



PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL - Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928



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Board Member MESSAGE

The 2022 Japanese Community Graduation Banquet

By Heidi Kimiko Tolentino

This year was the 75th Annual Japanese American Community Graduation Banquet and was held for the first time in three years. Graduates from the classes of 2020 and 2021 were also invited as they missed the opportunity to be honored during their graduation years.

The banquet was held at the Monarch Hotel on May 1st and Emceed by Brian Hochhalter, the current President of the Henjyoji Shingon Buddhist temple and he was accompanied by his wife, Debby. The words before and after the meal were given by Reverend Yuki Sugahara of the Oregon Buddhist Temple, who accompanied by his wife, Namiko.

Consul General of Japan, Misaki Shiga, who was accompanied by his wife, Hiroe, spoke to the attendees. The Consul General thanked the community for inviting him to take part in an event that had such a long history and congratulated the graduates on all of their accomplishments. He said that he could see how hard they had worked and how hard their families had worked to help them be successful and hoped they would continue to stay connected to their Japanese roots and their roots in Portland as they moved on to college.

Continued on Pg. 2

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

June
LGBTQ2IAA Pride Month

June 5
World Environment Day

June 19
Juneteenth

June 19
Father's Day

June 20
World Refugee Day

August 3-7
JACL Convention, Las Vegas

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Many graduates were recognized at the banquet, including two past graduates. Matt Aizawa, class of 2021 and the Henjyoji Art Award winner, joined the 2022 graduates and Emily Kiyoko Jackson, class of 2020, and the Veleda Club/Nikkei Fujinkai Scholarship winner, was also in attendance.

The 2022 graduates are a multi-talented group of seniors who have endured great obstacles during their four years of high school. Despite all of the roadblocks in front of them, they have excelled both academically and in their extracurricular activities. The donors were proud to present the students with their awards and scholarships.

Mrs. Mark Sumida Awards and Alice Sumida Scholarships

The Mrs. Mark Sumida Awards and Alice Sumida Scholarships are presented in memory of Alice Sumida. Alice Sumida was a long-time supporter of the Japanese American community and a generous donor to the graduation banquet. Alice Sumida passed away in August of 2018 at the age of 104. Mrs. Sumida wanted to award students in the community so that they would know their community was proud of them. **This year, the awards were presented by Mr. Mike Irinaga of the Japanese Ancestral Society. This year's recipients were Toshi Kondo of Tualatin High School, Hiroshi Kondo of Tualatin High School, Kaiya Yasui of Barlow High School and Bryan Yanase of Benson High School. Congratulations Toshi, Hiroshi, Kaiya and Bryan!**

Oregon Nisei Veterans: Iwasaki/Okamoto Scholarship

The Oregon Nisei Veterans began in 1948 with the purpose of raising money to build a monument to honor the Nisei soldiers killed in action during WW II. The Oregon Nisei Veterans awards the Athletic Award and the

Iwasaki/Okamoto Scholarship each year. The award and scholarship were presented by Commander Ron Iwasaki.

The Oregon Nisei Veterans Award is given to an outstanding athlete who has excelled in their sport(s). **This year, the award was presented to Megumi Oishi of Lincoln High School.** Megumi is an outstanding fencer. She's the team Captain of the PDX Fencing Team and has made the All-American Team and the All-Academic Team on the US Fencing Team. She will be fencing for the University of Washington next year. **Congratulations, Megumi!**

Art Iwasaki was a member of the 442nd Regimental Combat team during WWII and a founding member of Oregon Nisei Vets. Art was a recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal and this scholarship is given in memory of his loving wife, Teri. Second Lieutenant Roger Okamoto was killed in Vietnam in 1966 at the age of 23. Lieutenant Okamoto graduated from Benson High School and earned an engineering degree from the University of Washington. Ms. Janice Okamoto and her son, Mr. Gary Okamoto, represented the family at the banquet. This year, the Iwasaki/Okamoto Scholarship was combined with the Gresham-Troutdale JACL Scholarship.

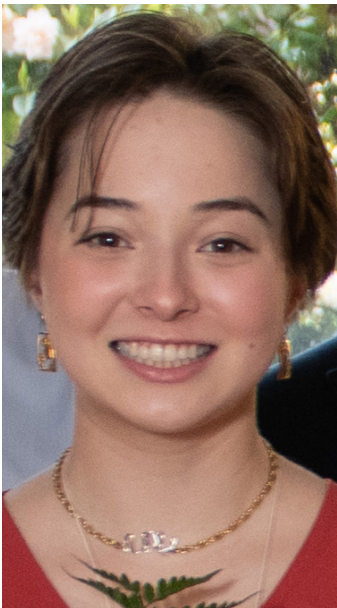


Gresham-Troutdale JACL (GT JACL): Gresham-Troutdale JACL Scholarship

The Gresham-Troutdale JACL is part of the oldest national civil rights organization in America. It serves to protect the rights of not only Asians, but all minorities, and nurtures the cultural heritage of Japanese

Americans. Mr. Terry Nishikawa, President of GT JACL, presented the scholarship.

The winner of the Oregon Nisei Veterans/ Gresham-Troutdale JACL Scholarship was Grant Pasquantonio of Clackamas High School. Grant was a Speech and Debate district champion, a four-year member of his school's music program, and a College Board AP Scholar. Grant will attend Oregon State University next year. **Congratulations, Grant!**



Portland Shokookai: Shokookai of Portland Scholarship Portland Shokookai was founded in 1966 by a small group of Japanese companies. They facilitate business operations for Japanese companies in Oregon and SW Washington and run the Japanese Language School. Mr. Yoshiki Saeki, the President of

Shookokai, presented the scholarship. **This year's Shokookai of Portland Scholarship winner was Nina Takahashi of Southridge High School.** Nina founded the Southridge Asian and Pacific Islander Student Union, was part of the student government and was a four-year member and captain of Southridge's dance team. Nina will be attending University of California Berkeley next year. **Congratulations, Nina!**

Japanese Ancestral Society (JAS):, Hide Naito Scholarship, Mary K. Naito Scholarship, Tsuya and Kumaichi Minamoto Scholarship

The Japanese Ancestral Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to serving the Nikkei community and promoting education and fellowship among the members of the

community. JAS awards three scholarships each year. Mr. Mike Irinaga presented the scholarships for JAS.



Hide Naito was a Portland entrepreneur who started his first of several businesses in 1921 which diversified during his lifetime into retail operations, importing and real-estate development. Mr. and Mrs. Verne and Aki Naito, the donors for the Hide Naito and the Mary

Naito Scholarships, attended the banquet to honor the scholarship recipients. **This year's winner of the Hide Naito scholarship was Julie Ichikawa of Tualatin High School.** Julie was chosen to play with the Portland Youth Philharmonic, attended the Portland Japanese School for fourteen years and trained her dog to be a therapy dog so that they could volunteer to support hospitalized people. Next year, Julie will attend University of California Irvine. **Congratulations, Julie!**



Mary K. Naito was a homemaker, community volunteer, businesswoman and high school Valedictorian. **The winner of the Mary K. Naito Scholarship was Rina Ishii of Columbia River High School.** Rina is a principal Bass player in the Portland Youth

Philharmonic. She played tennis on her high school team for three years. She also won the Japan Overseas Educational Services Literary Works Contest in both the Poem

Division and the Haiku Division. Rina will be attending the University of Washington next year. **Congratulations, Rina!**

The third Japanese Ancestral Society Scholarship was combined with a Portland JACL Scholarship.

Minamoto Family/Matt Masuoka Scholarship

Tsuya and Kumaichi Minamoto emigrated from Japan in the early 1900's and endured being incarcerated during WWII. Their daughter, Mary, created this scholarship in their honor. This year, the Minamoto scholarship was combined with a Portland JACL scholarship, the Matt Masuoka Scholarship.

Matthew Masuoka was a Nisei dentist who was a past President of Portland JACL and a Pacific NW District Governor. This award is given in his honor by his daughter, Dr. Connie Masuoka, who attended the banquet to honor the graduates.



The winner of the Minamoto Family/Matt Masuoka Scholarship was Shion Britten of Southridge High School. Shion is a member of his school's Asian and Pacific Islander Student Union. He was a four-year member of both the Southridge Baseball team and the Wind Ensemble. Next year,

Shion will attend Oregon State University.
Congratulations, Shion!

Portland JACL: Matt Masuoka Scholarship, Kiyoko Yumibe Scholarship, Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship

Portland JACL was established in 1928 with

an ongoing mission to fight social injustice and to preserve the cultural heritage and values of Japanese Americans. Portland JACL awarded three scholarships this year. The scholarships were presented by Mr. Chris Lee, the Vice-President of Portland JACL.



Kiyoko Yumibe was a hard-working Nisei who was incarcerated during WWII. She established a fund, through Portland JACL, to help support youth seeking higher education. Representing the donors at the banquet were Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Diane Onchi.

The winner of the Yumibe Scholarship

was Megumi Oishi of Lincoln High School.

Megumi is a National Merit Scholarship Finalist, the founder of The Athlete Narrative, an Anti-Athlete-Body-Shaming Social Media Platform and was both a Japanese-English tutor and translator. Megumi will be attending the University of Washington.

Congratulations, Megumi!



The Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship

Yoshiko Kennedy used her talents as a seamstress and master of Ikebana to ensure her children would receive an education. The Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship was created in her memory. **The winner of the Yoshiko Kennedy**

Scholarship was Brandon Okamoto of Hillcrest High School in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Brandon played baseball and wrestled for his school's teams, he volunteered at the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple and worked with his dad on renovating and managing properties in Oregon. Brandon is still deciding on which college he will attend next year.

Congratulations, Brandon!

The Velea Club and Portland Nikkei Fujinkai: Velea Club/Nikkei Fujinkai Scholarship

The Velea Club is Portland's oldest Nikkei women's service organization that is active in the community today. Ms. Sharon Takahashi, President of the Velea Club, gave the scholarship.

Portland Nikkei Fujinkai is a Japanese Ancestral Women's Association that was established in 1935. They support community activities and cultural education. Ms. Michie Uzunoe, President of Nikkei Funjinkai, gave the scholarship.

This year's winner of the Velea Club/Nikkei Fujinkai scholarship was Ashton MacClanathan of Clackamas High School.

Ashton played baseball for Clackamas High School and was selected for second team



all-conference. He also volunteered at My Father's House cooking meals for the homeless.

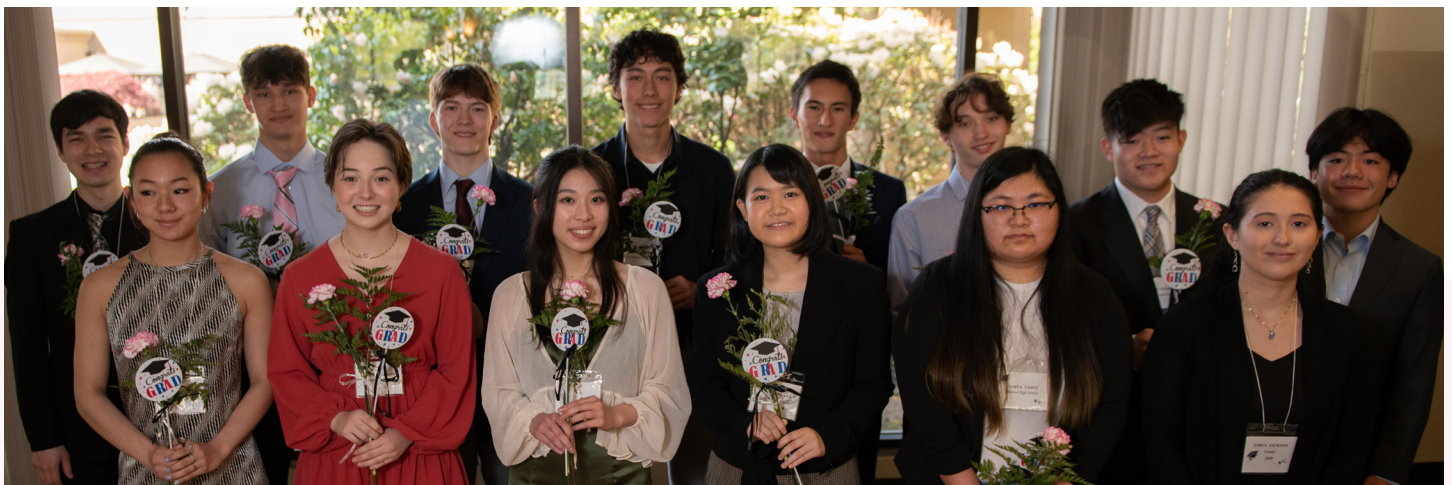
Congratulations, Ashton!

It was wonderful to be in person as a community to celebrate these amazing graduates. Our community can be proud of all they have accomplished in their four years

of high school, despite all of the setbacks of the pandemic. There is no doubt that each of the members of the Class of 2022 will continue to find success as they move to their colleges and universities next year. Graduates, good luck with the next steps of your academic career and we look forward to hearing about your future endeavors.

Congratulations to the Class of 2022!

(Thank you to Curtis Suyematsu for the photographs.)



Rear (left to right): Grant Pasquantonio, Hiroshi Kondo, Brian Yanase, Ashton MacClanathan, Shion Britten, Toshi Kondo, Brandon Okamoto, Matthew Aizawa (2021)

Front (left to right): Megumi Oishi, Nina Takahashi, Rina Ishi, Julie Ichikawa, Kaiya Yasui, Emily Jackson (2020)

• USC Awards Honorary Degrees to its Nisei Students •

By Alison Nimura, Portland JACL member

My grandfather, Raymond Kaname Nimura, was like many of his generation and did not talk much about his experiences from World War II. He was a quiet person in general, so most of what I knew about him was through family lore (fun fact: he had a blackbelt in Kendo and would travel to Japan for tournaments when he was young). I knew that during WWII he and his family were incarcerated at Amache. When given the option, he chose military service over incarceration, serving in the Military Intelligence Service as an interpreter. When my family learned that the University of Southern California would be awarding him an honorary degree posthumously along with other USC Nisei students, we discovered another piece of his story. The war and forced removal of the Japanese Americans from the west coast disrupted his studies and he was unable to complete his degree, but had he been attending another school there may have been another option for him.



I joined my cousins for a weekend of events planned by USC's Asian Pacific Alumni Association (APAA) for the Nisei students' families the first weekend of April 2022. Throughout the weekend we were able to share stories

with the other families and learn more about what had occurred in 1942. When Executive Order 9066 authorized the forced removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast, many universities helped their students transfer to other institutions outside of the exclusion zone. Meanwhile, USC actively blocked its Nisei students from transferring to other institutions by denying transcript

requests. Even after the war was over, USC denied Nisei students their transcripts and blocked students from re-enrolling. Some students were fortunate enough to have credits from other schools, while some began their coursework all over again at other universities and managed to earn their degrees despite the massive setback. We heard stories of others like my grandfather who had not completed their degrees, but remained proud Trojans, rooting for USC sports teams or wearing USC attire.

The weekend culminated in a fundraiser and scholarship awards gala held by the APAA. It was a semi-formal affair that felt especially unfamiliar after two years of being a pandemic homebody. In the final event of the evening, USC President Folt conferred honorary degrees to the Nisei students and presented the degrees to each of the 31 families in attendance. The act brought an end to the 15 year effort led by former APAA president Jonathan Kaji. He began petitioning USC's board of trustees in 2007 to apologize for its actions in World War II and issue honorary degrees to the Nisei students. In 2012 the university awarded honorary degrees to the remaining living Nisei students, but by that time only 11 were alive to receive them. It was an emotional moment as we accepted the degrees on our grandfather's behalf. The energy in the room was powerful as the audience of APAA members came to their feet in supportive applause.

Over the weekend's events it was difficult to learn of more hurt and injustice that had been inflicted on my grandfather and the larger Japanese American community. It was also gratifying to see him awarded the degree he was never able to complete. To hear a powerful institution take ownership of the harm it had caused and take steps to

make amends was incredibly healing. It also has been an opportunity for us all to tell our family stories and ensure our society learns from past mistakes. During the dedication of the new Nisei Rock Garden at USC, its administration made a commitment to

“never again abandon our students when they need us most.” It was a reminder of the duty higher education institutions have to their students and the community’s responsibility to ensure that they fulfill that duty.

❖ Deepening our Roots ❖

By Spencer Uemura

As a Yonsei/Shin-Nisei, I grew up with the idea that my family’s roots in the United States began with my father arriving to California when he was a young child. We didn’t talk much about our family history on either side of my family, but the relative recency of my father’s immigration seemed to explain enough about who I was, and why I looked and ate differently from other classmates. I assumed I did not have direct connection to Japanese American incarceration because my father arrived post-war.

In June 2020, spurred by a growing curiosity to develop a deeper sense for where my family came from, I put my thoughts toward my maternal side. Who were my great-grandparents and what were they like? A late-night search on Ancestry.com pulled up results for my maternal grandmother’s parents. There were marriage certificates, documents showing travel by boat, and... camp rosters from Manzanar and Minidoka. I had stumbled upon our connection to incarceration that some of my aunts and uncles were not even aware of.

We all have our own relationships to Japanese heritage. It can be a source of pain and friction, as well as stability and resilience. The Japanese American experience is one of in-betweenness. People commonly feel not Japanese

“enough” while simultaneously not American “enough”. What an impossible position to be stuck in! This can serve to drive us away from certain parts of our identity to avoid painful feelings. For myself, relocating to Portland brought experiences in which I felt like a generic racial “other”, disconnected from my community and Japanese identity. Learning about my family history has grown a rootedness in my sense of belonging. Now, I feel both deeply connected to my family’s 120+ years in America, and also to the people and places in Japan to which I am connected.

May we feel more rooted in who we are and from whom we come.

Questions to consider:

- To what extent are you aware of your family history from Japan? For multiracial Japanese Americans, to what extent are you aware of your family history from other countries as well? Does this correlate with any feelings you might have about your Japanese heritage?
- There are innumerable expressions or flavors of what it means to be Japanese American. All of these are good and valid. It is a beautiful byproduct of Nikkei influencing and being influenced by America. What is your unique flavor of Japanese-ness?

Interested in more?

- Speak with your elders, or share your experiences with younger folks in our community. Conversations do not even have to involve talking about struggle. Consider asking/sharing about the moments that were important, or most treasured.
- The 1950 US Census was released for public access in April. Some records still need to be indexed for easier searching, but you may be able to find family members by searching on <https://www.ancestry.com/c/1950-census>. This information can reveal where family members went after incarceration.
- Online communities can offer support and inspiration! "Japanese Family History" and "Japanese American Roots" on Facebook can be good places to start.
- Take a class about researching Japanese American family history. Organizations like Densho and Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages have offered programming in the past. I have received immense support in requesting koseki family registry documents from Japan, even with limited Japanese language ability.

About the series:

In this mini-series of articles, Kokoro Corner will address different aspects of wellbeing in the Japanese American experience. The inspiration from the name comes from the Japanese word kokoro (心 or こころ) which is used when referring to the heart, mind, and soul. It's a beautiful concept with varying applications, and in that way, it is reminiscent of the many ways we can pursue wellbeing. Some inspiration for this mini-series is coming from responses to our mental health survey,

so please consider filling it out or contacting me with any suggestions.

Help guide our work!

Your very own PDX JACL Advocacy Committee has a goal to address Asian American Safety and Visibility as one of its priorities for the new year. Under this topic are the important mental health needs of the Japanese American community. We know that we cannot do this work for our community without receiving feedback from the community, so we would love to hear from you!

Sample questions:

- How have your JA family/friends engaged with topics like wellbeing and mental health?
- What are some phrases you have heard in the JA community response to hardship? (i.e. "Shikata ga nai", "It can't be helped", "It'll be fine")
- What has your overall wellness and mental health been like during the COVID pandemic?
- What are the needs that you see around you, related to mental health?

You may complete this anonymous Google Form (**link here: <https://bit.ly/PDXJACLMH>, or use the QR code below**) or contact **Spencer@pdxjacl.org** to arrange a one-to-one conversation. Thank you in advance for your collaboration!



Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway

MEMORIAL HIGHWAY ADVISORY GROUP

American Legion Hood River Post 22

Japanese American Museum of Oregon

Oregon Nisei Veterans

Portland Japanese American Citizens League

The History Museum of Hood River County

with support from The Bend Heroes Foundation

In March 2022 the Oregon State Legislature unanimously passed Senate Bill 1509A to dedicate Highway 35, a 41-mile byway between I-84 in Hood River and Highway 26 near Government Camp, as the Oregon Nisei Veterans World War II Memorial Highway. An advisory group of Oregon nonprofits is overseeing the installation of highway signs and developing ways for travelers to easily find answers to their questions: "Who were the Nisei Veterans? What did they do in World War II? Why is this highway named in their honor?"

WHO WERE THE NISEI VETERANS?

During World War II, over 500 second generation Japanese American (*Nisei*) soldiers from Oregon served with honor and distinction in the United States military.

Their service came despite the forced removal of their families from Portland, Hood River, and other cities and towns west of the Cascades under Executive Order (EO) 9066.

GET ON BOARD!

Funds for the highway signs and educational material about the historical significance of the Nisei Veterans of World War II must be privately raised. **See back for details.**

Signed into law by President Franklin Roosevelt in February 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast were forcibly removed from their homes and sent to barbed wire enclosed incarceration camps in the US interior.

In January 1943 a restriction barring Nisei from military service was lifted and 33,000 Japanese American men and women served in the European and Pacific Theaters of World War II.

They served with fierce determination fueled by their desire to prove their families' rightful place in the country of their birth, the United State of America.

442nd Regimental Combat Team

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, activated in February 1943, served in Italy, France and Germany and became the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in the US Army's 246-year history.

Speaking at the 60th reunion of the 442nd in Honolulu, General (Ret.) David Bramlett lauded them through the lens of World War II history: "If you go to the US Army's official history, you will find 233 infantry regiments served in WWII; including the 18 Marine regiments, then you realize 251 infantry regiments fought in WWII. The most decorated of them all is the 442nd."

The 442nd, including the 100th Infantry Battalion (dubbed "The Purple Heart Battalion") was awarded eight Presidential Unit Citations.

Military Intelligence Service

Because of the highly classified nature of its mission, the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) was kept in secrecy for more than 30 years. MIS soldiers



General David A. Bramlett
US Army (Retired)



served in the Pacific Theater translating enemy documents, interrogating Japanese prisoners of war, intercepting enemy communication, and persuading enemy units to surrender.

In 1972 under the Freedom of Information Act, the scant records of their activities were made available. In April 2006,

more than 50 years after World War II, the MIS was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for their wartime valor throughout the Pacific Theater.

Women's Army Corps & Cadet Nurse Corps

Beginning in 1943 Japanese American women were permitted to join the Women's Army Corps. Many, like Rose Tanada and her older sister Emiko, served in the Cadet Nurse Corps (CNC).

Rose graduated from Gresham High School and Emiko, from Sherwood HS. In response to EO 9066, the Tanada family reported to the Portland temporary detention center, followed by incarceration at Minidoka. In July 1944 the sisters were permitted to leave Minidoka for Chicago, where they enlisted with the CNC and received their medical training at Thomas Wilson General Hospital, a US Army hospital in Staunton, Virginia.



Rose Tanada, member of the Cadet Nurse Corps



TEACHING FUTURE GENERATIONS

"Who were the Nisei veterans of WWII? Why do they still matter?"

In 1946 President Harry Truman welcomed the 442nd to the White House, saying: "You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice — and you have won."

Students today may wonder if his comments were premature. But there is little doubt that the Nisei veterans were an important step in our nation's journey towards social justice, and Truman's next words reverberate today, "Keep up that fight, and we will continue to win – to make this great Republic stand for just what the

Constitution says it stands for: the welfare of all the people all the time."



JOIN THE DRIVE!

Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

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P.O. Box 1803

Hood River, OR 97031

Oregon Nisei Veterans

12811 SE Hawks Crest Place

Happy Valley, OR 97086

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The Bend Heroes Foundation

Barbara Watanabe, Communications



| MON | TUES | | THURS | FRI |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| | | | 2 Shrimp Shumai | 3 Vegetable Lasagna w/ Meat Sauce Gratin |
| 6 Grilled Chicken w/ Green Onion Sauce 12:30pm Mahjong | 7 Bibimbap 12:30pm Sing a Long | X | 9 Cabbage Rolls | 10 Oyakodon Chicken & Egg w/ Rice |
| 13 Tempura w/ Cold Udon 11:15am Chair Yoga 12:30pm Mahjong | 14 Sweet & Sour Pork 12:30pm Sing a Long | X | 16 Miso Cod | 17 Karaage Japanese Fried Chicken Ohana Lunch Bunch |
| 20 Shrimp & Tofu w/ Black Bean Sauce 12:30pm Mahjong | 21 Ramen Salad 12:30pm Sing a Long | X | 23 Honey Walnut Shrimp | 24 Gyudon Japanese Beef Bowl |
| 27 Tonkatsu 12:30pm Mahjong | 28 Birthday Sushi 12:30pm Sing a Long | | 30 Omurice Japanese Omelet w/ demi-glace sauce | |

Cooks: Naomi Molstrom-M Kyoko Adcock-Tu Rieko Shimada-Th/F

New Lunch Prices: \$8 for seniors 65+ / \$9 for under 65 / \$ 5 kids

Reservations preferred / Indoor Dining Limited

*** For reservations please call and leave a message or email:**

(ph) 503-238-0775 (email) ikoinokai7@gmail.com

Seating at 11:30 am with lunch served promptly at noon

**** vaccination card and signed COVID waiver will be required in order to dine indoors**



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❖ Graduation Banquet Speaker ❖

The 2022 Graduation Banquet speaker was Heidi Tolentino who is a member of the Portland JACL Board and a school counselor at Cleveland High School. Heidi's grandfather, Joe Saito who lived in Ontario was a medic with the Japanese 442nd Regimental Combat unit during WWII. He was a member of many civic organizations in his community including being president of the Snake River Chapter of the JACL. Her grandmother, Nellie Aramaki Saito was incarcerated as a teenager at Mindioka.

Heidi promised her grandfather when she was in her 20's that she would keep the story of what happened to the Japanese community during WWII alive so that no one would forget and it would never happen again.

In her speech, Heidi reflected on her grandparent's traumatic young adulthood and

how the last two years of pandemic isolation has been particularly difficult for our young people. During the scholarship interviews, she asked all of the students what had they found during this lonely time that gave them joy. Her message to our youth was to make sure they found joy in their lives.

