



Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai Newsletter

Summer 2024

President's Message



Linda Asato
President

Greetings and Happy Summer, everyone!

Spring kicked off with a bang, as our groups showcased their talents at three special events in May as part of Asian Heritage month; the Wilmette Asian Festival, Skokie Festival of Cultures and Ft. Wayne IN Cherry Blossom Festival.

- A big thank you to all the performers who took part in these events to represent Chicago and the Okinawa Kenjinkai community.
- Up next? The Japan Festival at Chase Promenade, Millenium Park in downtown Chicago on Sun., June 16 - save the date!

Our Spring Party was a hit! Cheers to the lively crowd, dedicated volunteers, and hardworking members. Much appreciation to everyone who contributed and renewed their memberships. As we get ready for the picnic in July, we seek volunteers who can help with setting up in the morning and with distributing the bentos at 12noon. Please contact one of the officers if you can help us. Wishing you all a fantastic and safe summer!

--Linda Asato, President

Presenting

YUIDEN - Love

Save the Date-Aug.10



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Summer Picnic - July 27, 2024

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Get ready for an upcoming dynamic showcase titled "Yuiden - Love," a two-hour presentation of Okinawan performing arts right here in the heart of the Midwest. This event will feature the talented entertainer from Okinawa, Yasuhide Uezu, alongside performers from the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, collaborating with dancers and drummers from St. Matthews Church Chimu Don Don group. Join us for this event at New Trier High School in Winnetka on Saturday, August 10th. Although admission is free, remember to reserve your tickets in advance. Bring along your family and friends for a delightful afternoon. We look forward to seeing you there!

ANNUAL PICNIC

Bunker Hill - Grove No. 6 in Niles IL

Sat., July 27th, 2024 11:30 am - 4pm



- Raffle and 50/50 raffle with cash prize
- Bingo and games for children and adults
- Free soda, tea and water
- Guest fee is \$5
- Bring your summer vegetables to share

Bentobox Order

Select from:

No. 1 - Chicken teriyaki/salmon - \$15

Tamagoyaki, shumai, kanikama, kinpira, hijiki, potato salad

No. 2 - Okinawan Bento (spam) - \$10

Spam, mozuku, miso goya, beni imo, andansu miso, konbu

No. 3 - Okinawan Bento (vegetarian) - \$10

Age tofu, konbu iricha, konbu with gobo, miso goya, andansu and mozuku

--All bentos come with white rice

How to order: Contact Linda Asato by

Email: chicagookiken@gmail.com or

Phone: 773-593-4009

Please pay by cash, Zelle, check or credit card at the picnic.

How to get there....



Between Touhy Ave. and Devon Ave.;
between Milwaukee Ave. and Caldwell Ave.

Website: Bunker Hill Fpdcc

Additional guidelines:

- There will be no potluck or food sharing. Please bring food for yourself or family or preorder a Bento Lunch.
- Soda and water will be provided
- Bring folding chairs, bench seating is limited.

**Place your orders by Wed.,
July 17th, 2024**



No.1 - Chicken teri/Salmon - \$15



**No. 2 - Okinawan bento
(spam) - \$10**



**No. 3 - Okinawan bento
(vegetarian) - \$10**

--Community News and Announcements--



Satsuki Morgan

Introducing our new Secretary - Satsuki Morgan

Please welcome Satsuki Morgan, our new secretary with a special message to our members:

Hi! My name is Satsuki and I am the new secretary. I'm from Naha City, Okinawa and have lived in Roscoe, IL with my husband, Travis and children for 22 years. We have 4 kids, 1 dog and 2 cats! I've been a member of the sanshin group since last fall and really enjoy it! I love playing the sanshin. I want to share the goodness of the sanshin and spread the beautiful culture of Okinawa to as many people as possible! I hope to meet some of the members at the next picnic. Thank you.



Doris Uehara

Acknowledging Doris Uehara - our outgoing Secretary

During the Spring Party, we expressed our gratitude to Doris Uehara for her eight years of unwavering dedication to the kenjinkai organization. Whether at parties, picnics, Yuiden events, or cooking classes, she and her family have been a consistent source of support for us. At each officer's meeting, she meticulously documented our discussions and agenda items. Doris also provided valuable suggestions that enhanced our efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In recognition of her contributions, we presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation and a gift card. While we will miss her, Doris assured us that she and her family will continue to volunteer as needed. Thank you, Doris!

60th Anniversary Theme Contest !

The Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai is gearing up for its 60th anniversary celebration in May 2026 and is seeking a captivating theme for this milestone event. Having promoted the Okinawan culture throughout the Midwest for nearly six decades, the organization is now entrusting the next generation with this legacy. We invite you to unleash your creativity and craft a compelling slogan that embodies the essence of Okinawan spirit. Some previous ideas include "Embrace the Melting Pot," "Harmony in Diversity," "Let's Toast to Okinawan Spirit," and more.

Submissions are due by July 15, 2025, with the selected entry earning a rewarding \$75 Amazon gift card, determined by our panel of officers. The winning theme will be unveiled during the picnic in 2025.

Kindly submit your theme to Linda Asato, the President of Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, either via email at lhasato1@gmail.com or by mail to: Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, P.O. Box 94, Elk Grove Village, IL 60009. Let the creativity begin!



A Loving Tribute to Noboru "Jim" Asato --10 year Anniversary Memorial--

The Asato family is honored to present this tribute to Noboru Asato, who passed away 10 years ago in August. He was a beloved husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, businessman and a devoted supporter of the Kenjinkai community for numerous years.

With heartfelt regards,
Linda, Anne, Sara, Mark, Nichole, and Kendyl



In Memory of Paul K. Doi, member and dear friend

Born November 19, 1936 to Mitsuji and Ritsue Doi in Seattle, WA. In 1945, his family resettled to the southside of Chicago. He loved being a Southsider. He had friendships and memories that continued to this day. He is survived by his wife, Tonko, children Mitchell (Tonisha) and Paula Doi, granddaughter SJ Cavé Doi (Josh Cavé Doi) Jason Doi, great granddaughter Juno Toshiko, sisters Irene Okuda, Grace Kido and Julia Shaw, sister in law Laura Muraoka (Peter Izui) brother in law Tom Muraoka (Verna), many nieces and nephews and good friends who were like brothers and sisters to him.

A Friendly Reminder to please renew your membership!

Please renew your membership for 2024 if you have not already done so. Family is \$25 and Single is \$15. Payment can be made by cash, check, Zelle, or credit card. Forms are available to download from the website: www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com or ask one of the officers for a copy. You can also renew your membership at the picnic, forms will be available.

Additional photos and events are posted on our Facebook page:
Facebook.com/ChiOkiKen

Meet our Sanshin Group Members!

We are delighted to introduce two of our talented sanshin players, Akari Shimizu and Yaeko Minamikawa, who have showcased their skills at our events. We have requested them to share their experiences and their initial encounters with the sanshin. Stay tuned as we feature more players in each upcoming newsletter.

Akari Shimizu



Akari Shimizu

あの音色良いなーってずっと思っていて。そうしたら、ある日ミネソタのランタンフェスでミネソタ沖縄県人会の方達が演奏されていたのです。あれだーって思って、演奏後にお話して、沖縄の楽器、三線とわかり、そこから三線を始めました。15年くらい前かな。弾いていると海の香りがするっていうか、海辺の風を感じるっていうか。良いなーって思います。

習いだすと、そんな単純ではなく、弾くのも歌うのも大変！良いなーって言っている場合ではないですが、三線グループの皆さんの力を借りて、少しずつ楽しみながら前へ進んでいます。ミネソタ沖縄県人会のとしこさん、シカゴ沖縄県人会のよねこさん、現在の三線グループリーダーのまゆみさんが知っていることを全部伝えようとしてくださった事に感謝です。

踊り手さんやエイサーさんたちの地謡をさせていただく時は、沖縄の伝統に直接触れることができ、その奥深さに感動し、光栄に思います。

私はシカゴ沖縄県人会三線グループの一員で本当にラッキーだと思っています。グループの皆さんは、自分より他の人のことを考える方々で、困っている人がいると、すぐに助けようとフットワークが軽い！みんな練習熱心で、仕事や子育て家事などやることは尽きないのに、いつも明るく、皆さんと一緒にグループで練習できて演奏できて毎日感動&尊敬&感謝です。

清水朱里

I heard the sanshin before I ever saw one. For a long time, I always thought it was such a nice and relaxing sound but didn't realize what instrument it was coming from. Perhaps it was a shamisen. Then, one day at the Minnesota Japanese Festival, I saw the Minnesota Okinawa Kenjinkai perform and thought, "That's it!" I realized that the sound I loved so much was the Sanshin! Immediately after the show, I introduced myself, and joined the group. That was 15 years ago. Even now, when I hear the sanshin, I feel like I can smell sea salt and feel the ocean wind. I love it!

But after I started practicing, I quickly realized that playing, and singing, is both rewarding and very challenging. There is so much to learn. But with the support of the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, I am progressing at my own pace, getting better little by little. I want to thank Toshiko san from Minnesota Okinawa Kenjinkai, Yoneko san from Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, and Mayumi san from our Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai Sanshin Group for teaching me everything they know about Sanshin. One of the things I like best about playing is accompanying the dancers and Eisa group. When we do, it feels like we are standing at the entrance of Okinawa culture and peering in. I am always deeply moved and honored by its depth of tradition.

I am lucky to be part of the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai Sanshin group. They think of others more than themselves and if anyone needs support, they are always quick to help. They all practice so hard, and even though everyone is busy with their jobs, raising children, or housework, they are always cheerful. They share my enthusiasm for sanshin, and every day I am grateful to be able to practice and perform with them as a group. Thank you.

Akari Shimizu



Yaeko Minamikawa



ペン、ペン、トゥン、ドン、ドン、ハーイヤ。

数年前のある土曜日の午後、ミツワマーケットで買い物をしていると、奥の方から聞きなれない弦楽器の音色、太鼓の音、歌声が聞こえてきました。三線の音色を聞いたことがなかった私は、「三味線？ でもちょっと違う。なんだろう？ この心に優しく響き渡るような柔らかい音色は？ なぜか懐かしい感じがする。」そう思いながら、音がする方へ足を進めていくと、その音はミツワの中の奥にある“STAFF ONLY”と書かれているドアの向こうから聞こえてくるのがわかりました。とても楽しそうな笑い声も聞こえてきました。

「ここは何だろう？」ノックもせず、こっそりとドアを引き、隙間から中を覗いてみました。三本弦の和楽器を弾きながら歌う数人、太鼓を叩く人、カスタネットのような木片を打ち鳴らし、掛け声をする人、その音楽に合わせて何人かが部屋の真ん中で踊っていて、その横では郷土料理風の食べ物を食べながら、楽しそうにおしゃべりをする人がいました。

私はミツワの奥にこんな場所があることに驚きました。「ここで何をしているんだろう？ 民謡っぽいけど、どこの音楽なんだろう？」と興味津々で、しばしの間、ドアの隙間からこっそり覗いていました。20歳でアメリカに来た私は、沖縄のことをあまり知らなかったもので、沖縄の音楽を聴いても、沖縄の音楽だとはわかりませんでした。

私の背後から、目のクリクリした背の低い、真っ赤なセーターを着たおばあさんに声をかけられました。

「あんた、なにしてるさ、入りなさい。」

「あ、すみません。。音色にひかれて。。。覗いてしまいました。」

「あなた、名前は？ 入りなさい。私は米子と言います。」

「えっと、はい、八重子と言います。」

「この場所で毎週土曜日にシカゴ沖縄県人会のメンバーが集まって、空手、三線、踊りを練習しています。」

そのまま勧められて中に入り、シカゴ沖縄県人会のこと、三線という楽器のこと、琉球舞踊についての説明を聞きました。ポットトラックで持ち寄った沖縄料理もすすめられました。すべて初体験です。やや強引に勧められるがままに、その日の終わりに、三線グループに入ることになり、次週の土曜日から練習に参加することになりました。当時、私には沖縄出身のルームメイトがいて、一緒に三線を始めることになりました。

これが私と沖縄県人会、三線グループとの最初の出会いでした。

あの日の出会いから、早や14年。今でも、14年前と全く変わらずに、三線の音色を聞くと胸が躍り、音色に癒されます。仲間と三線を弾き、歌うことが楽しいです。

日本の南西部に位置する総面積：約2,281平方キロメートルの小さい島、沖縄。沖縄の伝統芸能である三線を遠く離れたアメリカのシカゴで知り、習うことになり、三線を通して多くの人との出会い、経験をし、繋がりができました。なんと興味深い事でしょうか。

この14年の間に私が知り合った三線のメンバーは多様で個性的。それぞれ、素晴らしい人であり、一人一人の出会いに心から感謝します。そして皆が集うコミュニティである沖縄県人会、三線グループに感謝します。

我らが誇る三線グループリーダ&先生、先代の米子さん、そして現リーダーの真由美さんの三線への熱い情熱と私たちの上達を願えばこそその愛情溢れるスパルタスタイルのご指導に感謝しています。努力を重ね、成長していきたいと思えます。

ゲラゲラとお腹を抱えて笑う時もあれば、パフォーマンスや練習にストレスやプレッシャーを感じる時もあります。時にはソーポオペラのような珍事件も起こります。色んな事を一緒に経験して、できた仲間との絆を大切に思っています。

もちろん、三線を弾き歌うのが好きだし、上達するように、練習を続けて行きますが、一緒に三線を弾いている仲間が素晴らしいから14年も続けています。そしてこれからも。



“The Day I Met Sanshin” by Yaeko Minamikawa

This is the story of how I joined the sanshin group.

One Saturday afternoon a few years ago, while I was shopping at the Mitsuwa Market, I heard unfamiliar sounds of stringed instruments, drums, and singing coming from the back of the store. Intrigued, I walked toward the sound and realized it was coming from behind a door marked 'STAFF ONLY.' I also heard happy laughter.

“What is this sound? What is this place? For some reason, it feels nostalgic,” I thought to myself. Without even knocking, I quietly pulled the door open and peeked inside.

I saw a few people playing three-stringed Japanese instruments, one person beating a drum, and hitting pieces of wood like castanets. In the middle of the room, several people were dancing to the music, while others were eating homemade Japanese food and chatting happily.

I was surprised to find such a place in Mitsuwa. “What are they doing here? It sounds like folk music, but what kind of music is that?” I was so curious that I continued to watch through the gap in the door. Having come to America at the age of 20, I didn’t know much about Okinawa, so I didn’t realize I was hearing Okinawan music at the time.

A short older lady wearing a bright red sweater called out to me from behind.

“Hey, what are you doing?”

“Oh, sorry... I was attracted by the sound... and peeked in.”

“What’s your name? Please come inside. My name is Yoneko.”

“Um, yes, my name is Yaeko. It’s nice to meet you.”

“This place is where members of the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai gather every Saturday to practice karate, sanshin, and dance.”

Yoneko-san explained about the Chicago Okinawa Kenjinkai, the musical instrument called sanshin, and Ryukyu dance. I also got to taste Okinawan food for the first time. It was an entirely new experience for me.

By the end of that day, I had joined the sanshin group and started participating the following Saturday.

Coincidentally, at that time, I had a roommate from Okinawa, and we joined the sanshin group together.

This is the story of how I joined the sanshin group.

It’s already been 14 years since that day. Even now, just like 14 years ago, my heart leaps when I hear the sound of the sanshin, and I’m soothed by its Okinawan music. I enjoy playing the sanshin and singing with the group.



2024 Spring Party Highlights



Consul General Yanagi and Mrs. Yanagi
with the Kenjinkai officers


**Thank you
Volunteers!**



Volunteers at the registration desk



Volunteers selling raffle tickets



Robby Uehara at the buffet table



The hardworking kitchen volunteers



Young taiko performers performing Dynamic Ryukyu



Elected kenjinkai officers



Minyo dancers performing Natsu Sugata



Linda Everitt performing Kagiade fu



Ukulele group



Sanshin group members performing a medley of songs



Audience dancing to the lively Kachashii music as the party drew to a close



2024 Spring Party Message from Minori Yamaki, VP

はいたい!

皆様、こんにちは! シカゴ沖縄県人会副会長を勤めております八巻希です。
本日はお忙しい中、シカゴ沖縄県人会スプリングパーティーへお越しいただき、
誠にありがとうございます。

本日は沖縄の音楽、お食事、そして楽しい『ゆんたく』(おしゃべり)を通して
この寒いシカゴで、沖縄の温かさを感じられる事を嬉しく思います。

私は県人会の副会長を務める傍ら、シカゴ郊外にある聖マタイルーテル日本語幼稚園で20
年以上、小さな子供達と関わっています。

保育の中で、次世代の子供達に伝えたい事を考えながらいつも保育に取り組んでいます。
私が幼い頃、沖縄で感じたおじー、おばーのおおらかさ。近所のおじさん、おばさんの笑い
声。家族や友達、幼なかった自分を包んでくれたコミュニティの温かい愛。
沖縄とは遠く離れたシカゴでも、心温かくしてくれるコミュニティがここシカゴにありま
す。

今日はベテランのパフォーマーに混じり、青少年達も太鼓を叩き、獅子舞を踊ります。
ベテランのボランティアの中に青少年のボランティアが入ってくれました。
文化や技術だけではなく、一緒に過ごすことによって、沖縄スピリットを子供達に感じても
らえたらと思います。

今日のこの温かい時間が、次世代の子供達の素晴らしい愛に満ちた未
来へと繋がりますように。

本日はこの温かい時間を一緒に作ってくださり、ありがとうございました!



Minori Yamaki

いっぺーにふえーで一びる
シカゴ沖縄県人会副会長
八巻 希



Scenes from the 2024 Lunar Gala, Skokie Festival of Cultures and Ft. Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival



Lively performances at the 2024 Lunar Gala at the Drury Lane venue in Oak Brook



Consulate staff with the Kenjinkai performers at Skokie Festival of Cultures



Sanshin group performing at Skokie Festival of Cultures

Our groups showcased their talents at four significant events in February and May. These photos highlight:

- The first event was at the 2024 Lunar Gala attended by 900 persons at the Drury Lane in Oak Brook.
- The next event was the Wilmette Asian Festival.
- Following that, they put on a 20-minute performance at the Skokie Festival of Cultures.
- The very next day, the performers traveled three hours to present their skills at the Ft. Wayne Cherry Blossom Festival in Indiana, before a large audience of college students and families.
- A big thank you to all the performers who took part in these events to represent Chicago and the Kenjinkai community.



For more photos check out the Ft. Wayne Indiana Cherry Blossom Festival Facebook page



Sanshin group at the Ft Wayne IN Cherry Blossom Festival



Consulate staff in front of Shuri-jo banner at Skokie Festival



2024 Donations

*Thank you for
your support!*

Diamond Level \$2000: In honor of Noboru Asato on the 10th Anniversary Memorial. Donated by Linda Asato and the Asato family; Anne, Sara, Mark, Nichole, and Kendyl.

Platinum Level \$200 - \$1000: Perry Higa \$500, Michiko Ishikawa \$250, Shinya Uehara \$250

Gold Level \$100 - \$200: Joseph and Jennifer Benigno, Bryan Berenz, Yoneko Berenz, Etsuko and Albert Des Rosiers, Bob Higa, Shinoko & Don Janz, Shannon Kindred, Shizuko Kindred, Kathleen Nichols, Richard and Yumiko Ormsby, Dennis & Sumiko Potamites, Tomiko Schumaier

Silver Level under \$100:

Rachel Aka, Katherine Anamizu, Machiko Bando, Kazumi Blachman, Yoneko Cabel, Megumi Nishihara Carroll, Miki Crawford, Betty DeAvila, Linda Everitt, Tia Felice, Mike & Kathy Higa, Kuniko Hirata, Misako Honjo, Akiko Ishikawa, Hayako Kikuchi, Kimi Kimura, Rie Kobayashi, John & Mitsue Koch, Akiko Maeda, Ikue Matsuda, Lisa Miller, Carlos Montes, Yoshiko Taki Murakami, Yoshie Nakasone-Patton, Edward and Ikuko Nichols, Dennis and Sumiko Potamites, Naomi and Chuck Salerno, Christian and Paula Schmidling, Marlene Serikaku, Toshiko Shimabuku, Linda & Michael Skurnak, Junko Sudo, Miyako Tsuchida, Miyoko Whiteside, Richard & Sachiko Wiseberg, Dan and Minori Yamaki, Fred Yamanuha, Mieke Zukeran

Welcome



Welcome New Members!!

We want to welcome several new members to our Kenjinkai family. A total of 8 individuals and families joined in 2024. We hope they will take advantage of the many benefits our organization offers. Our apologies if we left anyone out.

Rachel Aka
Yoshiko Murakami
Marina Takara
Kohei Tomita

Kristi Lin
Megumi Nishihara Carroll
Tia Felice
Mark Glochowsky

2024 Officers, Goodwill Ambassadors and Performance Group Leaders



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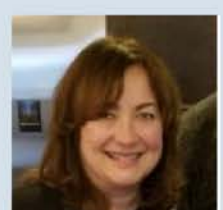
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Ukulele Group
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Follow us on Facebook.com/ChiOkiKen
Website: www.chicagookinawakenjinkai.com

