



# Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai Newsletter Spring 2024



# 2024

## Year of the Dragon



## President's Message



Linda Asato  
President

Welcoming the New Year!

As we start 2024, we extend a warm welcome to our new members! Although winter began with mild weather, we had sub-freezing temps in January so please stay safe and warm for another couple of months. The groundhog predicts an early Spring. Let's hope he's right.

The picnic last year was a huge success, with an excellent turnout, perfect weather, delicious bento lunchbox, and many games for both children and adults. Save the date for the next picnic on **Sat., July 27th**. The taiko, sanshin, and dance groups performed at the Japan Day Festival in downtown Chicago. Their outstanding performance was well-received by a diverse audience as they represented the cultural performing arts of Okinawa. Read new member, Dane Yamashiro's article of his impressions. If you couldn't make it, we suggest attending this event in June. Thanks to all the volunteers and performers who made these events possible.

Our Spring Celebration Party is scheduled for Saturday, April 6th at St. Paul Church. It's been two years since our last election. We're asking our members to submit nominations for new officers. A nomination ballot is enclosed for your consideration.



## Upcoming Election of Officers

Are you ready to make a difference? Are you Interested in getting involved with the Chicago Okinawan community? If so, consider becoming an officer. We are now accepting nominations for new officers. We are seeking qualified candidates who can lead our organization into the future.

The term is two years and details of the responsibilities are on our website: [www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com](http://www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com)

Election will be held on the same day as the Spring Party, April 6, 2024.

We have enclosed a nomination ballot for your consideration. Kindly mail it to the attention of our current secretary, Doris Uehara by **March 20, 2024**.

Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai  
Attn: Doris Uehara, Secretary  
P.O. Box 94  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009 OR Email: [ueharadoris@gmail.com](mailto:ueharadoris@gmail.com)

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# 2024 Spring Celebration Party

(Formerly New Year's Party)



**Date:** Sat., April 6, 2024

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

**Time:** Doors open at 11:00am

**Lunch:** 12 Noon

**Cost:** Members - Free

Guests: \$10 per person

**Party highlights:**

- Raffle prizes
- 50/50 Raffle
- Pot Luck Lunch and Dessert Buffet (Please bring a dish)
- Hot and Cold beverages will be provided
- Election of new officers
- Entertainment featuring Okinawan music, Karate and Ukulele





# --Community News--

## Maui Wildfire Donations from Chicago

We want to deeply thank all those who gave so generously to help our Maui brothers and sisters in their time of need. The 8 August 2023 wildfire that devastated the centuries-old town of Lahaina and the surrounding areas was the deadliest in modern US history, killing 100 people and displacing 11,000. Over four months later, families are still struggling to find homes and businesses are waiting to restart. Our members donated a total of \$3,500 with individual amounts ranging from \$20 to \$1,000. Our donations went to the "Yuimaru Maui Fund" set up by the Hawaii United Okinawa Association which sent them directly to the Maui Community.



## Japan Festival Chicago 2023 by Dane Yamashiro



Mitsue Koch performing Yotsudake with the sanshin group

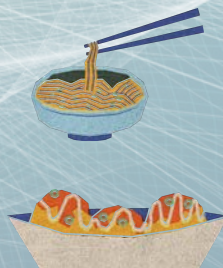
Did you know that Osaka and Chicago are sister cities? On August 19th 2023 in the Chicago Cultural Center, the Chicago Japanese American Council hosted the Japan Festival Chicago 2023. Situated under the world's largest Tiffany glass dome in the Preston Bradley Hall, there was a vibrant and immersive celebration of Japanese culture, offering a unique opportunity to experience the rich traditions, art, and flavors of Japan.

From local musubi, onigiri, kakigori, sushi, karaage, and mochi donut food booths to presentations of soba making, tea ceremony, and ikebana flower arrangements, there were both a mix of contemporary and traditional Japanese culture. The festival organizers also curated a beautiful performance program in the Cassidy Theater that featured many from organizations across Chicago. Some of the highlights were the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai's Ryukyuan dance and eisa performance, the Awadori Chicago Mikoren's Awa dance, and a special musical performance from the Takarazuka OG group.

This cultural extravaganza was not only a feast for the senses but also a platform for fostering cross-cultural exchanges and building bridges between the Japanese community and the diverse audience in Chicago. Hosted for the first time in the Chicago Cultural Center, I felt it was fitting to marvel at the historical significance of the Louis Comfort Tiffany art glass dome that was restored in 2008 originally constructed in 1897 when the building opened as the first Chicago Public Library. In order to restore the 30,000 pieces of glass, situated in 243 sections of the dome, and all in its cast iron frame, the panels had to be removed and sent to a world renowned glass studio. (continued)



Sanshin and Eisa Taiko performers



The Awadori Chicago Mikoren performers



## Japan Festival (continued)--

Similarly after visiting the Chicago Sister Cities International / Osaka Committee booth, and picking up some free swag, one could feel the deep symbolic connection between the thousands of individuals who immigrated from Japan in search of a restored life in America, established a community intricately held together by different organizations throughout the region, and united in one diverse home away from home, Chicago. As a melting pot of traditional charm and contemporary allure, the Japan Festival Chicago 2023 was poised to be a memorable event that brought people together to celebrate the beauty and diversity of Japan and Chicago. For those who couldn't attend, we hope to see you again this year!



**Dane Yamashiro** joined our Kenjinkai in 2023 and is one of our youngest and most enthusiastic volunteers yet. He recently graduated from the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) with a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering and specializes in renewable energy. Originally from Kailua, Hawaii, he lives in Chicago and was so happy to discover the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai organization. We welcome Dane and hope you can meet him at one of our future events.



## 1000 Hats knitted by Yoneko Cabel

Yoneko Cabel, longtime member of the Kenjinkai, knitted 1000 handcrafted hats for a needy cause. Her inspiration came from a bus stop encounter with children in need of warmth, motivating her to set an example for her own grandchildren to help others. Her efforts were well received in the Okinawa Times newspaper. We salute you Yoneko-san and thank you for your kind generosity!



## My Impressions of Okinawa

by Kobo Naka Michaeli



**Kobo Naka Michaeli**  
Sophomore at  
Northside College Prep HS

My impression of Okinawa was that it was a kind, welcoming place, like a second home. My mother was born and raised in Okinawa, and I visited my family in the summer of 2023 after not going to Japan for over 8 years. Seeing them and Okinawa was like revisiting my childhood memories. I also attended an Okinawa high school called Okinawa Shogaku high school for a week.

Being a student at Okinawa Shogaku was one of the best experiences of my life. At first, I didn't feel confident being alone in an all-Japanese-speaking school. I was wrong to think this because of how smart and welcoming the students were. As soon as I entered the school, middle schoolers greeted me in English and some just stared at me wondering who I was. I was placed into class 101, where I was immediately welcomed by the students. My classes included math, English, Japanese, karate, gym, and more. The difference in school culture and the classes themselves was noticeable compared to American high schools. Over my time there, the students and faculty helped me improve my Japanese so much, and I learned lots of high school slang. I was so lucky to be so quickly accepted by the students and faculty, and felt as if I was at home just from studying there for a week. I hope to attend the same school for even longer next year (continued on pg.8)



Kobo with Yuichi Uza sensei, Chicago Uza-san's brother (far left) and students from Okisho H.S. in Okinawa



Kobo with students from Okisho H.S. in Okinawa



## --Announcements--

### Save the Date-

**Summer picnic will be held on Sat., July 27, 2024  
at Bunker Hill - Grove No. 6 in Niles, IL**

### \$1000 Kenjinkai Scholarship

We are offering a \$1000 scholarship to a qualified high school student who submits a complete application by **April 30th, 2024** deadline. 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 to satisfy a minimum of 8 hours of community service which includes assisting the Kenjinkai 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 applications are available on our website, [www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com](http://www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com) or from one of the officers. We encourage you to apply early – Good Luck!

### Remembering Yusuke Arakaki



#### *A Dedicated Supporter of the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai*

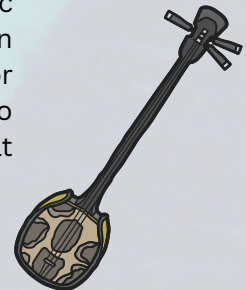
Yusuke Arakaki, a long-time member of the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, passed away on November 12, 2023, at the age of 94. Born on February 26, 1929, Mr. Arakaki spent most of his working life in Chicago before moving to Massachusetts in his later years. He passed away peacefully in his sleep at his home where he lived with his daughter Valerie and her family. Mr. Arakaki is survived by his son Warren and daughters Wanda and Valerie.

### Wanted: Sanshin music books



The sanshin group is seeking any new or used music books on sanshin, specifically the ones pictured on the left, titled, “Ryukyu Minyo Kunkunshi”. If you or anyone you know may have a copy they would like to sell or donate, please contact Mayumi Seino at [mseino@hotmail.com](mailto:mseino@hotmail.com).

Thank you.





# Scenes from the 2023 Summer Picnic



A fun time was had by all who attended the 2023 Summer Picnic in July. The weather was picture perfect and everyone was comfortable sitting under the large shade trees near the shelter. Once again, Kurumaya Restaurant provided 4 different types of delicious bento lunchboxes that everyone enjoyed. After lunch, there were many games and prizes and free ice cream donated by the Kenjinkai. The Grand Raffle included prizes such as an Apple iPad, 50 lb. bag of Tamaki Gold rice, home decor and many others. Members came from as far as Minnesota, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan.





# 2023 Financial Report

	EXPENSE	INCOME	BALANCE
<b>PREVIOUS BALANCE (as of 12/31/2022)</b>			<b>\$10,747.53</b>
Membership Fee Paid (Single 66 & Family 71)		\$2,765.00	\$13,512.53
Donations from Members		\$3,900.00	\$17,412.53
2023 Scholarship (Rio Kadono)	\$1,000.00		\$16,412.53
Performance Income in 2023		\$300.00	\$16,712.53
2023 New Years Income (Raffle Sales)		\$950.00	\$17,662.53
2023 New Years Expenses (Prizes, paper plates, food, drinks, sound engineers)	\$3,467.38		\$14,195.15
2023 Picnics Income (Bento, Raffle, Farmers Goods)		\$2,964.50	\$17,159.65
2023 Picnics Expenses (Bento, Prize, Drinks, Ice, Ice Cream, Fee & Insurance)	\$3,579.09		\$13,580.56
2023 Total Administration Expenses, (2 newsletters, postage, meeting exp, website fee, PayPal fee, PO Box fee & misc. fees)	\$4,506.27		\$9,074.29
Obituary donation to Mr. Yusuke Arakaki	\$100.00		\$8,974.29
Youth leader from Brazil Exchange Meeting	\$177.23		\$8,797.06
Mr. Uezu's performance fee	\$500.00		\$8,297.06
2024 Picnic Site Deposit	\$200.00		\$8,097.06
Other Income Rental Equipment		\$80.00	\$8,177.06
Bingata tablecloth & apron Exp (30)	\$450.00		\$7,727.06
Sales of aprons		\$240.00	\$7,967.06
<b>AS of 12/31/2023 Bank Statement Balance</b>			<b>\$7,967.06</b>

## 2023 Donations

**Special Donations over \$200 :** Perry Higa \$500, Michiko Ishikawa \$500, Shinya Uehara \$200

**Donations - \$100 - \$200:**

Linda Asato, Tom & Nozomi Corrao, Bob Higa, Ruth Keyso, Laura Kiam, Kimi Kimura, Shannon Kindred, Shizuko Kindred, Ikuko and Ed Nichols, Kathleen Nichols, Dennis & Sumiko Potamites, Tomiko Schumaier, Ritsuko White

**Donations under \$100:**

Katherine Anamizu, Machiko Bando, Yusuke Arakaki, Yoneko Berenz, Akami Bickerstaff (Janz), Kazumi Blachman, Yoneko Cabel, Ryuko Charapata, Chris Deiters, Keiko Dillon, Paul & Tonko Doi, Linda Everitt, Hatsuko Fortenberry, Nobuko Green, Katsuko Grigsby, Mike & Kathy Higa, Kuniko Hirata, Misako Honjo, Kazuko Hooten, Karen Kanemoto, John & Mitsue Koch, Shizuko Miller, Mika Miner, Sachiko Mitchell, Carlos Montes, Yoshiko Murakami, Yoshie Nakasone-Patton, Masayuki Negoro, Phil & Denise Potamites, Christian & Paula Schmidling, Marlene Serikaku, Linda & Michael Skurnak, Tomimitsu Yasukazu, Yujiro Uza, Kumiko Walker, Richard & Sachiko Wiseberg, Willie & Juana Wong, Fred Yamanuha, Mieko Zukeran



**Donations at Picnic:**

Prizes: Shizuko Kindred (home decor), Miko Gonzales (2-5 lb. Nishiki rice bags), Nobuko Gonzales (Bingo)  
 Baked Goods: Kazuko Hooten (biscotti), Junko Sudo (Banana bread)  
 Games: Bryan Berenz (water balloons)  
 Shaved Ice - Kumiko Walker  
 Hibiscus Tea: Michiko Ishikawa  
 Vegetables: Juana Wong , Ikuko Nichols, Michiko Ishikawa

# Welcome New Members!!

# Welcome



We want to welcome several new members to our Kenjinkai family. A total of 23 individuals and families joined in 2023. We hope they will take advantage of the many benefits our organization offers. Our apologies if we left anyone out.

Jess Abercrombie  
Keiko Anno  
Mariko Anno  
Machiko Bando  
Vito Gervasi  
Ken Kikuchi  
Rie Kobayashi  
Debra Kopsky

Mutsuko Kuniyoshi  
Jami Nakamura Lin  
Jane Matsuki  
Chiyo Menzel  
Kim Menzel  
Fumiko Nagao  
Masayuki Negoro  
Amy Oshiro

Aiko Ozaki  
Michelle Santelli  
Phillip and Arianna Siedoff  
Satoi Takasaki  
Tad and Takako Tanaka  
Roy and Joyce Yamamoto  
Dane Yamashiro

## 2023 Officers and Performance Group Leaders



**PRESIDENT: Linda Asato**  
773-593-4009  
lhasato1@gmail.com



**VICE PRESIDENT: Minori Yamaki**  
yamakimr1@hotmail.com



**SECRETARY: Doris Uehara**  
847-340-0435  
doris.uehara@kintetsu.com



**TREASURER/  
GOODWILL AMBASSADOR**  
Michiko Ishikawa  
Mishikawa601@gmail.com



**GOODWILL AMBASSADOR**  
Yujiro Uza 972-351-6405  
uzadojo@yahoo.com



**Eisa Taiko and Okinawan Dance**  
Mitsue Koch 773-706-0813  
mk51@att.net



**Chicago Okinawa Karate**  
Yujiro Uza 972-351-6405  
uzadojo@yahoo.com



**Okinawan Sanshin**  
Mayumi Seino 630-303-7005  
mseino@hotmail.com



**Ukulele Group**  
Kathy Serikaku 630-213-4343  
or  
Linda Asato 773-593-4009



**Performance Group Contact**  
Kathy Nichols  
kathleen\_nichols@hotmail.com

### My Impressions of Okinawa - (cont'd from pg.4)

I also got to experience the differences between daily life in Okinawa and the United States. One of the first things I noticed in Okinawa that I didn't get to see in Tokyo or Kyoto were the vast military bases and American influence in Okinawa. I went to places including the Parco City mall and Chatan which employed many English speakers and housed many Americanesque shops. It was very interesting how American culture influenced Okinawa.

My cousins and family took me to delicious Okinawa soba restaurants and incredible sights such as Kokusaidori. The most noticeable thing about Okinawa was how safe I felt and the kindness of the people. Living in America, and especially Chicago, I was raised to be on guard of my surroundings which can be stressful. Being in Okinawa was a completely different experience in regards to this because even the expressions on peoples' faces were kinder and more caring than those in America. I could walk around at night without much worry of my surroundings, so as soon as I came back to America, it was almost depressing. In all, my trip showed me how much of a second home Okinawa is to me. From my family to the incredible food and kind people, I would love to spend much more time there.