



THE RICE PAPER

A newsletter of the Twin Cities Chapter
of the Japanese American Citizens League

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website: www.tcjacl.org | @TwinCitiesJACL

April 2023

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PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

今年も桜の季節になってきました！

It's cherry blossom season again!

I hope everyone is doing well as we see winter winding up and the telltale signs of spring beginning to show. It seems like many members of our community have made the journey over to Japan to enjoy the sakura this year. But have you taken a look at the cherry trees in our very own Como Park? They are located by the Global Harmony Labyrinth and Butterfly Lot and were gifted to the city of St. Paul by the Japanese government 11 years ago on the 100th anniversary of the gift of cherry trees to Washington, D.C. The Saint Paul – Nagasaki Sister City Committee holds an annual celebration, which is coming up on Saturday, June 10th. Come say hi if you see us there!

Speaking of summer events, we are bringing back the Twin Cities JACL Summer Picnic on Sunday, August 6th at the Rosland Park Picnic Shelter in Edina! Come for good times and good food, and please reach out if a carpool would make it easier for you to attend!

Please also save Saturday, October 7th for our annual Chrysanthemum Banquet! This year, we are dedicating our activities to featuring the future generation of our community. If you are a student or young professional (or know one), we would love to hear from you! Doesn't matter whether you're Yonsei, Gosei, Shin-Issei, or No-Sei (4th gen., 5th gen., recent immigrant, or none of the above), we would like to feature who you are and what you do. Just a few months ago, we featured two impressive Yonsei leaders, TCJACL Vice President Ryan Sudo and Minnesota Representative Samantha Sencer-Mura, on a panel as part of our Day of Remembrance program. If you missed the event, you can view a recording here: tinyurl.com/DORrec2023.

また近いうちにお会いしましょう！

We hope to see you soon!

In solidarity,

Save These Dates – Local Events

**The Twin Cities Board of JACL has announced the dates
for its summer and fall events.**

**JACL's Summer Picnic
Sunday, August 6, 2023, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Rosland Park, Edina**

Yes, the summer picnic is back! After several years of not having a picnic, the Board decided that JACL members and friends should have a summer get-together. More information will follow. Please plan to attend.

**Annual Chrysanthemum Banquet
Saturday, October 7, 2023, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Historic Fort Snelling**

Last fall's JACL's 75th Anniversary Celebration at Historic Fort Snelling was an evening to remember. This year a new permanent exhibit, which includes a look at the MISLS, should be open at the end of September. Be one of the first to view it! Again, more information will follow. Please plan to attend this event as well.

Other JACL Related Events

**Como Park's Cherry Blossom Festival
Saturday, June 10, 2023
St. Paul's Como Park and Conservatory**



Como Park's 20 cherry trees were a gift from Japan and specially developed to withstand the cold Minnesota winters. The trees are located near the Mannheimer Memorial which is near the Butterfly parking lot. The best time for viewing is between early May and early June. At this time, there was no further information about the festival on the Japan-American Society's website. Check the website for further information.

**Como Park's Japanese Obon Festival (Lantern Festival)
Sunday, August 20, 2023 3 p.m. to sundown (9 p.m.)**

There will be food, entertainment, demonstrations, and the lantern lighting. The event will take place near the Visitor's Center, at the Marjorie McNally Conservatory area which is located at the southeast end of the park. Tickets are required. There will be more information in the next newsletter.

Scholarship News

The Twin Cities JACL Scholarship committee has been quite busy the last month or so. Applications for this year's (2023) high scholarships have been received and will be announced at a dinner on Thursday, May 11, 2023. Recipients will be introduced in the next issue of this newsletter.

**Want to recommend a young person for a
Twin Cities JACL Scholarship?**

**We would like to identify current
high school, middle school, elementary school, and pre-
school students!**

**Please send the
name, address, high school graduation year of your
child / niece / nephew / grandchild / friend
to
scholarship @tcjacl.org**

**His/her name will be added to the scholarship database, and
they will receive an application during their senior year.**

Undergraduate / Graduate Scholarship Applications Available in September

The Twin Cities JACL is pleased to announce the availability of undergraduate/graduate level scholarships to be awarded later this year.

Scholarship applications will be available on 1 September 2023 for students currently enrolled in a post-secondary educational program and students who are currently enrolled in a graduate level program.

Scholarships are available to current JACL – Twin Cities Chapter members only. Membership must be active as of September 1, 2023.

Applications will be available at <https://www.tcjacl.org/scholarships/apply/>. Only one scholarship may be received during a degree program.

Applications are due 1 November 2023.

For more information, please contact scholarship@tcjacl.org



Student Essays

The Relevance of JACL Today

(As part of their 2022 scholarship applications, graduating high school seniors were required to submit an essay on the topic "The Relevance of JACL Today." We are sharing some of those essays in this Rice Paper publication.)

The Relevance of JACL Today - Essay by Maximilian Ryuuta Onikura Bly

The tale of Japanese Americans is not a globally recognized one. Despite the countless horrors the Japanese American community has experienced throughout its existence, very few seem to acknowledge or remember its trauma. The tale of Japanese Americans is not just the tale of struggling minority immigrants in the United States. It is the tale of broken families, blatant racism, and oppression from an illogical, unapologetic, and hypocritical government. It is a tale that must be remembered and retold. Not just to honor those who suffered, but because it conveys a powerful message that can inspire others to join our fight to stop similar atrocities that continue today and in the future. JACL, the organization that protects the tale of Japanese Americans, is more important than ever before.

Even in our modern age, the horrors the Japanese American community has lived through are disturbingly uncommon. The Uighur people live under similar and undeniably worse conditions than in the Japanese internment camps of World War Two. Families continue to be torn apart in America as parents are thrown across borders like luggage and children are locked up in cages like animals. Asian Americans face hate crimes daily. Oppression by an illogical, hypocritical government continues to be the norm, and the list could go on forever.

Humanity has yet again failed to learn from its mistakes. Some may argue that this is inevitable. We are incapable of contemplation and are doomed to be subject to our primate instincts forever. I don't see it this way. I believe that through exposure and proper education, we can make real social progress. Humanity has failed to progress because it has continuously silenced the voices of the oppressed. It has continued to deliberately look away from those who need to be heard the most. However, ever so slowly, times have begun to change. More and more people are regaining power stripped from them long ago and are finding their voices. It is time we found ours.

The tale of Japanese Americans needs to be heard by as many people as possible. One way I plan to do this is through Japanese. The history of Japanese Americans is even less known in Japan than in America. The existence of the incarceration camps occupies only a tiny corner of history textbooks, and people talk of war brides in shame. I am very fortunate to be born into a family that primarily speaks Japanese at home. My mother raised me as both a native Japanese speaker and a Japanese American. I am proud of both identities and plan to use them to help bridge the gap between the two communities and increase awareness among the Japanese people.

The tales of trauma the Japanese American community experienced can help the fight against oppression and racism. I am committed to conveying its message to as many people as I can reach.

The Relevance of JACL Today - Essay by Seijin Klepp

The Japanese American Citizens League, and organizations like it, are extremely important in their passion for and work toward creating an America where "all men (and women, truly) are created equal". Without the work of the JACL, our society would lack as many opportunities for Asian American youth, and our communities would lack important cultural representation and connection. Most important to me, personally, though, is that without the advocacy of the JACL, the anti-Asian sentiment that was so prevalent in our country so recently, may be allowed to continue.

There are a multitude of other ways the JACL acts to ensure equality and representation for Asian Americans. The volunteer opportunities available to members benefit our country at large and help to strengthen Asian American communities. As a young adult, I look forward to working with the JACL in events like blood drives with the American Red Cross, working to fight against child abuse, or possibly hosting a foreign exchange student one day. I appreciate that League events can also bring together Asian Americans of different generations, which is so necessary in keeping our cultural traditions alive. I know one of the fears of our elders is the loss of our culture, as younger generations are more and more "American" and less and less "Japanese". If I ever have children, I know I will strive to find ways to connect with other Japanese Americans and keep our stories and customs part of our lives.

It has been very eye opening being a young Japanese American woman growing up in a family who has gone through many hardships. Learning of the racial discrimination my great-grandparents endured, and comparing it to my experience today makes me grateful for organizations like the Japanese American Citizens League and their mission of equal rights and opportunities. My bachi was born in the Gila River Japanese Internment Camp, in Arizona, during World War II. When I hear the stories she tells of how my Japanese American great-grandparents were torn from their lives in California, and my great-grandfather was shipped to the Midwest, where he wasn't "a threat", of how she and my great-grandmother were imprisoned in the camp without him, and treated horribly, absolutely sickens me. Though that wasn't very long ago, I cannot fathom living in a world where such blatant racism is allowed and even encouraged by our government. Clearly, much work has been done since that time, to abolish the anti-Asian society my grandmother was born into, but one year after the Atlanta shooting of six Asian American women, and amidst the bigotry toward Asians we see in the wake of coronavirus' Chinese beginnings, we know there is much more work to be done.

The JACL advocates for the human rights of all people, and works to ensure atrocities like what happened to my great-grandparents never happen again, and that all Americans feel secure in and proud to be who they are. They offer many ways Asian Americans can work together to manifest the America we want for our children - one where each of us is valued for who we are, who we come from, and what we, uniquely, can offer our communities.

The Relevance of JACL Today – Essay by Kenji Scales

When I was little - anywhere from age five to age eleven - if someone asked me "what are you?", I would have proudly and enthusiastically told them that I'm Japanese. Today, while I still see myself as Japanese, I also know that there's more to my cultural and ethnic heritage; I'm multi-racial - Japanese, African American and white. My parents named me 堅地, (けんじ); I connected with that name and meaning since I first heard the explanation. Even though I went to a Spanish immersion school for K-5, and continued with my Spanish in middle and high school, Eastview offers Japanese as a language. I was excited to take the class as I love Japanese culture, food, anime and speaking Japanese. I believe that the Japanese American Citizens League is an organization that does many things, including preserving and celebrating Japanese culture and language and providing opportunities for people to learn about Japanese culture.

While I know that the JACL actively works to promote and preserve Japanese culture and language, more importantly, it works as an advocate to combat injustice and discrimination of all people, and to fight against anti-Asian stereotypes and discrimination. In 9th grade I read Julie Otsuka's *When the Emperor Was Divine*, a fictionalized story of a Japanese-American family's experience in the internment camp in Topaz, Utah. Not only did the story open my eyes to the realities of the internment camps (even though we had talked about this in our government class when we discussed Fred Korematsu's Supreme Court case, and Executive Order 9066), but we also had the opportunity to listen to Sally Sudo's personal story of her and her family's experience in an internment camp as well. As a young man of color who is somewhat "racially ambiguous" at times, I've certainly experienced peoples' side glances in my direction, or someone making a quiet remark that is directed at me, but never the kind of racism and mistreatment like Japanese Americans experienced during one of the many awful racist incidents in our country's history. I was impressed with Ms. Sudo's story, but also her very direct criticism of the detainment of immigrants at our southern border (at the time), and her concern for any mistreatment of American citizens or immigrants. I believe that her story and her stance against racism and discrimination of anyone, is in line with the JACL, and as a 日本人の三生, I'm proud of her and this organization in their efforts to combat injustice and discrimination for all people. Her message, and the Japanese American Citizens League's message, made a lasting impression on me. よろしくお願ひします。

The Relevance of JACL Today - Essay by Ryder Makoto Sitcawich

"WHY!?" I scream in my head, as I view a video of an innocent eighty-year-old Asian grandma getting beat in broad daylight. Why would anybody commit such a heinous act? Why is nobody intervening? Why are these videos becoming more and more common on my social media feed? As a society, haven't we progressed past this point? According to University of Minnesota's history professor Erika Lee's "Postscript: Asian Americans' Racial Reckoning" in *The Making of Asian America*, in the United States, an alarming 2,500% increase in anti-Asian incidents has accompanied the spread of Covid-19.

Racism and prejudice are nothing new to the Asian American community. Throughout the history of the United States, policies such as the Asian Immigration Act of 1924 and Executive Order 9066 represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg of xenophobic government legislation designed to discriminate Asian Americans. The Asian Immigration Act of 1924 thwarted the immigration of the Japanese to the United States. This law was justified through the yellow journalism propaganda and the use of eugenics, a pseudoscience in which certain races and ethnicities are deemed genetically inferior to others. Executive Order 9066 imprisoned Japanese Nisei, US citizens (or as they were called, non-aliens), in inhumane "internment" camps in fear that, simply due to their ethnicity, they were conspiring against the US government. The victims of this policy were ripped from their jobs, ripped from their education, and ripped from their possessions. Today, racism toward Asian Americans is again plaguing our country.

With the rise in anti-Asian American sentiment across the United States related to Covid-19 (consider such terms as Wuhan virus, China virus, and kan-flu which singled out China and the Chinese as responsible for the mass deaths and suffering caused by the pandemic), the role of the Japanese American Citizens League is more pronounced than ever. By preserving the cultural values integral to the Japanese-American community through programs and committees such as the JACL National Youth Student Council, JACL is developing the next generation of active citizens who can identify injustice and fight for equality not only with regard to the Japanese American community but also other communities including the African American and Muslim communities after the murder of George Floyd (2020) and 9/11 (2001) respectively.

JACL also holds many events, such as Sam Mihara's Storytimes in which he describes his firsthand account of the Wyoming prison camp and *The Bay Area Allies of the Resisters* book talk in which the writer and multiple guests discuss the Japanese resistance to wartime incarceration, which educate the public about the grave injustices that occurred as a result of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. In addition to in-person and virtual events, JACL utilizes multiple social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, to further increase the reach of our message.

In my opinion, the relevance of JACL is two-fold. First, through informing the public of our past, we can be better prepared to prevent further discrimination in our future. Second, by forming joint campaigns with other historically marginalized communities, the screams of victims, like the one depicted in the video, can be amplified to reach a broader audience. The power and shock of these type of events, I hope, will create a society that is more accepting of all individuals regardless of their race, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability.

Scholarship information submitted by Pam Dagoberg, Scholarship Chair

Other Local Events – Past & Upcoming

2023 Day of Remembrance: Panel and *Bridge to the Sun* author, Bruce Henderson

On Feb. 18 at the Eastside Freedom Library, the TCJACL held its Day of Remembrance commemorating the 81st anniversary of EO9066 (Feb. 19, 1942). There were 157 registrants with around 45 on site in attendance and a peak of 63 present on Zoom. Author Bruce Henderson spoke virtually about his new book, “Bridge to the Sun,” where he featured the significant stories of Nisei Military Intelligence Service (MIS) veterans Kazuo Komoto, Takejiro Higa, Warren Higa, Grant Hirabayashi, Roy Matsumoto, Nobuo Furuiye, and Thomas Sakamoto and the roles they played in combating racism and prejudice as they served their country.

Even though he has written 21 books, several on WWII and the war in the Pacific, he had never heard of the MIS. Henderson wrote “Sons and Soldiers” about young Jewish boys who escaped Europe before WWII as refugees. They came of age in the U.S. and then returned to the European front, using their German language skills to fight for the US and for the families they had to leave behind. Henderson was familiar with the 100/442nd, but while doing research for “Sons and Soldiers” he was amazed to learn of the Japanese-Americans in the MIS. He talked of how these men volunteered by the thousands for both the combat and intelligence teams while many of their families were incarcerated in the camps because of falsified security concerns and that not one case of sabotage was ever charged or proven against the Japanese American community. He had not been aware that the MIS Nisei were attached to every military division in the Pacific during WWII and participated in all the major landings while needing body guards to prevent being mistaken for the enemy.

Left to right: Representative Sencer-Mura, Ryan Sudo, Sally Sudo, Saengmany Ratsbout, Dr. Onishi



Following Henderson’s presentation, a panel was facilitated by Dr. Yuichiro Onishi, who teaches in the American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota. The panel consisted of Representative Samantha Sencer-Mura (first Japanese American Minnesota state legislator and an advocate for educational and racial justice), Ryan Sudo (Yonsei and social justice activist), Sally Sudo (childhood incarceration camp survivor), and Saengmany Ratsabout (childhood refugee camp survivor from Laos and current director of ESFL whose education, research and civic engagement work has been focused on migration and resettlement), and Dr. Yuichiro Onishi. They participated in a multigenerational and multiethnic discussion of the significance of the Japanese American incarceration experience today.

(Photo taken at Eastside Freedom Library on February 19, 2023)

Article and photo submitted by Karen Tanaka Lucas

Shutting Down the Incinerator in North Minneapolis (Raising Awareness + Petition)

Professor Dr. Yuichiro Onishi, Chair of African American & African Studies at the University of Minnesota, has been working closely with local environmental justice organizers to galvanize the petition campaign (recently launched). Dr. Yuichiro Onishi writes, “The goal is to shut down the trash burner in North Minneapolis called HERC (Hennepin Energy Recovery Center) by 2025. The collective leading the petition campaign is called the **Minnesota Environmental Justice Table**. I am trying to raise awareness about this important environmental justice movement-building.”

The Center for earth, Energy, and Democracy published a web page to explain why this struggle matters. It is quite informative. The page also features an interview with **Akira Yano**, one of the organizers of the MN Environmental Justice Table. [Follow this link](#).

Most important, **here’s the link to the petition** to shut down HERC: <https://sites.google.com/mnejtable.org/shutdownhere/?pli=1>

For questions, contact Yuichiro Onishi at ohni001@umn.edu or at 612-625-5573.

Open Studio Event at Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art

TC JACL Historian, Steve Ozone, along with 29 other artists will be hosting an Open Studio event at Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art at 250 Third Avenue North, Minneapolis, on Saturday, May 6, from 5:30-9 p.m. Work in photography, painting, sculpture, book arts, installation and printmaking will be for sale. Free entry for all.


Traffic Zone Spring Open Studio
Saturday May 6th, 5:30-9:00pm
 The Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art
 250 3rd Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55401

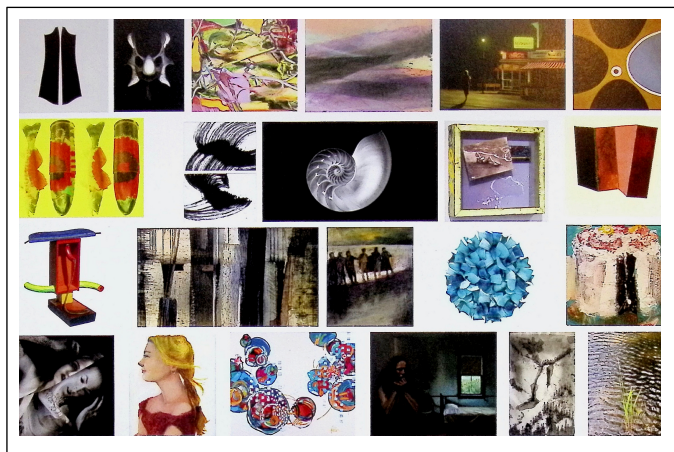
Participating artists include (guest artists in *italics*):

110 - Jantje Visscher	236 - Steve Ozone
120 - Paul Kwok	236 - Scott Seelins
120 - Pat Hui	240 - Jill Evans
200 - Perci Chester	300 - Lisa Nankivil
204 - Jim Conway	300 - Amber Jensen
208 - Vesna Kittelson	304 - Kristie Bretzke
212 - Rebecca Pavlenko	308 - Harriet Bart
216 - Patrick Pryor	312 - Jim Dryden
220 - Jodi Reeb	316 - Carl Bretzke
224 - CB Sherlock	320 - Phil Rosenbloom
224 - Kathy Bishop	320 - Jeremy Clark
224 - Joanna Halstrom	324 - Howard Oransky
228 - Jon Neuse	332 - Bonnie Heller
228 - Mary Walker	340 - Ellie Kingsbury

Traffic Zone Gallery: Convergence
 The exhibition runs from April 6 - May 6.
www.trafficzoneart.com

WE RECOMMEND PARKING IN RAMP C
 Need directions?
 Scan this code with your smartphone:





Examples of what might be for sale

Parking information

Welcome, Asia

The Twin Cities JACL board has a new member! Asia O'Neil, a senior at Minnesota State University, Mankato, has agreed to be the Youth Representative for our chapter. Asia was sworn in at the April 13 monthly meeting. Her first event is a "tabling event", to be held at the Mankato student center on Tuesday, April 25, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The focus of the event is to introduce students to JACL Youth activities and programs. She has even designed stickers for the students to take with them! (See designs below).



Japanese Social Justice Organization

Did you know that there is an organization at the University of Minnesota called the Japanese Social Justice Organization? The group's purpose is to plan programs that involve social justice issues that are of interest to both the United States and Japan. The JACL Social Justice group and the U of M group will have a discussion event on Thursday, April 20. The program will include Akiko Kashiwagi, a U of M student and former journalist.

Antigonick by Sophokles, - a new translation by Anne Carson
Directed by Martha B. Johnson; Producer/Associate Director Rick Shiomi
May 17-June 4, 2023 at Mixed Blood Theater www.fullcircletheatermn.org/tickets

Antigone is an ancient Greek play by Sophokles that depicts Antigone's heroic public defiance of King Kreon's tyrannical rule. This ever relevant play explores themes of love, family, loyalty, and civil disobedience. Antigonick, the translation, evokes the crucial timing of events, the "nick of time," in the play. Actors include Oogie Push, Rich Remedios, Laila Sahir, Sabastian Grim, Sandy Agustin, and 9 other professional actors.

Roof Depot Earth Day Protest (and other Sign Ons)

The TC chapter has been asked to endorse an Earth Day protest at the Roof Depot site. Details can be found at <https://facebook.com/events/1169576627117933>. The protest is being planned for Earth Day, April 22. The purpose is to make clear to city officials that Little Earth, East Phillips and their supporters say NO to the demolition of the Roof Depot and the Hiawatha Expansion project. The demolition could result in arsenic poisoning and the toxic fumes from heavy vehicles will pollute the surrounding neighborhoods. Being able to breathe clean air and drink clean water is essential to the mainly working class and BIPOC who live in the area. This protest is a way to fight climate change as well as environmental racism.

At the request of the National JACL, the TC chapter (as well as all JACL chapters) was also asked to endorse the following in support of the Houston JACL chapter. The Texas state legislature is considering a bill (SB147) that would prohibit individuals who are citizens of Iran, China, North Korea, or Russia from purchasing or otherwise acquiring title to property in the state. This bill, along with other bills of a similar nature, restrict the ability of immigrants from engaging in liberties such as purchasing homes, growing their businesses, and pursuing higher education. The bills in question, if enacted, would create barriers based exclusively on a person's ancestry or country origin. The request is for strong opposition to these kinds of bills.

The TC chapter was also asked by the National JACL to endorse a letter from the National Council on Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA) to the Office of Management and Budget advocating for the collection of disaggregated data on Asian Americans at the federal level to highlight the diversity of the group. The letter calls for doing a better job of collecting the many variations in these groups when looking at demographics.

Of White Ashes

Of White Ashes is a novel inspired by true events, true stories of the authors' family after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The authors are Constance Hays Matsumoto and Kent Matsumoto. The book will be available on May 1. The Japan America Society and JACL are co-sponsoring a virtual program to be held on Thursday, May 25, 2023, at 6 p.m. Details regarding registration to follow. More information can be found at <https://www.matsumotobooks.com>.

The Power of Irei

***Ireicho* is the sacred book that lists all those held in detention during World War II.**

Click on the following link: <https://discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2023/2/27/tsuchiya-family> and read of two Twin Cities brothers who traveled to Los Angeles in January of this year to honor their families. The two brothers are Paul Tsuchiya, Jr. and Fred Tsuchiya. A week later, their cousins, Brian Tsuchiya and his wife, Cheral, and Dr. Todd Tsuchiya, made the same journey to Los Angeles. Read the inspiring and touching story of their experiences.

Purchase Go for Broke Stamps

The U.S. Postal Service will stop selling the Go for Broke Japanese American Soldiers of World War II Commemorative Postage Stamp sometime this year (probably this summer). The remaining inventory will be destroyed, according to postal sources. The information was shared with the stamp Our Story Committee, the community group that led the fifteen-year campaign for the stamp. The stamp is a FOREVER stamp which means that it can still be used when the price for a first class stamp increases AGAIN this summer!



Congratulations!

At the recent Midwest District Council meeting, held in Omaha in March, TCJACL's Vice-president, Ryan Sudo, was chosen as the District's Vice-Governor. In addition, Simon Katz, a student from Iowa, but affiliated with the TC chapter, was selected as the District's Youth Chair.

Our president, Vini Taguchi, will be receiving a doctorate in Civil Engineering. His defense will be held on Thursday, May 4, 2023, 1 p.m. at the St. Anthony Falls Lab, 2 3rd Avenue Southeast in Minneapolis. All are welcome to attend.

Did You Know?

- Board meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6 p.m., via Zoom
- There is 1 opening on the board – for Membership Chair

To be notified of JACL activities, relevant opportunities, and events that occur on shorter notice than our Rice Paper can communicate, please sign up for the TCJACL “Email Blast” by contacting us at info@tcjacl.org or by visiting www.tcjacl.org/subscribe. Sign up now. Don’t miss out! Update us when your email changes.

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