

THE GRAINS OF RICE

Cincinnati Chapter Japanese American Citizens League

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Peggy Tojo Advocates for ProKids



Before Peggy Tojo became a ProKids CASA volunteer, she was a pediatric nurse. She loves children and wants to help them. And she feels these children especially need our help. Peggy trained as a CASA volunteer in 2003 because she realized foster children—who are in the system through no fault of their own—have no advocate, no one to speak for them.

ProKids, a nonprofit organization, trains and supports volunteers to work with foster children. The volunteers are court-appointed special advocates (CASAs) assigned to foster children to make sure their needs are met. A national study shows that children spend less time in long-term foster and move less often.

According to Tracy Cook, Executive Director of ProKids, “Children in foster care have court hearings where important decisions are made about their future. These include decisions about the child’s educational and medical needs, visits with family and, most importantly, where the child will live. There are about 1,200 kids in foster care in Hamilton County. In 2007, ProKids had about 136 CASAs serving 386 children.

Peggy thought she had seen it all. “Nothing prepared me for what I saw when I first visited this one year old in foster care system. Shari’s* (identity changed) eyes were sunken and lifeless. She was so malnourished that most of her hair had fallen out. She couldn’t crawl, sit up or lift her head. This baby had been laid down and forgotten.” When Peggy was assigned as Shari’s CASA, she weighed 11 pounds at 13 months of age. Her most important task was to help find a safe, permanent and nurturing home for Shari. Evette was a kind and loving aunt, and willing and able to take on this high needs infant. She convinced the magistrate that living with Evette was in the best interest of Shari. When the magistrate agreed, there were many medical and financial challenges to overcome to make this possible. Today, Shari is living permanently with Evette. Although she is in occupational, speech and physical therapy, Shari looks like the happy, healthy little girl she now is.

Permission to take excerpts from the May 2008 issue of *Hyde Park Living* was given to the *Grains of Rice* from Grace DeGregorio, Editor, and Chris Santoro, Marketing Manager of ProKids CASA, who contributed to the article. Peggy Tojo is a member of Cincinnati JACL

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008 JACL NATIONAL CONVENTION-July 16-20

By Betsy Sato

National JACL manages to pack many events- legislative, educational and social- into five days: business meetings, luncheons with speakers, exhibits, panels, dinners, receptions, electioneering and hallway lobbying. In this report I will share the highlights. For a more detailed account, I will post a longer report on our website.

Legislative: JACL is an organization that epitomizes the best and the worst aspects of democracy in action. Most of our officers and committees presented reports on what had been accomplished since our last convention in 2006. Other reports, like Nominations, Budget and Program for Action were looking ahead to where JACL needs to head in the future. Some, like Membership looked backward and to the future. As in any deliberative body, there were questions, comments and discussion before reports could be adopted. Adoption of Constitution and Bylaw changes required long discussion and parliamentary maneuvering before they could be voted on. The most exercise to be had in one of these sessions is holding the green voting card high in the air to be counted. The most notable Bylaw change is the switch to annual from biennial conventions. The first annual convention will be in 2011 following the 2010 convention in Chicago.

There were also a number of resolutions presented to National Council. The most far reaching was presented by the National Youth Student Council. Its passage put the JACL on record as supporting and advocating for human rights in North Korea. The youth did an outstanding job of researching and presenting this resolution.

An innovation for the National Council meeting was having plenary sessions, panel discussions on issues important for JACL. The Thursday session celebrating the anniversary of redress featured JACL speakers as well as representatives of the American Jewish Committee and

the Muslim community. The Saturday session focused on APA legislative issues: immigration and health care disparities. Both sessions were lively and informative.

Thanks to Mark Kobayashi's clear presentation, the 2008-10 budget was quickly adopted. **Elections:** Officers for the biennium are President: Larry Oda, VP of Operations: Sheldon Arakaki; VP for Development: David Kawamoto; VP for Public Affairs: Ron Katsuyama (**Dayton, Midwest District!!!**), Youth Chair: Brandon Mita; Youth Representative: Kimberly Shintaku.

Workshops: I attended *Getting the Most out of Your Medicare* where I discovered that there is lots of free, unbiased help available for choosing the best drug plan for your situation and for analyzing supplement plans. The other workshop was on *Civic Engagement* where Asian Americans shared how they got involved in politics and public service.

The Fun Part: The Welcome Reception held at Salt Lake's "This is the Place" pioneer park was great not only for meeting old friends but for the food and the train ride! Sitting through awards lunches and banquets may not sound like fun but getting to meet and talk with heroes of JACL makes it all worthwhile. Meeting Norman Mineta, Etsu Masaoka, Harry Honda and other elders provided an appreciation of the greatness and strength of past leadership. The keynote speaker for the Sayonara Banquet was Astronaut Dan Tani who spent 4 months on the International Space Station. He is someone we all can be proud of and an outstanding ambassador for NASA. His presentation made me wish I were young enough to apply for the space program. Finally, Sunday morning the Salt Lake Chapter arranged for us to attend a taping of a Mormon Tabernacle Choir program in their 22,000 seat conference center. Both the program and the venue are impressive.

PERSONALS

Condolences

Fumiko Tanaka's mother, Hideko Isogai of Kuwana, Japan, passed away on May 27, 2008 at the age of 93.

Welcome Friends of Cincinnati JACL

Haruko Hood

DONATIONS

Cincinnati Chapter gratefully acknowledges the following donations:

General Fund

Shiro and Fumiko Tanaka

Memory of Kate Brinton, Ludlow, Vermont

Rose Nakayama, Las Cruces, New Mexico

Honor of the baptism of Eric and Owen Smith, twin sons of Janet and Spencer Smith, grandsons of Les and Sue Fugikawa and great-grandsons of Mary Fugikawa.

Jacqui Vidourek

Memory of Hideko Isogai of Japan

Hiroshi and Hiroko Nishiyama, Cincinnati
Frances Tojo, Cincinnati

Grains of Rice

Rose Nakayama, Las Cruces, New Mexico
Yoriko Suhr, Cincinnati, Ohio

The Second Annual Greater Cincinnati Asian Summit

Save the Date

Saturday Oct. 18, 2008

9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Northern Kentucky University

Keynote address:

The Changing Face of Asian Americans

Workshops:

Intercultural Competence, Aging, Immigration

Organized by the Asian Community Alliance,

Inc. info: www.acacinci.org

IKEBANA INTERNATIONAL

Brenda Baird

As many of you know, my first Ikebana lesson was the day before the great Kobe, Japan, earthquake. The house was a shambles but the Ikebana stayed on my husband's desk. A sign? Yes, for me it meant that I needed to adjust my attitude about Ikebana, and that rules, order, and discipline were lessons I needed to learn.

Thirteen years later, we set up our Ikebana for display at the Cincinnati Flower show on Thursday, April 17, 2008. Then on Friday we had an earthquake that shook several states. Anyway, what are the odds of having Ikebana displayed and experiencing an earthquake the next day twice? Well, for me, another sign that I need to continue to be obedient.

We received a GOLD medal from the Cincinnati Horticulture Society, and another award by the Cincinnati Park Board for our display.

FANS OF AUGUST

Japanese Flower Arranging Exhibition will be held August 7 and 8 at the Civic Garden Center, 2715 Reading Road, Cincinnati. This Japanese culture exhibit with arts of fans and flowers is FREE.

Thursday hours are 10-4

Friday hours are 9:30-12:30

Reds Box Suite Tickets Raffle

Winners drawn of the 4th of July were:

1. Michael Tojo
2. Lois Nizny
3. John McDaniel
4. John Neidhard
5. Mike Carrell
6. John DeMarcus

We gratefully thank Toyota Motor Manufacturing, North America for supporting Cincinnati JACL again this year. We hope the winners and their hosts, Betsy and Kazuya Sato, enjoy seeing the Colorado Rockies vs The Reds.

Frances Tojo Beijyu Celebration

By Nicolle Rauch

On Saturday, April 19, 2008 Frances Tojo was feted with a surprise party for her 88th birthday, also known as Beijyu. There were close to 100 guests, including many family members and friends.

The Yoshikawas had invited Frances out for lunch, which she was led to believe would be a very small gathering. She certainly was surprised when she arrived at the Embassy Grill restaurant in Covington, KY and was serenaded by “Happy Birthday!” from all the guests to the guitar accompaniment by Sasha Strunjas. Gordon Yoshikawa then welcomed everyone and gave special welcome to folks who traveled quite a distance for the event including Dennis Bambauer from California, Shige Sawada & Ron Shigemura from Florida, David Tojo from Illinois, Aunt Chiyoko Yano and cousins Eugene & Dori Yano from California, and Jim & Cathy Hoyle from Missouri. Toasts followed to the guest of honor by niece Nicolle Yoshikawa Rauch representing the Yoshikawas, Jacqui Vidourek representing JACL, and James Tojo representing the Tojos. A buffet lunch followed and the guests wished Frances well and mingled. Sasa Strunjas played guitar beautifully throughout the meal. A photo slide show played with photos of Frances from 1936 to present day.

The Beijyu is also known as “rice age” because in Japanese, the kanji for rice (kome, mai, or bei) is written with the stroke consisting of kanji for 88 and with “jyu” or long healthy life.¹ Beijyu means celebrations of the 88th birthday, and wish for a happy, long life. This is an auspicious birthday. Frances received many well wishes in the form of cards, as well as some in the form of beautiful origami decorations. Kono Naegele and Hiroko Nishiyama created a large origami crane signifying longevity and three small turtles representing three generations. The Yoshikawas made 1000 cranes for the occasion, to grant Frances a wish. The Kariyas

told us that red is the color the celebrant wears at the Beijyu (typically a red vest and hat) and so they graciously brought a red corsage for Frances to wear at the event.

The afternoon brought another singing of Happy Birthday with Frances at her birthday cake making a wish. Frances’ actual birthday is April 21, 1920. It was an enjoyable afternoon by all, bringing back many wonderful memories and also making some new ones.



¹ From Ann Erb’s article on Beijyu on internet in the North American Bonsai Federation Newsletter.

Ohio Asian American Health Coalition (OAAHC) Meeting

By Shiro Tanaka

On June 27 and 28, I had an opportunity to attend a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, titled, “2008 Ohio Asian American Health Coalition’s Community Conversations,” held at the Holiday Inn Worthington. As the title aptly indicated, it was a gathering of approximately 70 people representing a variety of Asian ethnic groups residing in Ohio to express their (our) concerns about health and health care issues and to explore possible solutions in dealing with such problems. As such, there were no formal motions, resolutions or conclusions other than that the organizers of the meeting will sort out the collected information to draft a document in preparation for the planned national “summit” conference on the subject to be held in Washington, D.C. in 2009. Many nationalities or ethnicities of Asia were represented, including Chinese, Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis, Filipinos, Cambodians, Hmongs (an ethnic minority from Vietnam), Karen/Burmese (refugees from Myanmar), and perhaps more. A list of attendees will be provided by the organizer later. By the way, only Ron Katsuyama and Karen Jiobu from Dayton and I were Japanese Americans.

At the opening, Ron reported that the OAAHC was first organized in 2002 by him and others and subsequent conferences were held in 2005 and 2007. (Host cities were Columbus, Cleveland and Dayton.) During his chairmanship, OAAHC achieved acceptance of application for a Kellogg Foundation grant as well as the 501(c) (3) non-profit tax-exempt status. Recently, his chair was succeeded by Michael Byun.

During her keynote presentation, Betty Yung, PhD, of Wright State University stated that the meeting was a part of the national effort to “identify health disparities among minorities and communicate minority health need” (to policy makers), culminating in the “summit” conference in 2009. In the state of Ohio, 19 such local “conversations” were held or to be held and 3 statewide meetings are being held involving the Asian Americans, the Native Americans and the Hispanics.

The standard procedure utilized at each such meeting is to (i) identify the local needs, (ii) list up and prioritize them, and (iii) develop strategies to meet the needs. Later the participants

were randomly divided into four groups and my group was supposed to talk about “capacity building” moderated by Mr. Katsuyama. I did not make note of what other three groups were discussing. However, when we returned to the final plenary session, it was obvious that there were many common or overlapped areas of concern.

The organizers stated that the list of problems and proposals will be sorted out and condensed to prepare a final document, which is to be used in the 2009 ‘summit’ meeting.

Prior to my attendance, I corresponded by e-mail with the Chapter Board members as to what “health issues” I should be presenting at this meeting. Suggested items included osteoporosis, Type II diabetes, glaucoma, and laboratory test norms for Asians as compared to the Caucasians and African Americans. When the group listed up the items of concern on the wall board and prioritized them by votes, only diabetes and medication dosage for Asians were included (considering it being similar to the question of laboratory norms).

Then, what issues were considered important or critical by the majority of the participants? Although I must confess that I cannot present them in any organized manner, the following was presented by the groups. (Some of them do not make sense as listed without detailed explanation. Readers are asked to get the general feeling of the meeting from the list, rather than trying to understand what each item would mean.)

Group I

1. Funding needs – Apply for grants, contact foundations
2. Delivery of services – utilize main street media, local churches, ethnic restaurants
Outreach to schools, colleges, local corporations
3. Promote Asians to become members of the larger community, start volunteering
4. Cultivate cultural sensitivity – Asian fests, observation of ethnic days
5. Education on wellness. Use of community centers

Group II

1. Need for research to generate data
2. Need for more interpreters (who are trained in health)
3. More health care services
4. Diabetes care
5. Emergency preparedness
6. Youth services

Group III

1. Health information (free clinics, ethnic health care providers)
2. Affordable health care including medications
3. Provider education (on ethnic minorities)
4. Need for transportation and interpreter services

Group IV

1. Prevention through education
2. Building coalition (newsletters, prepare lists of providers who speak their language)
3. Single payer advocacy

During the individual presentations, we heard stories of many unfortunate cases which were not necessarily directly related to health care. Examples included a story of a Pakistani immigrant (mother of two young children) who was abused by her husband (from the same country) and was divorced by him when she consulted the social service for help; or of a Chinese woman who did not qualify for Medicare and experienced a large amount of medical bills when she suffered a stroke, etc. These cases are not necessarily limited to the Asian Americans but I had to realize that the situation could be further complicated because of the person's ethnicity and their inability to communicate.

In a sense, the problem is mostly of the first immigrants and of older generations. During the meeting, I noticed that young participants who were either born in the US or immigrated when they were small children had no problem in expressing their ideas, while older participants tended to speak broken English (with strong accent and bad grammars) despite the fact that they have lived in the US for so many years. As long as they are healthy and live in their own ethnic community, there maybe few problems. However, when they encounter health-related problems that cannot be solved within their community, a need to provide assistance becomes urgent.

While driving home, my thought was about the relationship of the Cincinnati Chapter (and even JACL as a whole) and the meeting I just attended. My assumption is that our members are mostly covered by health insurance of some sort such as Medicare, private health insurance or through the employer. We can go to a doctor or hospital by some means. We can communicate with health care providers and are not afraid to see non-Japanese physicians. Even if we wanted to see our own ethnic physicians, they are few and far apart other than in the West coast and the State of Hawaii. Unlike the large Indian community, we don't have a luxury of finding a Japanese doctor in a needed specialty in Cincinnati. In this respect, we may not have to do anything with the OAAHC. On the other hand, I also know that the family members of the employees of Japanese companies located in the Tri-State area often require interpreter services, for example, when they need a surgery.

Is my assumption wrong in that within our JACL community there exist no one who lack access to affordable health care? However, beyond Cincinnati and the Tri-State area, and beyond the Japanese American community, as I have just witnessed, there are minority Asian people who do not have easy access to the necessary health care. Some of their problems are common among many Americans, including the lack of affordable health insurance or medication coverage. Others are specific to the new immigrants such as the need for interpreters for medical and legal counseling. This is in this respect that Ron Katsuyama is taking a significant leadership role of reaching out to the Asian American communities in Ohio. Therefore, he is spreading out of the JACL boundary for the good of the underprivileged. His effort is really commendable. Nevertheless, it is still not clear to me as to what our Chapter should be doing for and with OAAHC. When the official document of this meeting is completed in preparation of the 2009 "summit" conference, we will be able to see its objectives and our role more clearly. One possible outcome may be that during the upcoming JACL National convention, this topic may be discussed and the National JACL may decide to actively participate in the 2009 summit. **ST**

CINCINNATI JACL AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships for 2008 have been announced by Ruth Takeuchi, Scholarship Chair. They are:

Tristan Morioka graduated from Clark Montessori and will be going to Kalamazoo College in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Jojiro J. LeCroix graduated from Sycamore High School with honors and will be going to The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio.

Alana F. Takeuchi will be leaving Vanderbilt University and going to Mercer University College of Pharmacy in Atlanta, Georgia.

Sara Pettit, granddaughter of Ruth Takeuchi has completed her studies at University of Florida and is a doctor of Veterinary Medicine in Houston, Texas.



Frances Tojo, Betsy Sato, Judy Ibarra (above)

Francs Tojo, Mr. Christmas who worked with Ezzard Charles, Eberhard Fuhr (top right)

Eberhard Fuhr with author of “from the heart’s closet”, Anneliese Krauter, fellow internee at Crystal City, TX (bottom right)

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM Goes back to the 40’s

On June 21 the Museum Center looked back into the 40’s with movies in the Newsreel Theater such as The Maltese Falcon, Casablanca and Arsenic and Old Lace. At 1pm Eberhard Fuhr gave a lecture on the German American Internment during World War II in Crystal City, TX.

In the Rotunda author of “Black and White Airmen” John Fleischman along with subjects in his book, John Lehr and Herb Heilbrun, spoke with the public. In the Losantiville Dining Room Swing Dance with WMKV, the Maple Knoll Big Band and Cincy Swing took place.

In the entrance ramp to the History Museum table displays were set up by Eberhard Fuhr and Frances Tojo covering both the German American and Japanese American internment experiences.



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Japanese American Citizens League
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www.geocities.com/cincinnatijacl

Non-profit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Permit 3302 Cincinnati, Ohio

2008 CALENDAR

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| August 7-8 | “Fans of August” Ikebana Exhibition |
| August 17
4:00 p.m. | Potluck Dinner
Hyde Park Bethlehem Church |
| September 25 | National JAACL Gala Dinner
“Celebrating Champions of Redress”
Washington, D.C. |
| October 18
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. | Second Annual Greater Cincinnati Asian Summit
Northern Kentucky University |