

\$3,950 Raised Locally

AkaMya Native American Culture Studio Opened May 29th

by Andy Noguchi and Twila Tomita

An awe-inspiring AkaMya Native American Culture Studio swung open its doors May 29th on the Big Pine Paiute-Shoshone Tribal reservation after a four-year effort of self-reliance, vision, commitment, volunteer labor, and donations. 75 well-wishers, including 10 vaccinated Florin JACL-SV members carpooled from Sacramento 300 miles away to join in the festivities in rural high desert Big Pine. (See attached photos).



The crowd enjoyed awesome Native dance performances, including a children's dance group, and stirring song & drumming from the Coyote Confederacy, plus a tasty lunch. AkaMya Director Sage Romero dedicated the Margaret L. Romero Cultural Dance Studio to his late mother who inspired him throughout his life and who passed away a few months ago from Covid.

Florin JACL and AkaMya's Friendship Began 2016

Florin JACL's Josh Kaizuka presented AkaMya with 1,000 origami paper friendship cranes in solidarity. We also gave Sage Romero a Florin JACL Daruma T-shirt making



Florin JACL presented 1,000 origami friendship cranes to AkaMya. Left to right: Christine and Stan Umeda, Sage Romero, Josh Kaizuka, Marielle Tsukamoto, Twila Tomita, Andy Noguchi. (Photo by AkaMya)

him an "honorary Japanese American!" The adventurous 10 member Florin JACL delegation included Stan & Christine Umeda, Marielle Tsukamoto, Jennifer & Steve Kubo, Fumie & Sam Shimada, Josh, Twila Tomita, and Andy Noguchi

The Florin JACL-SV first met AkaMya in 2016 after the nearby City of Bishop's Back Alley Bowl, run by a former owner, barred our Asian, Muslim, and diverse Florin Manzanar group the year before. Without even having met the Florin JACL, AkaMya reached out in friendship to start the

first 2016 Manzanar Culture Exchange program sharing Native, Japanese, and Muslim heritage and welcoming us to the community. Many local leaders and public officials also lent their support.

The Florin JACL recently raised local donations to help AkaMya complete the studio. \$3,950 in donations came from many generous individuals, the Florin JACL, and Council on American Islamic Relations-SV/CC (CAIR). (See the attached list). More construction of dance floor and outside restroom still needs to be done so please continue to donate online at www.florinjacl.com or mail checks to “Florin JACL” c/o 15 Mark River Court, Sacramento, CA 95831.

AkaMya’s Rich Accomplishments

Founded in 1998 by Sage Romero and other local leaders, AkaMya (Red Hand) Culture and Dance Group has grown into a major force for Native American dance, song, and



May 29th AkaMya grand opening cultural program with children’s group, dancers, and drummers in the newly opened studio. (Photo by Josh Kaizuka)

drumming, drawing support from the entire Owens Valley east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. They feature outstanding classes, workshops, artist collaborations, and community performances. The new studio enables AkaMya to expand all of that.

AkaMya proudly promotes culture, lifts the spirits, unifies the people, and strengthens the community, providing healthy opportunities for young people. Based among the small 500-member Big Pine Paiute Tribal community facing many challenges, including the death of 10 members from Covid, this is an especially impressive accomplishment.

They truly deserve our full support!