



# *Florin J.A.C.L. Newsletter*

*Florin Japanese American Citizens League*

- *Sacramento Valley*

Andy Noguchi and Josh Kaizuka, Co-Presidents

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**Hospitality: Marielle Tsukamoto**

**Ice Cream Social: Howard Shimada**

**JAAC: Julie Thomas**

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**Mochi Madness: Judy Fukuman**

**Newsletter Editor: Scott Matsumoto**

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**Michelle Huey and Andy Noguchi (Advisors)**

**Nikkei Dogs Scholarship / Youth Event:**

**Karen Yamamoto, Rick Uno**

**Obon Dance Workshop:**

**Jennifer Kubo, Jenny Takahashi**

**Scholarship: Karen Yamamoto**

**Social Media: Josh Kaizuka**

**Time of Remembrance: Christine Umeda**

**TOR Education Program: Marielle Tsukamoto,**

**Donna Komure-Toyama, Deanna Tsukamoto**

**Webmaster: Kevin Nobuo Nakano**

**Women's Forum: Jennifer Kubo, Deanna Tsukamoto**

## **Spring 2026 Newsletter**

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# Co-President's Message



By Josh Kaizuka

Is it spring already? Our chapter has been in constant motion—organizing, showing up, and standing in solidarity. From rallies to ceremonies to Days of Remembrance programs, Florin JACL-SV continues to be present where it matters most.

None of this happens without you—our new and renewing members—who give your time, energy, and heart to this work. Your commitment is what makes everything possible.

We also extend our deep gratitude to our Annual Lunch and NCTOR committees, and to the many friends and partner organizations who stand alongside us: Parkview Presbyterian Church, IWA Daiko, Physicians for Social Responsibility, our friends at Sacramento State, the California Museum, CAIR-SV/CC, and so many others. This work is only possible because of community—and we are stronger together.

As we reflect on these efforts, our mission statement feels more urgent than ever:

*Promoting civil rights, social justice, and cultural heritage for all through community education, alliances, and leadership.*

There was a time when we spoke of the Japanese American experience as history—something to be remembered so that it would never happen again. We spoke of the incarceration during World War II, of families torn apart, of a government that failed its own people. That history is not distant. It lives in the present.

It lives in the fear felt by communities being targeted today. It lives in the silence that still allows injustice to grow. It lives in policies and rhetoric that divide, exclude, and dehumanize. What we once warned against is no longer a lesson confined to the past—it is unfolding around us – so Kafkaesque.

And yet, even in these moments, there is reason to hope.

We see it in the growing number of voices refusing to stay silent. We see it in the alliances being built across communities. We see it in every act of courage, every rally, every conversation, and every effort to stand on the right side of history.

Our chapter continues to rise to this moment—expanding our reach, strengthening our programs, and sustaining a vibrant membership of nearly 220 strong. While other chapters may struggle, we continue to grow, grounded in purpose and driven by action.

The lesson of our past is clear: democracy is not guaranteed. Justice is not inevitable. Both must be protected—by ordinary people willing to speak out, stand up, and act.

The future we want will only exist if we are willing to fight for it together.



***Join Us for the Florin JACL Ice Cream Social***

**Sunday, May 17, 2026 -- 1:00 – 3:00p.m.**

***Fletcher Farms Community Center***

7245 Fletcher Farms Drive

Sacramento, CA

**SPACE IS LIMITED - PLEASE RSVP**

[karenyamamoto@sbcglobal.net](mailto:karenyamamoto@sbcglobal.net)

**Meet Our Amazing Scholarship Recipients**

*and*

**Hear about the 2026 Manzanar Pilgrimage**



Evan Fujii-Sisler  
Bradshaw Christian HS



Heather Koike  
CK McClatchy HS



Nathan Lee  
Jesuit HS



Wren Nishio  
CK McClatchy HS



Jaselle Umeda  
CK McClatchy HS

# Membership Update

The Florin JACL-Sacramento Valley Chapter appreciates every new and continuing member!

## ***Welcome to Our New Members***

Kenn Bican  
Sylvia Ryugo Campbell  
Nathan Lee  
Paul & Robin Masuhara  
Nola Nishio  
Wren Nishio  
Rei Onishi  
Megan Sapigao  
Anne Stokes  
Georgiana White  
Devin Yoshikawa

## ***Thank You to Our Most Recent Renewing Members!***

Julie Fong	Steve & Kathy Miura
Amos & Amos Freeman	Melissa & Matthew Nishio
Eric & Elizabeth Fujii	Kathryn Otagiri
Jody Fujii	Lisa & Gregory Shigenaga
Judy & Takeo Fukuman	Annika Tamaki
Mitchell Higa	Jeanette Thomas
Satsuki Ina	Rick & Sheryl Tokunaga
Wayne Kitade	Jaselle Umeda
Yayoi & Jonathan Kushida	Keith & Paula Umemoto
Keiko Lucas	Kishwer Vikaas
Anthony Marquez	Harry & Janice Wang
Grace Matayoshi	Sharon & Gerry Yokoi
Cheryl Miles	John & Elaine Yoshikawa

## ***Stay Connected. Stay Empowered. Stay Florin JACL-Sacramento Valley***

At the JACL Florin – Sacramento Valley Chapter, we are deeply thankful for every member who joins or renews each year. Your support fuels our fight for justice, equality, and civil rights—not just in words, but through action.

Haven't renewed yet? Want to join? Visit: <https://www.florinjacl.com/florin-jacl-membership-email-list.html>. Or contact Katherine L. Morris at [katmorris77@hotmail.com](mailto:katmorris77@hotmail.com) or (916) 719-8389.

Thank you for being part of our community. With your continued support, we'll keep making history—together. We can't wait to see you at our next event!

# Ireicho Ceremony at Walerga

By Josh Kaizuka

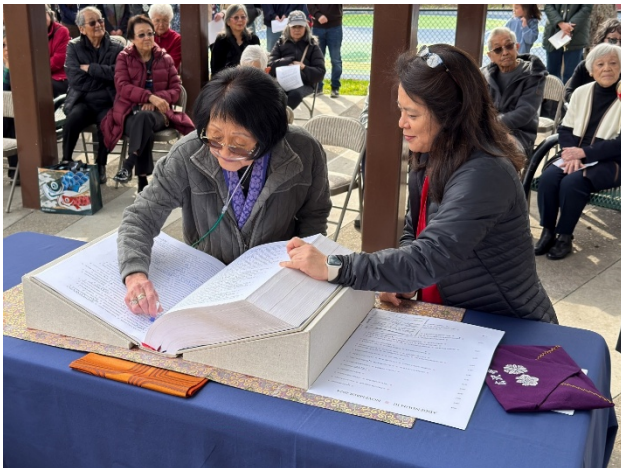
With possible rain in the forecast, the weather ultimately gave way to a calm and beautiful morning—fitting for a day of remembrance and reflection at Walerga Park, the site of the former Sacramento Walerga Assembly Center memorial.

Rev. Duncan Williams of the Ireicho Project reminded those in attendance that 84 years ago, 4,739 members of the Japanese American and immigrant community were unjustly incarcerated at this very site. Families were uprooted, lives were disrupted, and an entire community was forced into confinement without due process. Yet on this day, the gathering served as both a solemn acknowledgment of that injustice and a powerful act of remembrance.



*(Mits Yamamoto, Rev. Duncan Williams, Sachi Louie)*

A deeply moving portion of the ceremony included survivor Mits Yamamoto and former Walerga incarceratedee Sachi Louie reading aloud the names of those who passed away at the temporary detention facility, as well as those who were born there. Each name carried a story—of loss, resilience, and the enduring strength of a community that refused to be forgotten.



*(Evelyn Yomogida stamping the Ireicho)*

Among those present was Evelyn Yomogida, one of the babies born at the Walerga temporary detention facility. In a moment that bridged past and present, Evelyn was able to stamp her name into the Ireicho, the sacred book honoring all those of Japanese ancestry who were incarcerated during World War II. Her presence was a powerful reminder that even in the harshest conditions, life continued—and today, those lives are remembered with dignity.

The ceremony was made possible through the collective efforts of many dedicated individuals and organizations, including the Ireicho team, the Sunrise Park and Recreation District, Hach

Yasamura, Parkview Presbyterian Church, Jason Jong, Josh Kaizuka, and, of course, the NCTOR committee. Their commitment ensured that this important history continues to be shared, honored, and preserved.

Events like this not only remember the past but also call on all of us to remain vigilant in protecting civil liberties and standing against injustice in all its forms.

# Celebrating Florin JACL–Sacramento Valley’s 90th Anniversary

By Marielle Tsukamoto

Thanks to Dr. Amy Kautzman, our 90th Anniversary event was held at the CSUS Alumni Center, where we welcomed about 180 attendees—perhaps one of the largest turnouts for an annual event.

Our Mistress of Ceremonies, Sharon Ito—who has emceed many of our events and was last year’s recipient of the Carol Hisatomi Award—did a wonderful job keeping the program on schedule while incorporating important reflections on why we do what we do after 90 years.

Andy Noguchi presented a short video produced by Judy Fukuman highlighting notable and important events our chapter has been involved in over the years. It was inspiring to see the impactful work the chapter has done since 1935. Afterwards, Sacramento City Councilmember Mai Vang presented our chapter with a resolution from the Mayor and City Council of Sacramento, recognizing our work promoting civil rights and social justice for all.



As part of the program, Heather Koike, a senior at C.K. McClatchy High School and a youth member of our chapter, performed a fitting song for the occasion. She chose “Rise Up” by Andra Day, a song about resilience, perseverance, and finding the strength to overcome challenges.

The Community Service Award was presented to the Elk Grove Unified School District Board (EGUSD) of Trustees for supporting the Time of Remembrance program for 5th-grade students. Each successive board has voted annually to support the study of the forced removal and incarceration of all persons of Japanese ancestry (70% of whom were American citizens) during WWII. Elk Grove is the only school district on record to support this subject at this level. An estimated 60,000 Elk Grove students have been educated on this topic.

We are grateful to the following representatives of the EGUSD who accepted the Community Service Award: Board President Beth Albiani, Superintendent David E. Reilly, and former board members Jeanette Amavisca, Priscilla Cox, Katherine Albiani, Carmine Forcina, Chrystal Martinez-Aires, and Alex Joe.

Daruma Awards were presented to board members for their many years of service: Jeanette Amavisca (38 years), Priscilla Cox (20 years), Katherine Albiani (17 years), and former District Board Secretary Arlene Hein (52 years of service). (**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**)



# Celebrating Florin JACL–Sacramento Valley’s 90th Anniversary



**(FROM PAGE 5)** The Kansha Award was presented to Titus Toyama, chapter treasurer, in gratitude and appreciation for 45 years of service and leadership. Titus served as chapter president for two terms during a time of rising anti-Japanese and anti-Asian hate, as well as in the aftermath of the murder of Vincent Chin. He is also deeply involved in planning the Florin Manzanar Pilgrimage and ensures that the chapter remains within budget for its various programs.

Julie Thomas received the Carol Hisatomi Women’s Leadership

Award. She has served as the steward and curator of the Japanese American Archival Collection at CSUS for 23 years. The JAAC consists of 275 oral histories and documents. With the goal of making the entire collection accessible online, Julie has leveraged grants to digitize oral histories and archival materials. She has also been a guest speaker, panelist, and scholar at numerous symposiums and public forums relating to the WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans.



One of our younger members, Gregory Wada, was presented with the Florin JACL Next Generation Award. He has been active in the community for many years, founding the Davis Cherry Blossom Festival 10 years ago, teaching taiko, and organizing taiko performances for the Florin Manzanar Pilgrimage. He has been a driving force behind social justice rallies and events and spoke about building community connections through music. He now directs the IWA Daiko taiko ensemble.



## Follow Us on Facebook

The Florin JACL-SV is dedicated to providing the most current chapter news, list of upcoming events, and resources to help you stay informed on local and national news. Follow us on Facebook @florinjacl.



# 2026 Northern CA Time of Remembrance

By Donna Komure-Toyama

“Preserving History,” was the theme of the Northern California Time of Remembrance program held on February 14, 2026, at the California Museum and the California Secretary of State’s auditorium. This annual program was organized by the Florin, Sacramento, and Placer County JACL chapters. The planning committee decided on its theme after we heard reports that the U.S. Department of Defense had removed from its public website information about the contributions of the 442nd Regimental Combat Unit, and that the Department of Interior had put up signs at incarceration sites seeking public comment, if any information on display were considered “negative.”



*(Naomi Oswald Kawamura, Christine Umeda, Rev. Ducan Williams, Sharon Ito)*

Our speakers were Naomi Oswald Kawamura, the Executive Director of Densho and Duncan Ryuken Williams, the founder of the Ireicho Project. Both non-profit entities are engaged in preserving history - - through digital preservation and by creating a book of over 125,000 names which expands our understanding on what is a monument. The panel discussion was

moderated by Sharon Ito who created an engaging and thoughtful dialogue between the speakers. You can see the video of the program at [www.nctor.org](http://www.nctor.org), click on Event Information on the home page.



*(Marielle Tsukamoto, Naomi Oswald Kawamura, Christine Umeda, Rev. Ducan Williams)*

The NCTOR committee decided that because of the important work of Densho and the Ireicho project, as well as the loss of federal funding for non-profit organizations, that we would give all donations and sponsorships from this year’s program to Densho and the Ireicho project. Because of the generosity of our donors and sponsors, we raised \$16,740.24 and were able to give both organizations \$8,370.12.



# JACL Kakehashi Project 2025

## *Finding Home in Okinawa*

By Annika Tamaki

Center, was my bridge to a complex Okinawan American identity. His presence in my life was a true gift. He provided wisdom gathered through hardships I cannot begin to imagine, yet he maintained an unwavering optimism about the world. My grandfather could befriend just about anyone and leave them smiling. Most notably, he was the most generous person I knew, always giving to others before thinking of himself.



(Miya R. and Annika navigating the Tokyo Metro system)



(Kakehashi Project Okinawa Cohort with members of Yomitan Village at the Host Stay Closing Ceremony in Yomitan, Okinawa)

A month after his passing, I applied to the JACL Kakehashi Project. Although I had many friends who were Kakehashi alumni, I could have never anticipated how profoundly this program would impact me.

After learning of my placement in Okinawa, I was overjoyed. Soon after, a strange melancholy set in. I felt almost sad knowing that in my grandpa's 95 years, he only visited Okinawa once at the age of 80 years old. It is hard to believe that in my 23 years, I have managed to visit my ancestral homeland twice. As I tried to understand my emotions, I reassured my friends and family that I do not feel guilty for these

opportunities granted to me, but rather sadness that he did not have the same. Perhaps it is different for a nisei with Okinawan parents than for a yonsei hapa with a longing to explore this part of her identity. However, when having a picnic on the beach in Yomitan, while my host ojichan strummed a tune on the sanshin, I thought of my grandpa and how much he would have enjoyed the peace and natural beauty of this island.

While in Okinawa's Yomitan Village, I was immediately struck by the kindness and hospitality of the locals, especially my host ojichan and obaachan. From welcoming us into their homes, providing for us over the stay, and treating us like family, they demonstrated a generosity and selflessness that can only be captured in uchinaaguchi, the Okinawan language, in the phrase *Ichariba choodee*; "When we meet, we're family." **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)**

# JACL Kakehashi Project 2025

## *Finding Home in Okinawa*

**(FROM PAGE 8)** These traits were not unique to my host grandparents. The love and immediate bond formed between the participants and their host families were evident as we exchanged tear-filled, affectionate goodbyes.

Because of the suffering of the Okinawan people during wartime, followed by the highly visible U.S. military presence, peace, community, or the ryukyu spirit are not taken for granted. Their shared experiences contribute to a strong sense of pride in the uchinaanchu identity. With that, they value community, living by the phrase *Yuimaaru no sekai*, or “a world of helping one another out.” From their shared quick sense of humor, love for gardening, and pure benevolence, it was not difficult to find the parallels between my Ojiichan Seiji from Yomitan and my Grandpa Paul from Los Angeles. It was thanks to the JACL Kakehashi Project and the good people of Yomitan Village that I learned that my grandpa, a born-and-raised American, lived his life with his true Okinawan values. It is these values that I strive to live by, to embrace my Okinawan roots and make my grandfather proud.



*(Picnic at the beach in Yomitan with fellow Kakehashi participants Annika, Jillian S., Megan A., Nanami L., and Stella S)*

# JACL Kakehashi Project 2025

## *Hiroshima and Tokyo*

By Devon Akiyama

During the Kakehashi program, I gained a deeper understanding of rural Japan and the lasting human and environmental impacts of the atomic bombings. Having visited Japan before, I was already familiar with many cultural and social norms. However, living in a small, community-based village revealed an even deeper sense of care, appreciation, and kindness that left a lasting impression on me.

My host family was incredibly welcoming and provided an intimate glimpse into everyday Japanese family life. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 10)**



*(Homestay Family Mayumi Yoshida and Yui Yoshida, Kakehashi Member Treyton Littlejohn, Kakehashi Member Devon Akiyama, Kakehashi Member Chris Ichiho, Homestay Family Kosuke Yoshida, and Ritsuo Yoshida)*

# JACL Kakehashi Project 2025

## Hiroshima and Tokyo



*(Kakehashi group picture in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome Memorial)*

**(FROM PAGE 9)** Their generosity and openness allowed me to experience Japan not as a visitor, but as a member of the community. With them, I was able to watch traditional Japanese performances (Kagura), cook Hiroshima-style meals like Okonomiyaki, and even visit and explore the local volunteer-led fire station.

Furthermore, in downtown Hiroshima, I learned not only through the extensive museum exhibits, but through the landscape itself, where physical scars (such as old buildings and surviving trees) quietly testify to the lasting effects of the atomic bomb.

The program also highlighted challenges shared by communities around the world, including the difficulty of maintaining active engagement amid aging populations and declining interest among younger generations. This was apparent throughout my rural community where many host families discussed difficulty in continuing to maintain old buildings and the many rice fields, amidst the city's population shift. As I continue my work with the JA community through organizations such as the Northern California Japanese American Youth Alliance and the Buddhist Churches of America, I hope to carry these lessons forward and help ensure that our community remains vibrant and connected for decades to come.



*(Kakehashi Group inside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs meeting the Parliamentary Vice-Minister, Mr. Onishi Yohei)*

I applied to the Kakehashi program both to strengthen relationships with fellow Japanese American youth organizers and to gain a broader understanding of Japanese and Japanese American culture. Because part of my family originated in Hiroshima, this experience offered a meaningful opportunity to explore the region they once called home. Through this program, I was able to enjoy, quite tangibly, the gentle and warm community culture which had once shaped my ancestors.

The program exceeded my expectations, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunities it provided to learn, reflect, and engage. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Japanese American Citizens League for its continued support of programs like Kakehashi and for its longstanding commitment to strengthening Japanese American leadership and community engagement.

# Florin JACL-SV Shows Up and Speaks Out



*(Survivors attending Tanforan Rally)*

By Josh Kaizuka and Andy Noguchi

Since our last newsletter, our members have continued to show up, stand together, and raise their voices for democracy and justice. On October 18, 2025, Florin JACL-SV was represented at two powerful rallies.

One group gathered at Tanforan, the site of a temporary WWII detention facility, for the “ICE Out of California” rally. Standing on that ground where 6,000 Japanese Americans were once imprisoned in converted horse stalls was a solemn reminder of what can happen when fear and injustice are allowed to

take hold. More than 400 people came together in solidarity, honoring that history while speaking out against present-day injustices.

The sound of taiko, performed by Kongo Gumi, echoed across the site—both a tribute and a call to action. The rally, organized by Tsuru for Solidarity, JA Families for Justice, and other Bay Area Japanese American organizations, brought together generations committed to ensuring that history is never repeated.

On that same day, with little notice, 32 of our members and friends mobilized to attend another rally. For many, it was their very first time participating in a demonstration. Together, they joined an inspiring crowd of over 7,000 peaceful protesters united behind a clear and urgent message: “No Kings” and “Stop the Attacks on Democracy.” Signs and banners filled the space—creative, powerful, and often bringing moments of laughter amid serious purpose. Across the country, this energy was multiplied in more than 2,500 rallies, with nearly 7 million Americans standing up for democratic values.



*(Kongo Gumi at Tanforan)*



*(Andy Noguchi speaking at the pre-rally)*

Most recently, on March 28, 50 members, friends, and allies—including partners from Parkview Presbyterian Church, IWA Daiko, and Physicians for Social Responsibility came together at the State Capitol for another “No Kings” rally.

We began with a pre-rally gathering in front of the California Museum, where Andy Noguchi spoke about the urgency of this moment and the importance of collective action. **(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)**

# Florin JACL-SV Shows Up and Speaks Out

**(FROM PAGE 11)** Our voices were strengthened by youth leader Mana Nozue, Gregory Wada of IWA Daiko, and Dr. Harry Wang of Physicians for Social Responsibility—each reminding us that this work spans generations and communities.

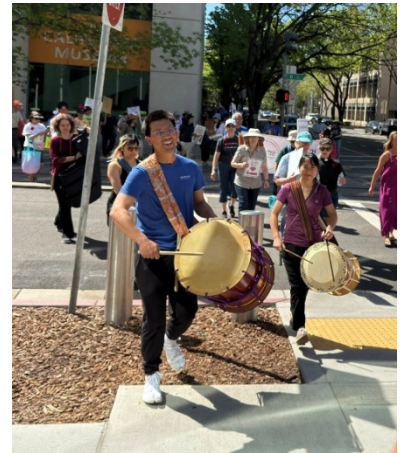
From there, we marched to the Capitol, led by the steady, unifying beat of taiko. That rhythm carried us forward—not just as individuals, but as a community bound by shared purpose.

At the Capitol, we joined approximately 10,000 others, including 1,000 who marched in from West Sacramento. Across the region and the nation, the message was unmistakable: thousands more gathered in surrounding communities, and millions across all 50 states stood together in one of the largest coordinated demonstrations in recent memory.

But just as important as the crowds were the connections. After the rally, some gathered over pizza—sharing stories, reflecting on civil rights and social justice, and building the relationships that sustain this work. These moments remind us that movements are not only built in the streets, but also in the conversations and community we create afterward.

From Tanforan to the State Capitol, being present matters. By showing up, the past is honored, the present is confronted, and a more just future is shaped.

Together, we continue to say: No Kings.



*(IWA DAIKO members Gregory Wada and Lisa Shigenaga)*

