



# Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai Newsletter Spring 2025

## President's Message



Linda Asato  
President

Welcome 2025!! Greetings to all members and friends!

I hope many of you enjoyed the balmy weather we had in December only to be met with a blustery and chilly January!

We're excited to usher in the Year of the Snake, a time for shedding bad energy and embracing new beginnings. Our performance groups are already practicing for the upcoming events this year and the planning for the 60th Anniversary celebration in May 2026 is well underway. If you would like to assist us in the prepping of any of these events, please contact Linda Asato to join one of our committees. There is much work to do in advance, so any help would be welcome.

In December the sanshin group, Eisa Taiko and Chimu don don groups performed at the Holiday Matsuri in the new JASC building in Chicago. The audience was delighted to see so many of our young talent dance to the upbeat music of Okinawa. Our vice president, Minori Yamaki introduced the group and coordinated the program segment. Thanks to all the volunteers who supported us for this event.

2025



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We look forward to seeing everyone at the Spring Party on Sat., April 5, to share camaraderie, conversation, delicious food and entertainment. So, invite your friends, bring your dish to share, and enjoy an afternoon with our fellow members.

Finally, we welcome your ideas and assistance at these events to help us improve each year.

Thank you -- Linda Asato, President



# 2025 Spring Party

All members and friends are welcome!



**Date:** Sat. April 5, 2025

**Location:** St. Paul Lutheran Church  
5650 N. Canfield Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60631

**Time:** Doors open at 11am

**Lunch:** 12 noon

**Cost:** Members Free

**Guests:** \$10 per person

**Party Highlights:**

- Raffle prizes
- 50/50 Raffle
- Pot Luck Lunch and Dessert  
(Please bring a dish to share)
- Hot and cold beverages provided
- Entertainment featuring Okinawan music, dance, karate and more...



**DANCE  
SANSHIN**



**TAIKO  
KARATE**

**FOOD & MORE ...**



# --Announcements--

## Save the Date!!

Our summer picnic will be held on Sat., Aug. 9, 2025  
at Bunker Hill - Grove No.6 in Niles, IL



## \$1000 Kenjinkai Scholarship

We are offering a \$1,000 scholarship to a qualified high school student who submits a complete application by April 30, 2025. The successful applicant will be a senior who shows the most potential in helping us meet our goals of preserving the culture and traditions of Okinawa. There is an additional requirement of a minimum of 8 hours of community service which includes assisting us with a variety of tasks at our annual events. A Community Service form is available on our website.

Applicants should be current high school seniors accepted to an undergraduate program at an accredited college or university. Students attending the first year of college will be considered only if there are no qualified high school seniors. Details and application forms are available on our website: [www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com](http://www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com) or from an officer. We encourage you to apply early and Good Luck!

## Welcome New Members!!



We want to welcome several new members to our Kenjinkai family. We hope they will take advantage of the many benefits our organization offers. Our apologies if we left anyone out.

### New members:

Rachel Aka, Tia Felice, Edward Garcia, Mark Glochowsky, Kristi Lin, Owen Kreis, Yoshiko Murakami, John O'Toole, Betty Segal, Marina Takara, Hanae Tani, Kohei Tomita



# 2024 Financial Report

by Michiko Ishikawa, Treasurer

## FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR 2024

	EXPENSE	INCOME	BALANCE
<b>PREVIOUS BALANCE(as of 12/31/2023)</b>			<b>\$ 7,967.06</b>
Membership Fees Paid (Single 56 & Family 64)*		\$ 2,440.00	\$ 10,407.06
Donations from Members**		\$ 8,660.00	\$ 19,067.06
2024 Scholarship ( Rin Vizconde)	\$ 1,000.00		\$ 18,067.06
PREVIOUS BALANCE from Performance Group		\$ 2,658.77	\$ 20,725.83
2024 Performance Income		\$ 2,000.00	\$ 22,725.83
2024 Performance Expenses ( Microphone, Travel Exp & Costumes)	\$ 3,429.38		\$ 19,296.45
Chimu Dondon Fee	\$ 500.00		\$ 18,796.45
2024 Spring Festival Income		\$ 1,110.29	\$ 19,906.74
2024 Spring Festival Expenses	\$ 3,255.29		\$ 16,651.45
2024 Cooking Class Income ( Total 17 X @\$49) + ( 3 X \$50 )		\$ 983.00	\$ 17,634.45
2024 Cooking Class Expenses( site & Chef)	\$ 516.49		\$ 17,117.96
Sale of aprons at Cooking Class and Picnic		\$ 180.00	\$ 17,297.96
2024 Picnic Bento Sales Raffle Sale, Farmers Goods & T-Shirts Sale		\$ 2,547.00	\$ 19,844.96
2024 Picnics Expenses ( Bento, Prize, Drinks, Ice, Ice Cream & Insurance )	\$ 3,320.28		\$ 16,524.68
2024 Yuiden Income Sponsorship Ads		\$ 1,800.00	\$ 18,324.68
2024 Yuiden's Income( Sales of Items)		\$ 2,259.00	\$ 20,583.68
2024 Yuiden Total Expenses ( Program and Sales Items)	\$ 3,744.53		\$ 16,839.15
2024 Total Administrative Expenses,( 3 News Letter, Postage, Meeting Exp, Website fee , Storage Fee, Paypal fee & PO Box)	\$ 3,770.52		\$ 13,068.63
Obituary Donation to Mr. Doi & Mrs. Higa	\$ 200.00		\$ 12,868.63
T-Shirts cost	\$ 514.04		\$ 12,354.59
State of IL Annual Report	\$ 15.00		\$ 12,339.59
2025 Picnic Site Deposit	\$ 200.00		\$ 12,139.59
<b>AS of 12/31/2024 Bank Statement Balance</b>			<b>\$ 12,139.59</b>

## Time to Renew Your Membership!

It's that time of year to renew and submit your membership form and fee! Your membership includes free admission to our spring party, summer picnic and Yuiden events and a free copy of our spring, summer and autumn newsletters.

The fees have remained the same, \$15 for single and \$25 for family membership. We are happy to report that we haven't raised our fees in over twenty years! Donations are always welcome.

For your convenience, we have enclosed an updated membership form with a box to check if your information hasn't changed. We accept cash, checks, credit cards, Paypal or Zelle payments. The deadline is April 30th.

Thank you for your support!







# MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT

This month's spotlight is on Miwa Vizconde and her family who have been actively involved in the sanshin group and Eisa Taiko group for a number of years. In spite of her busy schedule, she is able to balance work, family, hobbies and playing the sanshin.



## My Connection with Okinawa - by Miwa Vizconde



Miwa Vizconde with her children



Miwa Vizconde

I still vividly remember my first impression of Okinawa. During my high school years in Osaka, my school placed a strong emphasis on never repeating history and striving for peace.

As part of this initiative, we visited Okinawa for our school trip, where we explored sites like the Himeyuri Monument and air raid shelters. The intense emotions I felt during those visits remain with me to this day.

My deepest connection with Okinawa, however, was forged through my encounter with Minori-sensei from St. Matthew's Preschool. I have three children—Myu (21), Rin (19), and Sui (15)—all of whom attended St. Matthew's Preschool.

Sixteen years ago, when Myu was five, I watched a collaboration performance between members of the Okinawa Kenjinkai and St. Matthew's Preschooler at an event at Navy Pier. I was captivated by the elegance of the Ryūbu dance, the contrast of the adorable children's Paranku drumming, and the powerful Odaiko performance. The vibrant Bingata costumes, the harmonious singing, and the gentle sound of the Sanshin left a deep impression on me. The sound of the Sanshin, in particular, felt nostalgic, as it reminded me of my grandmother's Shigin( reciting poetry ) chanting.

In total, I was involved with the preschool for ten years. At that time, I was a stay-at-home mother, fully devoted to raising my children. When Sui graduated, it also marked my own "graduation" from the preschool community. Feeling a deep sense of gratitude for the love and care Minori-sensei had given us, I wanted to give back in a meaningful way. To create a special memory, I decided to surprise her with a Sanshin performance and reached out to other graduating mothers to join me. We came up with the idea of performing "Umi no Koe" by Kenta Kiritani, a song that was popular in Japanese commercials in those days. Many of the mothers were energetic and passionate, involved in performing Sanshin and Odaiko nowadays. We quickly purchased Sanshin, and with the addition of guitars and piano, even some fathers (including Jeremy) joined in. With my rewritten lyrics, our surprise performance was a success, filled with tears and heartfelt emotion.

This achievement was only possible thanks to Yoneko-san, who was teaching Sanshin at Mitsuwa Market back then. Nervously, I knocked on the door there and passionately shared my desire to express gratitude to Minori-sensei and St. Matthew's Preschool. Yoneko-san welcomed us warmly and patiently taught us Sanshin from the very basics, despite our complete lack of experience.

Playing Sanshin was a challenge on its own, but we also had to sing along. For seven months, we practiced diligently. Eventually, we began learning traditional Okinawan songs as well, gradually immersing ourselves in the world of Sanshin.





## Miwa Vizconde, cont'd

Thanks to the rigorous training of our current leader, Ms. Mayumi Tonks, I even reached a point where I could stand alone in front of a microphone, play Sanshin, and sing—a feat I had never imagined possible. I am deeply grateful to both Yoneko-san and Mayumi-san for giving me this invaluable experience.

Lately, I have been busy as a potter, leaving me with little time to practice Sanshin. However, I have continued to contribute in other ways, such as donating pottery for fundraising events and designing Okinawa-themed T-shirts.

Inspired by the passion that Yoneko-san, Mayumi-san, and Minori-sensei have poured into us, I am determined to give back to the Okinawa Kenjinkai with all my heart. Together with the Vizconde siblings, I hope to support and contribute to this wonderful community in any way I can.

-- Miwa Okumura Vizconde

## Miwa Vizconde Essay (in Japanese)

沖縄の第一印象は今でもはっきりと覚えています。

私の通っていた大阪の高校が平和学習に力を入れていて、修学旅行に沖縄を訪れ、ひめゆりの塔、防空壕などを見学した時の強烈な感情と共に。

その後の沖縄との繋がりは、聖マタイ幼稚園のみより先生との出会いが圧倒的です。

私には美悠羽みゅう(21歳)、凜(19歳)そして翠(15歳)の三人の子どもがおり、皆聖マタイ幼稚園に通いました。

さかのぼる事16年前、みゅうが5歳の時、Navy Pierのイベントで沖縄県人会の方々と聖マタイ幼稚園生とのコラボレーションを見た時、艶やかな琉舞、子ども達のパーランクーの可愛さと大迫力の太鼓、紅型の綺麗な衣装と共に揃った歌声と優しく響く三線の音色に魅了されました。

三線の歌声は、私の祖母が詩吟を習っていたのを聞いていたので、なんだか少し懐かしくも思えました。

それから私が幼稚園に関わったのは延べ10年となり、当時専業主婦として育児が中心の生活でした。

翠が卒園する時は私も卒園するという事で、もう幼稚園との繋がりが無くなってしまふ寂しさ、みより先生にたくさんの愛をいただいたお返しに、思い出に残るサプライズイベントとして三線を弾いて感謝を伝えたいと、卒園する同級生のママ達に声を掛けました。

当時日本のテレビコマーシャルで流行っていた、桐谷健太さんの「海の声」をみんなで演奏しないか? というアイデアに決まりました。卒園メンバーのママ達は今も三線、太鼓とパフォーマンスを続けているノリの良いパワフルな人達で、すぐに三線も購入してギターやピアノも混え数名のパパ達(ジェレミー)も一緒に演奏し、私の作った替え歌で涙と感動のサプライズが成功しました。

それが実現できたのは、当時ミツワで三線を教えてくれていた米子さんのおかげです。

ミツワのドアをノックし緊張しつつも私が聖マタイ幼稚園のみより先生への熱い想いを米子さんに語ると、快く受け入れてくださり、何もわからない私達に三線を一から辛抱強く教えてくださいました。

弾くだけでも難しいのに、歌も歌わなくてはいけないので7ヶ月間練習しました。その内に沖縄の三線曲も教えていただくようになり、三線の世界へと足を踏み入れる事になりました。

現在のリーダー、Tonks真由美さんの猛しごきにおいては、その当時では考えられない、自分1人でマイクの前に立ち三線を弾いて歌えるようにまでありました。私の人生にとってこのような貴重な経験をさせていただけた事、お二人には感謝しかありません。

最近の私は、陶芸家として忙しい毎日を送っており、三線の練習がままならなくなってしまいましたが、ファンドレージングなどに陶芸作品で寄付や、沖縄Tシャツのデザインをさせていただいたりしました。

米子さん、真由美さん、みより先生が私達に注いでくれた情熱に負けないうらい沖縄県人会へご恩返しができるようにヴィスコンデ三姉弟と共にお手伝いさせていただきたいと思っております。

ヴィスコンデ 奥村 美和





# Summary of 2024 Donations (updated)



**Special Donation: \$2,000:** In memory of Mr. Noboru Asato. Donated by Linda Asato and family members.

**Special Donation \$1,925:** In memory of Mrs. Misao Higa. Donated by family and friends of Robert and Perry Higa.

**Special Donation \$500:** In memory of Mr. Paul Doi. Donated by Tonko Doi and family

**Special Donation \$100:** In memory of Mr. Yusuke Arakaki. Donated by Wanda Arakaki

**Misc. Donation \$100:** From Oakton Community College for a presentation on Okinawa.

**Platinum Level \$200 and above:** Perry Higa \$500; Michiko Ishikawa \$500; Shinya Uehara \$250

**Gold Level \$100 - \$200:** Linda Asato, Joe and Jennifer Benigno, Bryan Berenz, Yoneko Berenz, Tom and Nozomi Corrao, Bob Higa, Don and Shinoko Janz, Hayako Kikuchi, Alex Kenney, Shannon Kindred, Shizuko Kindred, Akiko Maeda, Ikue Matsuda, Yoshiko Taki Murakami, Kathleen Nichols, Richard and Yumiko Ormsby, Emil and Tomiko Schumaier, Miyako Tsuchida, Ritsuko and Dennis White, Miyoko Whiteside

**Silver Level under \$100:** Rachel Aka, Mayumi and Nathan Aaberg, Katherine Anamizu, Machiko Bando, Robert and Elizabeth Berenz, Kazumi Nakandakari Blachman, Yoneko Cabel, Megumi Nishihara Carroll, Miki Crawford, Betty DeAvila, Chris Deiters, Linda Everitt, Tia Felice, Tomoko and Mike Flowers, Katsuko Grigsby, Mike and Kathy Higa, Kuniko Hirata, Misako Honjo, Akiko Ishikawa, Kimi Kimura, Rie Kobayashi, John and Mitsue Koch, Lisa Ritsuko Miller, Carlos Montes, Satsuki Morgan, Yoshie Nakasone-Patton, Masayuki Negoro, Ed and Ikuko Nichols, Dennis and Sumiko Potamites, Naomi and Chuck Salerno, Christian and Paula Schmidling, Marlene Serikaku, Toshiko Shimabuku, Linda and Michael Skurnak, Junko Sudo, Kumiko Walker, Richard and Sachiko Wiseberg, Minori Yamaki, Fred Yamanuha, Dane Yamashiro, Mieko Zukeran.

## 2025 Officers, Goodwill Ambassadors and Performance Group Leaders



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