreas Marks, Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Dr. Marks is a specialist in Asian art, particularly Japanese art. From 2008 to 2013 he served as the Director of the Clark Center for Japanese Art in Hanford, CA. Since 2013 he has served as the Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art at the Minneapolis Institute of Art. He has curated many exhibitions at 37 other museums,

including the Honolulu Museum of Art and the Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo and has contributed to the promotion of Japanese culture and art world-wide. In 2014, he received an award from the International Ukiyo-e Society in Japan for his research. He has written 22 books on Japanese art, some of which have received awards, for example from the International Fine Print Dealers Association (IFPDA). He has visited Japan on exchange programs organized by the Tokyo National Museum and the Japan Foundation, contributing to cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan.

2. Group

St. Louis-Suwa Sister City Committee

Since its establishment 50 years ago, the St. Louis-Suwa Sister City Committee has worked to promote sister city exchanges with Suwa City in Nagano Prefecture. Through the dispatch and acceptance of delegations and youth from both cities, the committee has greatly contributed to the development of exchanges between St. Louis and Suwa. The organization also contributes annually to the St. Louis Japan Festival, the largest of its kind in the Midwest, by coordinating efforts with Suwa City, disseminating information on sister city exchanges, and planning and organizing the Lantern Festival, among other activities. These activities have contributed to the promotion of understanding between Japan and the Midwest, including the state of Missouri, and to the development of a wide range of grassroots exchanges.

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

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