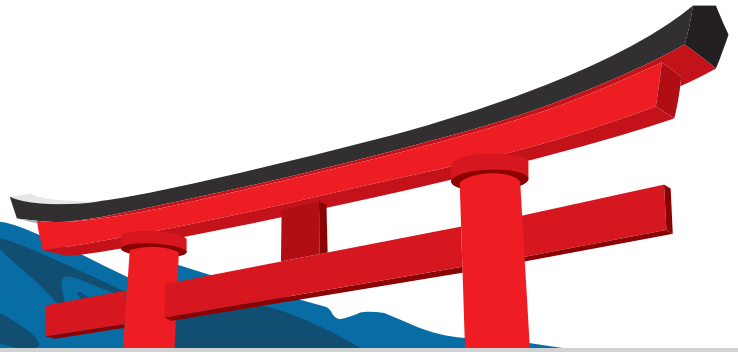




PORTLAND JACL NEWSLETTER

Portland JACL - Supporting Civil Rights Since 1928



• JUNE 2026 | VOLUME 32 ISSUE 06 •

Board Member MESSAGE

The 2026 Japanese Community Graduation Banquet

By Heidi Kimiko Tolentino

This year was the 79th annual Japanese American Community Graduation Banquet. The banquet was held at the Hilton DoubleTree at Lloyd Center. The Emcee for the event was Terry Nishikawa, the President of the Gresham-Troutdale chapter of the JACL. Terry is also on the board for the Japanese Ancestral Society.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chip Larouche and the words before and after the meal were given by Reverend Shindo Nishiyama of the Oregon Buddhist Temple. The Consul General of Japan, Ken Todoriki, spoke to the attendees and thanked the people who had long supported the graduates. He noted that he felt the pride and the strong spirit of the community in the room and was proud to be attending the banquet for the second time. The Consul General encouraged the graduates to embrace their heritage and stay connected and remain an active member of the Japanese American community.

This year's keynote speaker, City Councilor Tiffany Koyama Lane, was introduced by Ms. Marleen Wallingford. She noted that Councilor Koyama Lane, also known as Teacher Tiffany, is an award-winning educator who taught for 16 years in public education. She was a proud leader in her union and spent years fighting for Portland Public Schools' students and staff. Koyama Lane is a Yonsei whose family's WWII incarceration has informed her community work.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

June 6

Sachiko Introduction

Japanese American Museum of Oregon | 10am

June 7

People of the Drum

Street beside Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall
11am-130pm

June 12

"Hijinks, Hyperbole and Spectacle" Kabuki, Kyogen and Dance Performances

By PSU Students

Lincoln Performance Hall | 7-9pm

June 13

Safe Passages

By Evelyn Iritani

431 NW Flanders | 1pm

July 1

Teacher's Workshop

Tule Lake

July 3-5

Tule Lake Pilgrimage

July 9-12

Minidoka Pilgrimage

July 29-Aug 2

JACL Convention

Las Vegas, Nevada



These 2026 graduates were recognized with the Mrs Mark Sumida Award.

She lives in SE Portland with her husband and two young children.

Councilor Koyama Lane shared that in her youth, she did not know a lot about what it meant to be Japanese American. But, as she got older, she did her own research and learned about the people in the Japanese American community who sacrificed and had to make impossible choices to survive and the quiet choice of resilience. She noted that the graduates are part of that history and their own that they will create. When Koyama Lane was younger, she often felt that she shouldn't take up space and in school, she only raised her hand when she was sure of the answer. As she aged, she started to ask herself what would happen if she just tried and took a chance. Her actions started small and quietly, supported by many people. After she became the first Asian American woman on the City Council, she acknowledged that it had started simply by her trying. Koyama Lane challenged the graduates to take small risks and she let them know that if they ever decide to become one of the voices in political office, she would be there to help them. As she concluded, she reminded them to remember the family and community and the generations before them who have supported them. She also wanted them to remember that they come from something strong and that they can lead quietly or loudly, but to be proud of where they come from and to listen to the voice that says, "What if I try this?"

After Councilor Koyama Lane's speech, the

scholarship recipients were announced.

Mrs. Mark Sumida Awards: The Mrs. Mark Sumida Awards 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. Mrs. Sumida wanted to make sure that all of the graduates in the Japanese American community were honored for their achievements in high school. This year, the awards were presented by Ms. Lynn Fuchigami Parks. *This year's recipients were Angela Allen of Sunset High School, Shota Arai of Mountainside High School, Miya Armstrong of Camas High School, Travis Takumi Blake of Beaverton Early College High School, Samuel Gross of Grant High School, Keisuke Hibino of Westview High School, Nina Ichikawa of Tualatin High School, Ruka Kikumori of Westview High School, Ayu Kira of Mountain View High School, Sophia Miksovsky of Sunset High School, Asher Foster Nakamura of Baker Web Academy, Kai Onishi Plumbo of Lake Oswego High School, Kyoko Sakai of Camas High School, Mira Spokes of Grant High School, Toua Suzuki of Westview High School, Alex Tsuchdy of Grant High School and Lucy Wakush of Oregon Episcopal School. Congratulations to all of these recipients!*

Japanese Ancestral Society (JAS) Scholarships: 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 awarded two scholarships: Hide

Naito, and Mary K. Naito Scholarships. These were presented by Ms. Lynn Fuchigami Parks.



Hide Naito Scholarship:

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. The Hide Naito Donors are Sam and Marsha

Naito. **The winner of this year's Hide Naito Scholarship was Tai Brown of West Linn High School.** Tai is Captain of his Cross-Country team, he lettered in Track and Field and is part of the Chamber Orchestra as a Viola player. Tai will be attending Carleton College.



Mary K. Naito

Scholarship: Mary K. Naito was a homemaker, community volunteer, businesswoman and high school Valedictorian. A former Poston internee and UC Berkeley student, Mary managed Import Plaza for 20

years and served many local organizations with thoughtfulness and grace. Verne and Aki Naito represented the donor family at the banquet.

The winner of the Mary K. Naito Scholarship was Madeline Williams of Jesuit High School.

Madeline is a US Figure Skating competitor, a Team Scout Lead on her Robotics team that won the State Championship during her junior year. Madeline will be attending the University of Southern California.

Gresham-Troutdale JACL (GT 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. Ms. Linda Gerber presented the scholarship. **The winner of the Gresham-Troutdale JACL Scholarship was Miu**

Takeuchi of Sunset High School. Miu is an Allstar Cheerleading National Champion, Captain of the Sunset Track and Field team and attends Japanese School every Saturday. Miu will be attending college in Japan.



Epworth United Methodist Church

Scholarship: Epworth United Methodist Church has evolved to become a reconciling congregation that welcomes people of all backgrounds and identities, and practices with an inclusive vision and

in alignment with these values. The Epworth scholarship is provided to support the promotion of compassion, justice, and community building in our youth. Ms. Marilyn Sholian represented Epworth for this scholarship. **The winner of the Epworth United Methodist Church Scholarship was Taisei Sasaki of Westview High School.** Taisei played Baseball for four years at Westview, he is active in the service club Thrift 4 Goods and he plans to study Veterinary Medicine. Taisei will be attending Oregon State University.

Oregon Nisei Veterans 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 WWII. The Oregon Nisei Veterans awarded the Art and Teri Iwasaki/Roger T. Okamoto Scholarship.

The scholarship was presented by Mr. Paul Tamura. 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. Roger T. Okamoto was a Second Lieutenant who was killed in Vietnam by a Viet Cong land mine in 1966 at the age of 23. Lieutenant Okamoto graduated from Benson High School and earned an engineering degree from the University of Washington. The Okamoto family has honored Lieutenant Roger Okamoto at this event for over forty years. Mrs. Janice Okamoto and her son, Mr. Gary Okamoto, represented the family at the banquet.

powered rocketry and has designed, built and launched several rockets, he is an avid bird watcher and enjoys tennis and ultimate frisbee. Luke will be attending the University of Portland.

Portland JACL Scholarships: 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 four scholarships this year: Two Kiyoko Yumibe Scholarships, the Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship and the Matt Matsuoka Scholarship. The scholarships were presented by Mr. Spencer Uemura, the Co-President of Portland JACL.



The winner of the Art and Teri Iwasaki/Roger T. Okamoto Scholarship was Max Barielles of Franklin High School. Max is a National Merit Scholar Finalist, is first chair clarinet in Franklin's band and Co-Vice President of Unite People of Portland

JACL. Max will be attending Oregon State University.



Kiyoko Yumibe Scholarship #1: 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 Ms. Christi Iwasaki and her daughter.

The winner of the first Yumibe Scholarship was Kira Sato of West Linn High School. Kira is a National Merit Scholarship finalist, is writing and illustrating a graphic novel based on her family's experience in Hawaii during WWII and she volunteers at Ikoï no Kai. Kira will be attending the University of San Francisco.



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

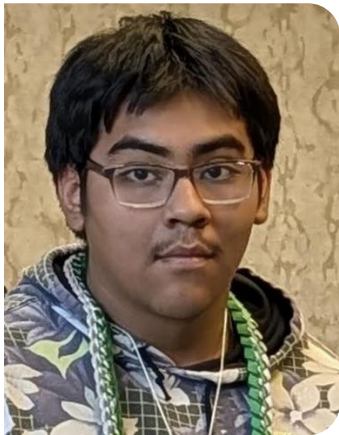
Language School. Ms. Sally Fujimoto presented the scholarship. **This year's Shokookai of Portland Scholarship winner was Luke Vande Griff of Roosevelt High School.** Luke is interested in high



Kiyoko Yumibe Scholarship #2: The winner of the second Yumibe Scholarship was Sophia Tanne of Mountain View High School. Sophia is the President of the Women's Empowerment Club, plays violin in Mountain

View's Chamber Orchestra and is Captain of the school's Swim Team. Sophia will be attending the University of Washington.

Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship: Yoshiko Kennedy used her talents as a seamstress and master of Ikebana to ensure her children would receive a college education. The Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship was created in her memory. **The winner of the Yoshiko Kennedy Scholarship was Alisa Kondo of Century High School** (No photo available). Alisa has been a competitive gymnast for thirteen years and was the Regional Champion in balance beam and floor exercise. She is also a member of her school's Key Club and Black Student Union. Alisa will be attending the University of Arizona.



Matt Masuoka Scholarship: This scholarship honors Matthew Masuoka, a Nisei dentist, who was past president of Portland JACL in 1952, and Pacific Northwest District Governor from 1953-55. This scholarship is given in his honor by

his daughter, Dr. Connie Masuoka, who helps organize the Graduation Banquet every year. **The winner of the Matt Masuoka Scholarship was Mario Estrada Pena of Reynolds High School.** Mario wrestled for four years at Reynolds, he worked a part-time job and plans to major in Electrical Engineering. Mario will be attending Oregon State University.

The Valeda Club Scholarship: The Valeda Club is Portland's oldest Nikkei women's service organization that is active in the community today. They are dedicated to supporting the community and preserving Japanese American heritage and traditions. The scholarship was presented by Ms. Sharon Takahashi. **The winner of the Valeda Club Scholarship was Malia Stewart of Banks High School.** Malia played



Soccer and ran Cross Country, she was Class President for two years and a member of the National Honor Society. Malia will be attending Linfield College.

Nikkei Fujinkai Scholarship: Portland Nikkei Fujinkai is a Japanese Ancestral

Women's Association that was established in 1935. They support community activities and cultural education. Mrs. Michie Uzunoe presented the scholarship. **The winner of the Nikkei Fujinkai Scholarship was Haruki Winner of Grant High School.**



Haruki is Co-President of Unite People of Portland JACL, is a consummate volunteer at Oregon Buddhist Temple and is a member of the Grant Choir Program. Haruki will be attending Oregon State University.

Henjyogi Shingon Buddhist Temple Art Award: This award was established by the family of the late Reverent Kazuko Wako Henjyogi in recognition of her lifetime of service strengthening cultural ties between the United States and Japan. She was devoted to education, teaching Japanese and Americans alike both the art of Japanese tea ceremony and the art of Ikebana. This award was presented by Dave Batchelor. **The winner of the Henjyogi Shingon Buddhist Temple Art Award was Haruki Winner of Grant High School.** Haruki was awarded for artistic expertise in Origami crane folding demonstrated in a series about Japanese Internment entitled *Anxiety*. It was created out of thousands of Origami cranes folded out of Japanese newspapers.

The Graduate's Response was given by Malia

Stewart of Banks High School. Malia shared that she was honored to be chosen as the student speaker. As someone of mixed race, she appreciated having organizations that support all Japanese Americans. Malia thanked all of the scholarship donors and the banquet organizing committee. She ended by thanking all of the audience members who came to support the graduates.

The Ice Breaker Awards, a fun event for the graduates to learn about people in the Nikkei

community, were given out by Mrs. Elaine Yuzuriha. She ended with a reminder to the graduates to return back to their community after they graduate and wished them well in their next steps.

Congratulations to the graduates of the Class of 2026! Your accomplishments are a representation of your hard work and dedication. We, your community, are proud of you and look forward to hearing about your future endeavors.



❖ One Book, One Coast: This Year's Pick ❖

Get ready for a new community read. We're thrilled to join in the first year of One Book, One Coast, the largest library book club on the West Coast!



Over 140 libraries throughout Oregon, Washington, and California gathered from April 1 to May 31 to read a shared book together. The program aimed to unite libraries by celebrating literacy, learning, community, and civic discourse.

This year's pick was *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei. This bestselling graphic memoir recounts Takei's experiences in incarceration camps during his childhood.

"One Book, One Coast is meant to spark conversations," said Director of Libraries Annie Lewis in a press release for LA County Library. "But our hope is that it achieves much more. By exploring this period in our nation's history, together we can learn, gain a deeper understanding of one another, and discover our shared humanity."

Check out a physical copy of the book from your local library starting April 1. Prefer to read digitally? Find an always-available copy on Libby from April 1 to June 6!

Takei spoke about the book on May 31 at the East Los Angeles Library.

The concept of a shared read may sound familiar to you. We've been putting on our own community reading program, Everybody Reads, for over 20 years. Never fear, dear gentle readers — Everybody Reads is still continuing strong. We're excited to offer this additional opportunity for you to gather around a read. It's an honor to join together with other libraries to promote conversations that span across states.

Stop by your local library this spring, and join us in this new community reading project. Already read this excellent memoir? Want to dig in deeper? Our librarians have curated a list of books to read along with *They Called Us Enemy* to keep the conversation going. Participating libraries also developed supplementary programming to give more context to Takei's story.

Books were generously donated by the Friends of the Multnomah County Library, a local nonprofit dedicated to supporting Multnomah County Library through supplemental funding for library programs and services.



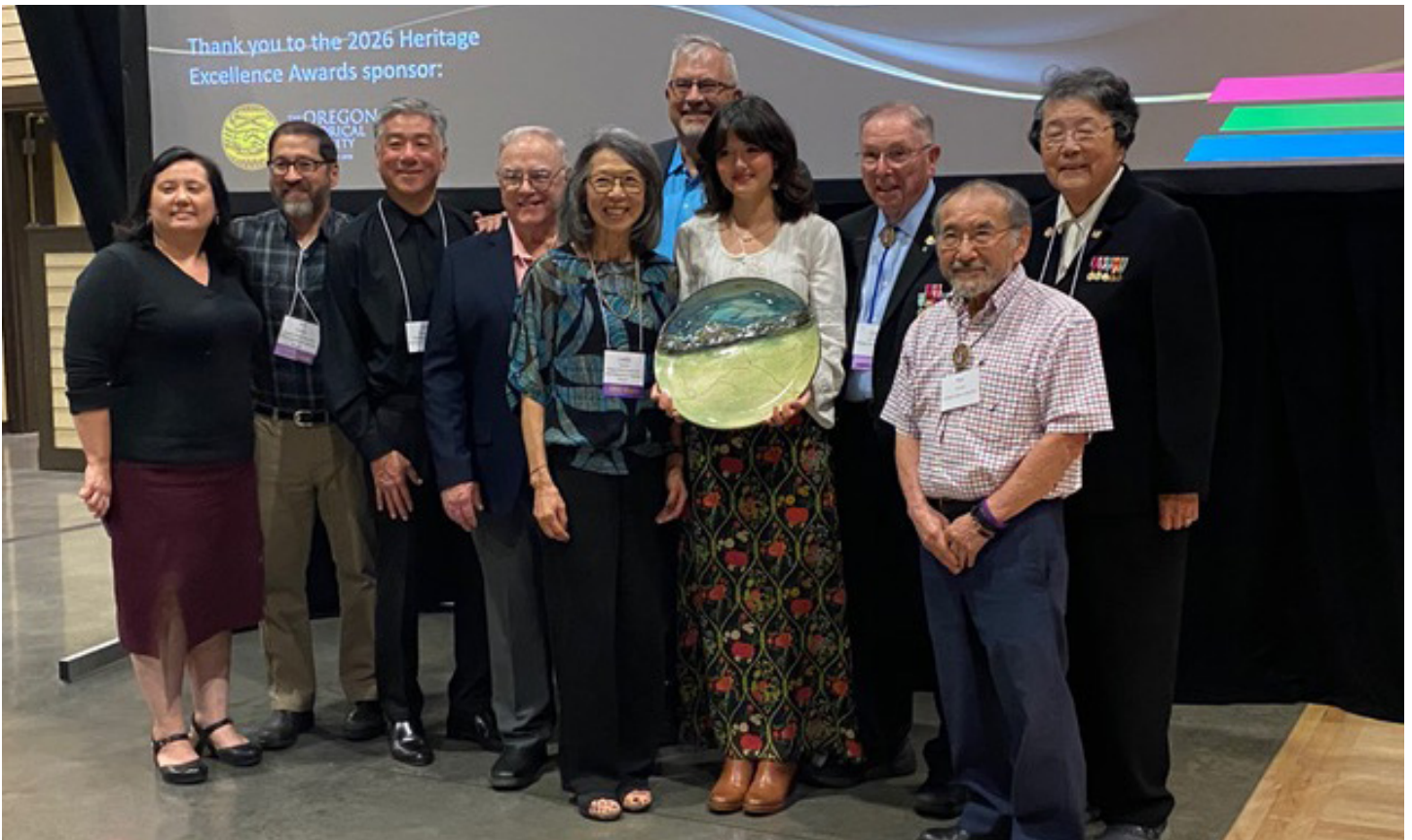
Photo Corner



Supporters cheer high school graduates receiving scholarships at the 2026 Japanese American Community Graduation Banquet, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Portland, Portland, Oregon. Photo by Rich Iwasaki



Councilor Tiffany Koyama Lane presents the keynote address on May 3, 2026 at the Japanese American Community Graduation Banquet, DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Portland, Portland, Oregon. Photo by Rich Iwasaki



On April 29th, The Oregon Nisei Veterans WWII Memorial Highway and Historical Marker Project was awarded the Oregon Heritage Excellence Award. Attached photo is a group picture of the project principals who received the award. L to R: Leslie Tamura, Eric Ballinger, Jeff Matsumoto, CDR Carl Casey, Professor Linda Tamura, Mike Allegre Mia Ballinger, Chip Larouche Ron Iwasaki, and Setsy Sadamoto Larouche.



Portland JACL co-president Jeff Matsumoto (L) leads a group walk to Terry Shrunck Plaza following the Mother's Day March event at the Japanese American Historical Plaza, Portland, Oregon. Among the speakers was Olga Shcherbakova (second from left), Outreach and Prevention Coordinator at Slavic Oregon Social Services, Portland. Other speakers on the walk included Chris Eves, Director of Refugee and Immigrant Ministries, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, Olga Cherevatenko, Community Pulse Association board member, and Frank So, Executive Director, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. *Photo by Rich Iwasaki*



Filmmaker Jon Osaki (center) speaks as part of a panel discussion following the screening of his film "Making Waves: The Rise of Asian America", at APANO, Portland, Oregon. The panel was moderated by (l to r) Faith Kebekol, MS Ed., Portland Community College Cascade Multicultural Center (l), and included Osaki, Karina Autar, former APANO ALLY youth participant now at IRCO, and Nikki DeLeon, founding member of Filipino Bayanihan Center, Portland. *Photo by Rich Iwasaki*



On Monday, May 4, Professor Linda Tamura spoke at the Ledding Library in Milwaukie contrasting her childhood lack of knowledge about Japanese American wartime experiences with George Takei's childhood memories - and her abrupt recognition as a young adult. Pictured L to R are Commander Carl Casey, American Legion Post 22, Hood River, Kay Endo, Nisei Veteran Brent Husher, Ledding Library Director, and Chip Larouche. *Photo by Setsy Larouche.*



The Portland JACL and the Japanese American Museum of Oregon shared a table at the opening game of the Timber's season at Providence Park. The special edition Timber's Cherry Blossom scarf got a lot of attention.



Bento volunteers get together once a month to prepare a nutritious meal. *Photo by Julie Hirai*

The Word “Foreigner”

By Sophia Tanne

Sophia graciously allowed us to share her essay about her Japanese American experience . She was the recipient of the Portland JACL Yumibe Scholarship.

The first time I was called a foreigner, I was seven years old.

During one of the humid summers in Gunma, Japan, my mother enrolled me in the local elementary school to better assimilate me into Japanese culture. On my first day, my teacher introduced me to the class. Using a globe she pointed to the United States and announced that was where I was from. I remember the confusion rising in my chest. I was born in Japan. I lived there for the first two years of my life. Yet suddenly, in front of everyone, I was an American.

I smiled politely as my classmates stared. Some gazes held fascination and others, disdain. In the following weeks I was called “gaijin,” a foreigner. Two girls would comment on my pale skin and talk down to me as if I were something strange. What confused me more was that when my brother attended school, he was praised and admired. I began to wonder if belonging was easier for him or harder for me because I was a girl.

Even back home in Portland, at Japanese School every Saturday, I felt that same quiet separation. Students were expected to speak only Japanese, yet classmates and even parents would apologize to me in English because of my appearance. Boys in my class are called “busu.” I remember straightening my naturally wavy hair

and wearing a mask long before it was necessary, trying to hide what I thought was my “white face.” I wanted to appear as Japanese as possible, as if belonging could be earned through effort.

And yet, there were moments that grounded me. When I saw other half-Japanese students who looked like me, something softened. I wasn’t the only one navigating two identities. I wasn’t alone in the in-between.

Being both Japanese and Jewish added another layer. At Jewish camp in the United States, a country that calls itself a melting pot, I was called an Asian slur. I was constantly misidentified, misunderstood and reduced to something simpler than I was, Japanese, Jewish, American Somehow never fully recognized as all three.

Over time, I began to understand that much of this stemmed from misunderstandings Japan, especially rural Gunma, is largely homogenous. Difference stands out. But understanding the roots of exclusion does not excuse it.

The Japanese American experience is one shaped by questions of belonging, by being labeled foreign in one’s own home. Growing up between cultures taught me that identity is not something others validate; it is something we claim. My experience has made me more empathetic, observant, and more committed to reading spaces where “in-between” is not seen as incomplete, but whole.

Yes! I want to help!

Your generous donations help fund cultural events, youth programming, community partnerships and social justice causes. We appreciate your support of our work.

You can make a tax-deductible donation online through:

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Portland, OR 97286

Venmo





Iko no Kai - JUNE 2026

1333 SE 28th Ave / 503-238-0775

ikoinokai.org

MON	TUES		THURS	FRI
1 Gyoza Dumplings 餃子 12:30pm Mahjong	2 Pork Kimchi Donburi 豚キムチ丼 12:45pm Sing-along	X	4 Kanikama Donburi Krab Rice Bowl カニカマ丼	5 Tang Su Yuk Sweet and Sour Pork 韓国風酢豚 10-11:30am Shigin
8 * Omurice Rice Omelet オムライス 11:30am Soroban 12:30pm Mahjong	9 * Chicken w/ Ume Sauce 鶏肉の梅ダレ 11:30am Aikido Stress Relief 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing-along	X	11 * Nasu Dengaku Misoyaki Miso-glazed Eggplant ナスの味噌田楽 9:30am / 10:30am Ukulele 11am Blood Pressure 11am Haiku	12 Char Siu Chinese BBQ Pork チャーシュー 10-11:30am Shigin 12:30pm Bingo
15 Teriyaki Salmon 鮭の照り焼き 11:30am Chair Yoga 12:30pm Mahjong	16 Hambaagu ハンバーグ 12:45pm Sing-along	X	18 * Yaki Udon Noodle Stir Fry	19 Beef Stew ビーフシチュー 10-11:30am Shigin
22 Negishio Chicken ねぎ塩チキン 12:30pm Mahjong	23 Croquette コロツケ 11am Blood Pressure 12:45pm Sing-along	X	25 * Thai Pineapple Curry タイ風 パイナップルカレー 9:30am / 10:30am Ukulele 11am Blood Pressure 11am Haiku	26 Birthday Sushi お誕生日寿司 *Reservations required (suggested donation \$12) 10-11:30am Shigin
29 Miso Ginger Pork & Eggplant 味噌生姜焼き ナス入り 11:30am Soroban 12:30pm Mahjong	30 Sweet Chili Shrimp & Tofu えびチリ豆腐 12:45pm Sing-along	X		

Chefs: Naomi Molstrom-M Kyoko Adcock-Tu Justin Sato -Th/F

Suggested Lunch Donation: \$9 for seniors 65+ / \$12 for adults under 65 / \$ 6 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

*** vegetarian option available on that day - please reserve two days in advance**



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If you would like to contact the Board, their email address is *First Name@pdxjacl.org*

Edited by Chong Sim (simc0186@gmail.com)