

BERKELEY-SAKAI SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION



Celebrating over 50 years of Friendship



バークレー・堺 50年超える友好

Annual Membership Meeting and Potluck.

Friday, March 13 at 6:00 pm

**Unity Hall of First Congregational Church of Berkeley
2345 Channing Way. Berkeley**

We would like to invite you to our 2025 Annual Membership Meeting and Potluck, held at the First Congregational Church, 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, on Friday, March 13 at 6:00 PM. The Berkeley-Sakai Association Board members will supply main courses, dessert and beverages. Please bring a salad, side dish or dessert to serve 6.

Come and vote in our new Board, hear reports from the BSSE 2026 students, see the Sakai Kindergarten Art display, experience Tatsumaki Taiko perform, have a great dinner and conversation, and buy nice things at the Silent Auction!

Proposed 2026 Board of Directors

| | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Kathryn Lucchese | Chairperson | Helena Meyer-Knapp | Rotary Liaison |
| Robert Lucchese | Treasurer | Atsuko Morse | |
| Rinko Miyoshi | Secretary | Molly Phillippe | Chaperone 2026 |
| Brad McCullough | Auditor | Carolyn Rising | |
| Forest Borie | Chaperone 2026 | Don Rising | |
| Amani Meleis | | Christopher Reed | |
| Paula Meleis | Alumni Chair | Jay Sordean | |
| | | Sally Stevens | |

The Berkeley-Sakai Association is a non-profit organization, established in 1967, to promote goodwill and friendship between the citizens of Berkeley and our sister

city, Sakai, Japan. We have been active and successful in arranging student exchanges since 1968, as well as goodwill visits, school visits and programs, marathon runners, artist exchanges, kindergarten art exchanges, and individual visits and home stays. Donations and membership renewals can be made by check to the **Berkeley-Sakai Association** and mailed to: Berkeley-Sakai Association, 1378 Ocean Ave., Emeryville, CA 94608 or using through PayPal on our website at: <https://berkeley-sakai.org>.

We could not do this without your volunteer support and contributions.

Thank you for making all this possible!

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Kate Lucchese

Last year's Newsletter celebrated the first Goodwill Mission from Sakai since COVID, and this year saw more "first since COVID" moments: the first (albeit small) Adult Goodwill Visit from Berkeley to Sakai, the first Sakai-Berkeley Student Exchange, our first booth at the Solano Stroll, and the first visit to Berkeley of Sakai Mayor Hideki Nagafuji: all good things!

Highlights included reconnecting Yuko Miyamae (SBSE 1971 and co-leader of SBSE 2025) with her longtime friend Sandy Quong...literally "breaking the ice" between BSSE 2024 and SBSE 2025 students at the Tilden Park Merry-Go-Round...and seeing the joy on the face of Sakai Mayor Nagafuji after his in-depth visit to Berkeley's SkyDeck Innovation Center.

Your membership and loyal support of the Berkeley-Sakai Association over the past years have made possible the "firsts since COVID" as well as the "millionth since 1967" experiences. With our 60th Anniversary fast approaching, won't you consider joining our one-year all-out effort to help reconvene the Alumni, welcome visitors from Sakai, and commemorate our long association with one another?

Won't you work with us to assure another sixty years of existence for our beloved organization, and spread the word to friends who might like to join?

As members going forward, remember, you will be eligible to join the 60th Anniversary Goodwill Visit to Sakai, slated for the fall of 2027!

With many thanks for all you do to keep Peace Through Friendship alive,

Kate (BSSE 1973)

MEET THE NEW BOARD CANDIDATES FOR 2026

HELENA MEYER-KNAPP

I am a scholar/activist, whose work and concerns center on peace-making, on ways to bring existing conflicts to an end. I taught peace studies and participatory political studies in college for decades up in Olympia, Washington at Evergreen State, a public liberal arts college. In 2001 I took on a semester's work as part of Evergreen's long-standing, international faculty exchange with our sister university in the Hyogo Prefecture. In the 25 years since, I've worked in Kobe twice more, and also spent extended periods doing research while based in Tokyo where my husband was affiliated with Waseda University. I have considerable experience doing similar work in South Korea.

I speak no professional level Japanese but I understand enough to manage every day life there, shopping/cooking/travel/restaurants etc. I have traveled all over the country . . . , our friends there of course are amazed at how much more we've seen than they have. The same is true in reverse. One of our closest Japanese friends has a husband who has visited every single US State capital.

Sister cities stood out in my earliest work on peace-making during the Cold War. "Soviet" American sister cities enabled citizen diplomacy when there were far too few opportunities to relate across the Iron Curtain. Relations like that of Sakai and Berkeley are just as important to ensure continued peace for the good of the whole world.

RINKO MIYOSHI

Hi! My name is Rinko Miyoshi, and I am an undergraduate pre-med student at UC Berkeley. After graduation, I plan to attend medical school and specialize in pediatrics. My passion for becoming a doctor stems from being the eldest of four sib-

lings, where I naturally took on a teaching and caregiving role—an experience that inspired my love for helping others understand and navigate their challenges. This is also why I recently began tutoring violin to young children, an instrument I have played since I was four years old.

I grew up moving across the world, having lived in Tokyo, New York, and the Bay Area, which has shaped my adaptability and appreciation for connecting with people from diverse backgrounds. Currently, I work as a medical assistant at an ophthalmology clinic and as a sports medicine intern with the Cal Football team, roles that have reinforced how much I enjoy working closely with people and building meaningful connections. Outside of academics and healthcare, I enjoy videography and capturing special moments during my travels, and I also run a food-focused Instagram account where I create content, share restaurant recommendations, and collaborate with local restaurants.

MOLLY PHILLIPPE

I was born and raised in Berkeley. My Family and I hosted a BSSE student in 1980, and went on the exchange myself the next year. We had a great trip and learned a lot and when I went off to college I studied Japanese language for a couple of years. I graduated from CWRU with a masters in Nursing and became a Nurse Midwife. I worked for the Indian Health Service in Phoenix and the University of Colorado in Denver before "retiring" to raise my daughters. I was the leader of my older daughter's Girl Scout troop for 5 years, and I chaperoned her school trip to France 4 years ago. This year I will be Chaperoning the students to Japan along with Forest Borie.

CHRISTOPHER REED

My name is Chris Reed, and I work at UC Berkeley's Global Engagement Office, where for the past four years I have worked on international protocol for high-level visitors and foreign dignitaries meeting with university leadership. Previously, I worked with several Japanese organizations, including the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and The Asahi Shimbun, and completed a master's degree in Political Science and Economics at Waseda University. My interest in Japan began in high school and was solidified through a Rotary homestay program, subsequent study as a Japanese major at UC Davis, participation in the JCHIP program at a

children's home in Mie Prefecture, and two years teaching English on the JET Program in Nagasaki. These formative experiences underscored for me the lasting impact of meaningful people-to-people exchange, and I would be grateful for the opportunity to help support and contribute to another sister-city relationship so that others may benefit in similar ways.

Report on BSSE 2026 by Molly Phillippe BSSE 1981

This year we have 8 awesome students going with myself, Kate Lucchese, and Forest Borie to Sakai this summer. Kate has been teaching the kids about Japanese history, Forest has been our Japanese language and culture coach and I've been heading up fundraising efforts and general wrangling. Brad McCullough and Amani Meleis have also helped out with the efforts to prepare the kids for their trip.

They've been making cranes to take to Hiroshima, took a trip to the Asian art museum to see the Japanese art exhibit, helped out at the Solano Stroll BSSCA booth in September, and had a successful bake goods/Hummus sale on 4th street in December.

The kids in the group did not really know each other before and I've enjoyed watching them become friends and get more comfortable together. As we head into spring, the students are all getting more excited about the trip. We will continue our fundraiser efforts (another yummy hummus sale is coming soon), attend the annual meeting, explore Japanese food, begin planning their program, and address the more practical concerns of what to bring.

VISIT BY MAYOR NAGAFUJI

On November 12 Saikai's Mayor Nagafuji arrived in Berkeley along with seven delegates for a 3 day visit. After presenting Kate the official greeting letter from Mr. Yozo Shimano, President of the Sakai-Berkeley Association, the delegation met with Mr. Otsuke, Consul General of Japan in San Francisco.

A brief stop at the Memorial Sundial on the Berkeley Marina was then followed by a visit to Noria Wines in Berkeley, where Nori Nakamura greeted them and explained his vision of making wines that pair with Japan food. Next, the group went to the Takara Sake Brewery Museum, meeting with Senior Sales & Marketing Manager Hideki Inoue for a tour.

The next day started with a visit to Berkeley High School, attending a Law and Social Justice class, visiting the principal's office to learn about the school and the student body, then ending up attending a Jazz Class practice. The morning continued with a visit to the Center for Japanese Studies followed by a working lunch at the City Club's Julia's Restaurant with Mayor Adena Ishii and her Policy Chief Julie Sinai, supported by the Office of the Mayor and the delegates. Mayor Nagafuji received a City Proclamation from Mayor Ishii and got acquainted, took photos in the upstairs lounge before setting out for SkyDeck.

The meeting at SkDeck involved a productive discussion between the visitors and Berkeley representatives on various mutual topics of interest, and the day ended with a tour of areas of the campus then a farewell dinner that evening at Eureka.



SBSE 2025 with Berkeley Mayor Adena Ishii (in white) and BSSE 2024 members Amani Meleis and Joseph Hegarty (third and fourth from left), translator Rinko Miyoshi and Chair Kate Lucchese (twelfth and thirteenth from left)



APRIL 2025 Goodwill Mini-Mission of Brad McCullough, Steven Farnum, Amy Murray, and Kate Lucchese with Sakai-Berkeley Assn stalwarts at a Farewell Dinner in Sakai.

PLEASE DONATE & BUY at the ANNUAL DINNER's SILENT AUCTION ON MARCH 13

Back this year is the SILENT AUCTION, traditionally featuring Japanese items, antiques, wine, nice kitchen ware, fine coffee, and restaurant coupons, all to raise money for the upcoming student exchange and add to the Fern Harger Student Exchange Scholarship Fund. Also, for the first time we are having an online auction, so please join in on that. IT'S EASY! To donate items, just email a photograph of

each item, the estimated value, and a description to info@berkeley-sakai.org by WED. MARCH 4 and bring the items to the Annual Dinner.

Come join us! We will once again be marching in the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival Parade on April 20, 2025. This is a lot of fun, walking the parade route waving to all the people on the sides of the streets, talking with the others in



IN MEMORIAM

It is with great sadness that we have heard from Sakai of the passing of Kenzo Yamaji on February 12 at the age of 102. Mr. Yamaji was a member of the Sakai-Berkeley Association since its inception, served as its president, and visited Berkeley numerous times with various Sakai groups, working tirelessly to promote goodwill through cultural and educational exchanges. On January 2, 2000, Mayor Shirley Dean officially proclaimed Kenzo Yamaji Honorary Citizen of Berkeley, California, and was presented with the Proclamation that summer by Michael Aplan, the Berkeley Senshu

Marathon runner. The Berkeley-Sakai members remember him with great fondness, and send our condolences to his family.

