



Progress Report No. 46 Fall 2013

Sakura Kai

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Photo by Jerry Fitzpatrick

THE BEGINNING OF SAKURA KAI 40 YEARS AGO

By Ben Takeshita and Kimi Honda
Edited by Marjorie Fujioka

Sakura Kai celebrated its 40th year anniversary on July 20, 2013, at our El Cerrito Senior Center. Forty years is for many people half a lifetime, and this article is to recall for this and future generations how it all started.

In 1970 a group of Sansei University of California students saw the need to provide recreational and social services to the elderly, immigrant-generation Japanese Americans called Isseis and formed the East Bay Japanese for Action (EBJA) of Berkeley. It was one of the most active Japanese American organizations in this area along with the various cities' Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and many community churches. The EBJA invited representatives from churches and JACL organizations to organize the Berkeley Nikkei Senior Center in March 1971, Eden Japanese Senior Center in June, 1972, and Sakura Kai Senior Center in June 1973.

Sakura Kai representatives were George Nakagawa, Heizo Oshima, Eimi Kuramoto, Alice Shimamoto, Hide Oshima, Ben Takeshita, and Kimi Sato (Honda) as noted in the By-Law and Articles of Incorporation filed October 3, 1974. Finding a place to meet, funds to hire a senior coordinator and to set up some senior center programs was an enormous task but with the enthusiasm and hard work of those in attendance they set up a senior center for the Issei in the El Cerrito – Richmond area

June Sakaguchi was the first senior center coordinator and the late Masako Yoshida was the Japanese-speaking translator. The first site was an old store front on San Pablo Avenue, and the name Sakura Kai was selected with a board to plan, coordinate, and support the coordinator and to start raising funds to operate the center. Programs were begun in arts and crafts, and volunteers were invited to speak on subjects such as nutrition, medical care, social security, wills, etc.

Sakura Kai center activities were held on the first and third Saturdays of each month, starting at the American Savings and Loan Association, then moving to the Community Involvement Center in El Cerrito temporarily, then moving to the Richmond Senior Center which lacked privacy, and then moving on to the Richmond Library. In 1977 the El Cerrito Senior Center became available, and Sakura Kai has been located here since.

Ben Takeshita and Kimi Honda remain on our board today. Grace Morizawa, a University of California student in the 70s will return to Sakura Kai in September to teach our new English as a Second Language class for Japanese speakers. Sakura Kai has continued to grow and thrive thanks to many who attend and support our program.

History of the Annual Sakura Kai Health Fair Kimi Honda

The annual Sakura Kai Health Fair was originated in 1975 to provide quality health screening to the Japanese speaking whose language barrier kept them from participation in local screening projects. The first few Health Fairs were held at various facilities, such as the Community Involvement Center which was a run-down redevelopment center in El Cerrito and the generous Free Methodist Church (Now East Bay Free Methodist Church). Dr. Ted Iida, a local optometrist, employed part time by the Richmond Health Department, volunteered his services, and was able to secure the Richmond Health Department for our Health Fairs. For over ten years the Sakura Kai Health Fairs were held at Richmond Health Department's facilities until their policies changed to charge rent for their clinics. Since then, the Sakura Kai Health Fairs have been held at the El Cerrito Open House Senior Center.

It would have been impossible to have the Health Fair for 38 years without the loyal, dedicated volunteers who give their services for this worthwhile cause. Each year approximately 85 to 100 volunteers are necessary to cover all the 14 screening stations, provide nutritious morning snacks, a delicious lunch, transportation, clean up, translate and escort the elderly. Too numerous to name, the volunteers are key to the successful health fairs.

(Taken in part from special issue printed 5/18/13)
BILL AND TAYE WAKI DAY AT SAKURA KAI

Every year since 2005 we honor the care dedication, and generosity the Wakis gave at Sakura Kai. From 1977 until 1995 Bill was Coordinator. His efforts helped Sakura Kai develop a partnership with the City of El Cerrito by making a request for the Issei seniors who had returned from internment after World War II and needed assistance only possible with a program just for them in the El Cerrito/Richmond area. We still enjoy this relationship with the city as we use the city's senior center for our first and third Saturday center activities.

Taye prepared the delicious meals all the years Bill was Coordinator at Sakura Kai. Bill was the Coordinator for some 18 years and many times he assisted the seniors beyond his work at Sakura Kai.

It is people like Bill and Taye Waki and other volunteers and teachers that we can "stand on their shoulders" to continue our program at Sakura Kai.

Congratulations Sakura Kai on our 40th Anniversary By Setsuko Doi, Coordinator

An anniversary celebration was held at the senior center on July 21, 2013. One hundred ten people attended the celebration luncheon including the current members. Also in attendance were special guests who played an important part in our history. Our first coordinator, June Sakaguchi shared stories of the beginning years when Sakura Kai struggled to find a meeting place until the City of El Cerrito invited us to meet at the El Cerrito Senior Center. We were also pleased that Meriko and Dennis Yotsuya founding board members and 108 year old Chiyoko Otagiri (a regular attendee until the age of 99) were able to join us.

I would like to thank all of you for making this celebration a memorable one. Also, special thanks to our devoted and hard working volunteers and to the board members for guiding us. You have all made my job easier.

I look forward to having more seniors spend a whole day at the center, taking classes, chatting with friends and enjoying their lunch. Along with the board members, I will try to continue to create more appealing programs for seniors.

The Guests at Sakura Kai's 40th Anniversary

Thank you so much for joining us to celebrate our 40th anniversary. Your presence made this event a special one. We were very honored to have all of you at the luncheon. Also, your long-time support of Sakura Kai is deeply appreciated.

Guests were: June Sakaguchi, Rev. Kay Sakaguchi, Meriko Maida, Emiko Shinagawa, Dennis Yotsuya, Grace Yotsuya, Bill Shimamoto, Greg Tanaka, Barbara Tanaka, Chiyoko Otagiri, James Otagiri, Fe Otagiri

SAKURA KAI WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Scott Takeda About me:



I like sports, enjoy playing taiko, and watching martial arts movies. Professionally, I have been self-employed for 17 years in programming and mechanical engineering

I was fortunate to be raised in a multi-generation home. In addition to the benefits of an extended family support system, grandparents have unique perspectives of people and the world I can appreciate today.

I began volunteering for Sakura Kai as a kitchen aide and instructor for the iPad/tablet class. When the opportunity to serve on the Sakura Kai Board emerged, I was happy to accept. Sakura Kai is an outstanding organization to learn, share and inspire each other. I look forward to serving with everyone.

BOARD MEMBER ARLENE O'NEILL



My name is Arlene O'Neill. I have been a board member since February. I was born and raised in Hawaii and moved to the Bay Area in 2001. I was a Social Worker for the State of Hawaii working with Child Protective Services, the Department of Health, District Court & Family Court, besides doing some part-time work as a consultant for a nursing facility.

Since moving to the Bay Area, I have continued as a Social Worker doing home visits with a private home health agency, and had short stints as a case manager at

J-Sei (when it was JASEB) and the Multi-Purpose Senior Services (MSSP) program which assists low income seniors. I currently work for Contra Costa County as a Social Worker in Richmond and have been with the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and the Welfare to Work programs. I enjoy traveling, cooking, eating, and keeping in touch with family and friends. I was an associate student at Sakura Kai until obtaining the honor of being a regular member in 2012 and enjoy the classes, culture, food, and fellowship. Aloha to all for allowing me to be a part of Sakura Kai.

POPULAR CASINO TRIPS by Sam Uchihara, Treasurer

Our casino trips are very popular with our seniors. This year instead of a two-hour drive, we went to Cache Creek Casino that took only one hour and fifteen minutes from the Bay Area. On May 24, 2013, we took a group of 52 gamblers to Cache Creek Casino for six hours of playing the slots, table games and dining. With over one thousand slot machines, many of them the one-cent variety, any manner of table games (e.g. black jack, craps, three card poker, four card poker, Texas hold-em poker, pai gow poker, etc.), one could find something fun to play and win (maybe). There are six restaurants to use the \$5 dining credit given by the casino upon arrival and the \$15 slot coupon were the lures that the casino offered to the gamblers.

The ride home was filled with mixed emotions. Some were elated at winning while some were not so happy. Most were looking forward to our next trip, October 24 again to Cache Creek Casino. Save your nickels and dimes for this exciting trip. The cost will be \$20 a person. The bus will leave promptly at 8:30 a.m. and return about 5:30 p.m

SAKURA KAI UPDATE ON WEST CONTRA COSTA ADULT EDUCATION By Marjorie Fujioka

What has been done

- *Our students and families signed letters sent to key state legislators.
- *Survey was made of hours our students volunteer
- *Older adult class teachers meet weekly with COSAS (Communities Organized to Save Adult School) to discuss ways to educate legislators on the benefits gained from our classes.

Victories won

- *A two-year reprieve to maintain our level of state funding.
- *Proposition 173 proposal to reorganize adult ed with community colleges was rewritten
- *Amendments keep us in K-12 budget until 2015

*Forums will take place before legislators vote on proposal to eliminate older adult classes

Continued efforts needed

*Inundate legislators with requests by as many as possible to support our programs for older adults.

*Document skills acquired, maintained, transferred to the outside community

*Document what is learned at older adult classes

*Collect data to show that our physical, mental, and social programs reduce dementia

*Preserve state funding to support seniors' lifelong learning and civil rights

Students' and supporters' help needed

*Email us at ECsakuraKai@gmail if we can send you information on how you can participate in Town hall meetings, on-line petitions, and testimonial letters

SAKURA KAI CLASS SCHEDULE

Both Saturdays Taiko, Conversational Japanese, Japanese Computer, Crafts, English Wi-Fi, Digital camera, Knitting Clinic, and Mah Jong

First Saturday only: 10 a.m. guest speakers or performers, Blood Pressure Screening, Yoga sit down and stretch, Karaoke, Shigin

Third Saturday only: Japanese Calligraphy, Ukulele, Hula, English as a second language, Tai-so (light exercise), Line Dance

To see classes in action and pictures of our activities, see our web page at ***SakuraKaiEC.org*** with thanks to ***Harvest Land*** for updates.

Become an Associate member to attend one class or be placed on our full-time attendance waiting list by email ECSakuraKai@Gmail.com or phone at 510.778.3406

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2013

February - April

Assistance in preparation of Federal State Income Tax for seniors

February 2

Monthly program: Presentation- Blossoms and Thorns

March 2

Monthly program: Okinawan Dance

March 2

Hina Matsuri, Girl's day special bento lunch and sakura mochi

April 6

Monthly program: Presentation - CPR and AED equipment for use by EC Fire Department

April 21

Cherry Blossom senior appreciation brunch in SF. Our honorees: Mr. Kunio and Mrs. Teruko Shibata

May 4

Annual Health Fair Screening with professional volunteer medical staff, other volunteers, snacks and lunch

May 18

Bill and Taye Waki Day, bento lunch

May 22

Casino trip to Cache Creek

June 1

Happyo Kai (recital) at the Fairmont School Auditorium

July 6

Monthly program: Lecture on acupuncture

July 20

40th anniversary celebration special bento lunch, red bean rice, red and white mochi

August 3

Monthly program: Let's make a scarf Knitting class part I

August 17

Presentation: The Kizuna Project--relief program of the East Japan earthquake and tsunami

September 7

Monthly program: Let's make a scarf Knitting class part II

October 5

Monthly program: Presentation - City of El Cerrito Recycling Program

October 10

Field trip to Benicia: Benicia Capitol State Historical Park, Fischer-Hanlon House, Nourot Glass Studio

October 12

City Wide Garage Sale: Sakura Kai Fundraising

October 24

Casino Trip to Cache Creek

November 2

Monthly program: Lecture on Bone Density

December 7

Bonen Kai (yearend party) at a restaurant

December 21

Christmas party, Santa visit, Bingo



Our sympathy on the passing of Sakura Kai seniors and our condolences to the families

Mr. Kosuke Ijichi

Mrs. Toki Yoshida

Mr. Jiro Fujii

Mr. Tom Oishi