



The Scoop

Executive Notes by Dawn Mokuau

Happy New Year! We know that Oshogatsu is a very special time of the year for our community. It is a time for people to return to their childhood home or spend time with their families and connect with their cultural roots.

Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) students and educators have been busy preparing for the new year too. In December our students engaged in *osōji* and prepared our classrooms for their return in January. Another



Preschools work together to clean the Peace Garden classroom for the new year!

tradition that we focused on was creating a New Year's greeting card, or *nengajo* to express our *Kansha* (gratitude and appreciation) for our family and friends. With the help of a preschool family member, the children learned all about soba noodles, made their own soba noodles and enjoyed eating them together.

Our hope in integrating Japanese practices

into our curriculum will foster a positive self and social-identity for our children while encouraging relationship across differences.

As we have prepared for this year, I am looking forward to our year together. It's a tremendous honor and the realization of a life-long dream to serve in this role for NLF. I am deeply grateful to Cathy for igniting the possibility, her leadership, and guiding us through this transition phrase. Becoming a part of a community and organization that holds such profound significance is a rare and exceptional opportunity in one's career and lifetime. It's a gift that I'm grateful for every day. As a nonprofit organization, we often think we need to be really serious to do really serious work. I've come to learn from our preschools that if we're going to grow (*Gakumon*) and think outside the box (*Souzousei*, creativity), we have to value joy and play along the way. Our educators come to NLF everyday ready to play alongside with our littlest learners and in those moments we create games, solutions, and futures in order to make space for ideas and new solutions. It's this place of abundance and optimism that brings us joy!

NLF's Anniversary Celebration

After 3 years of virtual Anniversary Celebrations, an in-person event was finally held on Friday, November 17th. This special evening once again included the delicious sushi from Chef Andy Tonozuka of We Be Sushi, along with sake tasting provided by Todd Eng of Sake Trend and wine tasting by Jason Mikami of Mikami Wines.

This year marked a milestone in the history of NLF as the evening program honored **Cathy Inamasu**, on her retirement from NLF after working with the organization for 48 years and the past 36 years as Executive Director. In addition, the new Executive Director, **Dawn Mokuau**, was warmly welcomed and introduced. Serving as co-hosts for the program were **Joyce Oishi**, a current Capital Campaign Committee member, former Board member and parent of two NLF alums; and **Mika Stjernvall**, a current Board member, former NLF teacher and parent of three NLF After School Program students.

Joyce eloquently praised Cathy for her many years of dedication leading NLF, highlighting

the challenging times with the preschool facing evictions, the struggle to acquire the historic Issei Women's building and the construction of the preschool building addition. A video of the preschoolers performing a few special songs for Cathy, put together by Site Manager **Yuji Uchida**, was also shared. Following the video, **Cynthia Tsuchimoto**, a member of NLF's Capital Campaign Committee and parent of an NLF alum, along with Program Director **Naomi Miura**, presented Cathy with a beautiful art piece of 1,000



An exquisite origami art piece, created by Linda Mihara from Paper Tree, was presented to Cathy.

Photo courtesy of the Kaz Lewis

NLF's Anniversary Celebration (continued from page 1)

cranes in NLF's colors signifying the countless lives touched by her. The kanji in the middle, "sou" in *sou-zousei* or creativity, honors Cathy as a pioneer whose creative vision played a pivotal role in shaping NLF into the remarkable organization it is today.

Cathy expressed her gratitude to the staff, Board, current and alum families, and supporters as the success of NLF could not be sustained without this invaluable extended family. She talked about how her personal life was also immersed in NLF as she met her husband, Jay at NLF, her two children, Brandon and Cori, are NLF alums, and her 3 grandchildren, Cooper, Philip and Cameron, are NLF current and future students. She concluded her remarks by sharing that she will continue to volunteer on NLF's Capital Campaign Committee and looks forward to just being a grandparent in the program.

Mika extended her appreciation to Dawn in taking over the leadership role of NLF. She shared Dawn's extensive background in operations management, budget development and fiscal reporting, administration, and her Master's Degree in Nonprofit Administration from the University of San Francisco, which will all serve her well as NLF's new Executive Director. She was also a member of NLF's Board for 4 years and Chair of the Board for the past 2 years.



Cathy congratulated Dawn with a ceramic *daruma*, a symbol of perseverance and good luck, wishing her success in leading NLF and carrying forward its legacy.

Photo courtesy of Kaz Lewis



Guests enjoyed sake tasting provided by Todd Eng of Sake Trend and wine tasting by Jason Mikami of Mikami Wines.

Dawn graciously thanked everyone for their support and confidence in her as the 'new Cathy'. "Cathy's steadfast care, unwavering dedication, and commitment to excellence are fundamental in making NLF the extraordinary place it is today. Many of the attendees have a personal story or significant moment influenced by Cathy, where your life took a positive turn because of her. It is with this same care and wisdom that I will lead NLF with."

Schools and after-school programs provide spaces where students can safely explore their multifaceted identities, enabling them to shape themselves into the individuals they aspire to become in our society. I look forward to building the next generation of curious thinkers and problem solvers."

Capital Campaign Committee member, **Karen Kai**, then presented an update on the Issei Women's Legacy website project, "Dreams Interrupted...but not forgotten". She shared the website home page, explained the sections which are works-in-progress, and that the website is now up and can be accessed by going to www.isseiwomenslegacy.com.

Closing out the program was an energizing performance by **Crosswinds** composed of NLF alum parent **Jan Yonemoto** on sax, **John Chung** on bass, **Mike Lem** on guitar, **Rick Laurell** on keyboards, and **William Stokes** on drums. It was a wonderful evening and everyone enjoyed the program, great food and drinks, and socializing with old and new friends.

Special acknowledgements go to The Tateuchi Foundation and US Bank for sponsoring the event.



Jan Yonemoto, a parent of two NLF alums, (photo on the left) organized the Crosswinds band to play for this special occasion.

Photo courtesy of Kaz Lewis and Takeshi Moro

Halloween. Thanksgiving. Christmas. Staples in the lives of most of our families and central to the end of year observations and celebrations, the holiday season can seem like a societal necessity in our lives. Our affection for the dominant culture holidays as educators were woven into our classroom, activities, and environment. As our Nihonmachi Little Friends (NLF) community grew we reflected on holidays that were integrated into the curriculum and the beautiful cultural holidays that resonated with our families. We discovered that many families enjoyed Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas; and NLF families celebrated Lunar New Year, Hanukkah, Naadam Festival. Therefore, we were challenged to rethink our approach to holidays. We grappled with, 'What holidays should we focus on?' We wanted our children and families who celebrated holidays outside of the dominant culture to see their families' values and beliefs represented at NLF.

As we reflected on the question - "What holidays should we focus on?" - we honed in on the rituals of a holiday and their significance which led us to the value of the ritual and the holiday itself! Focusing on the underlying values of the holidays - helped us in our approach. Values like *thankfulness*, *creativity*, and *empathy* and *caring* are ideas that we wanted to highlight with the children this year that are connected to the holidays.

These values just so happen to align with NLF's five core values: *Omoiyari* (Empathy, Caring, Compassion); *Nintai* (Perseverance); *Kansha* (Gratitude); *Souzousei* (Creativity, Innovation); and *Gakumon* (Life Long Learner, Critical Thinker)

With these values in mind, we looked at the holiday calendar and

curriculum to find a way to be able to honor the importance and values in the holiday season, separate from the cultural or societal aspects of each holiday during the year.

One such example that we have already employed this year is to celebrate *Souzousei* (Creativity) with the kids, highlighting their inherent creativity, imaginations, and innovations during the Halloween season. We called this our *Creative Expression Week*, where we allowed the kids to let their imaginations run wild and build/create with as many open-ended materials as we could find. We were thrilled and blown away by the wide range of art, engineering, costumes, and creation that resulted in the week.



Students created a bridge from recycled materials during Creative Expression Week.

We also really wanted to take this whole season of autumn to explore the deep and complex ideas of *Kansha* (Thankfulness and Gratitude). We felt that in this season of change (changing seasons, changing colors, etc), we wanted the kids to reflect on the things in their lives that are changing, to celebrate and be thankful for those changes and transformations; those which have happened, are happening, and are set to happen.

We are bringing in a new idea: the *Kansha Tree*, a symbol we have for the kids to embrace the change in

their lives and to be thankful for those changes, from simple things like a change in bedtime, to the deeper thankfulness for things like a friendship lost or a friend who moved away. We encouraged the kids to scribe things that they were thankful for on leaf shaped post-its, which we have placed on the tree. As they eventually fall or are moved to the base, they will be replaced with new ideas of thankfulness, hopefully creating a cycle of the changes in their lives, and the *Kansha* for those changes.



Students worked together to create the Gratitude Tree.

In autumn, we reflected on the changes in our past, signified by the pile of leaves (leaf post-its) that were scattered around the base of the tree. Come spring time, we are planning to have a new season where kids can scribe the things they are thankful for on new, green leaves that will be placed on the tree as new, "sprouting" changes they are grateful for!

As we look forward to the new year, we are excited to incorporate the other NLF values into our curriculum: *Nintai* (Perseverance) & *Gakumon* (Life-long learning). We are really excited to deeply explore with the kids the values that govern our program and be able to implement those values in the holiday season, and more importantly, into their daily lives!

Misa sensei Presents at the NAEYC Conference by Yuji Uchida

The annual NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) conference took place in Nashville, Tennessee on the third week of November 2023. Early childhood educators and professionals from around the nation and globe gathered to connect, collaborate, and learn together. Misa sensei participated in a conference session as one of the presenters! The title of the presentation was, "Mirrors and Windows: Making Asian American Culture Visible for All Children and Families." The session explored what it means to be Asian in America today, examined curriculum examples and strategies that use an Asian lens to provide mirrors and windows in the classroom, as well as strategies to support Asian American, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander families. Misa sensei joyfully and courageously joined her team presenters prior to the event. She planned, organized, and prepared with them. The panelists she collaborated with were: Debbie Lee Keenan, Consultant/Lecturer at Antibias Leaders Early Childhood Education; Iris Chin Ponte, Director/Teacher at Henry Frost Children's Program; and Ninderjet Gill, Faculty at North Seattle College.

Misa sensei's presentation focused on her experiences at NLF and her book, "Making Adjustment" (You can find her book here:

<https://www.exchangepress.com/catalog/product/making-adjustments/3600586/>).



She started her presentation by introducing a beautiful and powerful quote from her book: "I have come to understand our work in early childhood education and our everyday life with children as a political act. We are building democracy from the ground up". -Misa Okayama

This quote as an opening statement for her presentation gave me goose bumps, and also made me realize that as educators, we are not only working at schools but also contributing and working toward the societal awareness of our democracy to grow. In her presentation, she reflected on "Tsuki's Motorcycle Story" from the book, and her focal point was about the societal context of repeated and ongoing acts of injustice such as Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and the rise of Anti-Asian violence. Misa sensei intellectually and skillfully talked about social justice by interweaving her book, NLF's history

including the Issei women and architect Julia Morgan's contribution to the community, and synchronizing NLF's five core values with anti-bias goals.

I was completely impressed and amazed by how well she executed her presentation with calming and confident manner in front of a few hundred people in the audience. Congratulations Misa sensei for your marvelous achievement!

Much love & blessings,
Yuji Sensei



P.S.- Look at my favorite pic from the conference!! I had a great time in Nashville! ~
Yuji sensei



All photos courtesy of Yuji sensei

As we contemplate the blessings of the past year, we find abundant reasons for gratitude, and we hope you share in the pride of our collective achievements. From successfully completing various building projects to the launch of our innovative multimedia website project, we have been hard at work ensuring the preservation of our historic facility and sharing the compelling stories that define our community's legacy.

Building Projects: Several work projects on the historic building were completed last year. These included building-wide electrical safety upgrades, the children's bathroom renovation, sprinkler head replacements, and new window coverings. Additionally, NLF is currently undertaking the removal of the deceased cherry tree and securing a suitable replacement.

"Dreams Interrupted" 1830 Sutter Multimedia Website Project: We are thrilled to have launched an interactive website, "Dreams Interrupted...but not forgotten," that explores the story of the remarkable Issei women founders of the Japanese YWCA. Their legacy was lost due to wartime incarceration, post-war Redevelopment, and their relationship with the SF YWCA. This project sheds light on how these events have impacted the Japanese American community. The initial website launch coincided with NLF's 48th Anniversary Celebration, marking the beginning of the project's digital presence. We encourage you to visit our website: www.isseiwomenslegacy.com and spread the word about this project. You can further engage with the project by sharing your family stories via email at isseiwomenslegacy@gmail.com. Additionally, you can support the project by making donations through the "Donate" button on the website.



Dreams Interrupted website logo.

In this next period, we will continue to build online content and commence video shooting for the legal case against the San Francisco YWCA by mid-2024. This video will be one of the key features of the project website, chronicling how NLF embodies the legacy of Issei women and actively contributes to the community through its childcare programs while preserving and sharing the Issei women's stories and culture within the community. We anticipate releasing an excerpt from the legal case video at NLF's 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2025.

This project was funded, in part, by generous grants from the California State Library, California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, the Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) Grant Program, and the JA Community Foundation. Our special thanks also go to the Dreams Interrupted Project Team members who continue to dedicate their time and expertise to this project, as well as San Francisco Architectural Heritage and GenRyu Arts, our collaborative project partners.

In Memory: Our deepest sympathies go to the families of **Susan Kobayashi** and **Maria Matsu** who passed away respectively, in January and August of 2023 after battles with cancer. Both Susan and Maria were former NLF Board and Capital Campaign Committee members and played pivotal roles in NLF's Capital Campaigns for its 1830 Sutter Issei Women's Legacy building and the preschool building addition. We will be commemorating their contributions with special recognition plaques in this coming year. They are greatly missed.

Your Support Helps: Your unwavering support has played a pivotal role in making these endeavors possible. As we look ahead, we are excited about the continued growth of our initiatives and the positive impact they will have on generations to come. Fundraising efforts persist for essential building projects, facility maintenance, and the Dreams Interrupted project. Your gift of any amount ensures the sustained preservation and legacy of our historic facility. On behalf of the children, their families, our dedicated staff, and the board, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support and generosity.



Scan the QR Code to visit the Issei Women's Legacy Website!

Thank You to Our Supporters

Along with our families of enrolled students and staff, we would like to acknowledge the following individuals who generously contributed to NLF over the past year (from 12/23/22 thru 12/31/23)

Alaric Akashi & Pauline Tomita
Eric & Alice Akiyama
Michele Alexander
Tom & BJ Lew Baba
Fred Barstein & Diane Nakashima Barstein
Marina Bearman in Memory of Maria Matsu
Stephen Broce in Memory of Maria Matsu
Patrick & Shina Bray
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Charlene Harper in Memory of Maria Matsu
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Keith & Priscilla Kojimoto
Lyo Kori & Ellen Lee
Takao & Ruri Kori
Kenneth Kuchman
Laura Kum in Memory of Maria Matsu

Kyle & Meredith Kurahara
Shunsuke & Yukiko Kurakata
Lee Eiso Kusumoto
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Wilfred Lim & Susan Sakuma
Gary Louie & Eleanor Gong in Honor of Kaz Naganuma
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Linda Maniwa in Memory of Maria Matsu
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Van Okamura & Glynis Nakahara
John Ota & Mari Matsumoto in Memory of Maria Matsu
Miyo Ota
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James H. Wong, OD
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Wendy Wong
Raymond Woo & Adrienne Shiozaki-Woo
Dav & Mie Yaginuma
Wayne & Anna Yamaguchi
Joyce Yamasaki
Marcella Yano
Daniel Yokomizo
Shellin Young
Shang Ying Zhu & Fen Xiao

*sorry if we missed anyone



The children enjoyed making their own soba noodles which they had for lunch.

Our special thanks go to The Asian Pacific Fund, The Bernard and Alba Witkin Charitable Foundation, The Tateuchi Foundation and US Bank Foundation for their continued generous support.

Your Support is Needed

Plant a Seed (Tane Maki) Campaign Major Donor Wall: Pledge or contribute and have your name be a permanent part of the 1830 Sutter Street building.

Name: _____
 Address: _____ Phone Number: _____
 Email address: _____

Amount of donation: \$ _____ Amount of Pledge: \$ _____

I would like to have my name on the donor wall at the following level:

_____ \$5,000 (Cherry/Sakura) _____ \$10,000 (Oak/Kashiwa) _____ \$25,000 (Pine/Matsu)
 _____ \$50,000 (Maple/Momiji) _____ \$100,000 (Bamboo/Take) _____ \$250,000 (Ginkgo/Icho)



Children's Songs Community Building Campaign Display: Pledge or contribute and have your name be a permanent part of the Community Donor Wall.

I would like to have my name on the donor wall at the following level:



_____ \$3,500 (Koinobori/Carp Streamers)
 _____ \$2,500 (Okina Taiko/The Big Drum)
 _____ \$1,000 (Kaeu no Uta/The Frog Song)

General Program Support: Your contribution will go toward keeping our service fees affordable for our families and maintaining the quality of our programs.

Total Donation Amount: _____ General Program Support Building Fund Support

Credit Card Donors:

Name as it appears on the card: _____
 Card number: _____ Amount: \$ _____ Card Expiration date: _____ CVC _____
 Email address: _____ Phone Number: _____

Please remit this form and contribution payable to: NLF, 1830 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115 (415) 922-8898

Other Ways to Support

- * **Online Donation:** Give online through our website at www.nlfchildcare.org. If your employer matches donations, you can double your gift!
- * **Mail-In Donations:** Checks should be made payable to NLF, 1830 Sutter Street, SF, CA 94115
- * **Remember NLF in your will or estate planning.**

NLF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Nihonmachi LITTLE FRIENDS™

Japanese Bilingual & Multicultural Childcare

1830 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115

P: 415-922-8898 | F: 415-922-0135

Email: NLFChildcare@gmail.com

www.nlfchildcare.org



Kagami Kai pounded delicious mochi at our annual *mochitsuiki* family event in December.

SAVE THE DATE:

**Dowa No Omatsuri: A Festival of
Children's Stories Fundraiser**
Sunday, February 25, 2024, 1-3pm
IN-PERSON

Nihonmachi Little Friends Staff

Vivian Cho	Dawn Mokuau
Todd Eshima	Keiko Moore
Carmen Huang	Maiko Murakoshi
JiaMin Amon Huang	Misa Okayama
Kristen Jeong	Makiko Romero
Akiko Kudo	Sydney Roughton
Michelle Kwok	Yuji Uchida
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Naomi Miura	Olivia Yee
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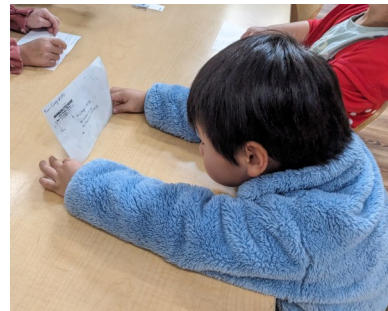
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Tiffanie Muraoka	Kevin Toda
Kevin Pagano	Kanako Wong

Capital Campaign Committee

Cathy Inamasu	Kaz Naganuma
Karen Kai	Joyce Oishi
Makiko Kambayashi	Adrienne Shiozaki-Woo
Mari Matsumoto	Cynthia Tsuchimoto



The children crafted their own New Year's greeting cards known as *nengajo*, to convey their thanks and appreciation to their families and were excited to place them in the mail.



The pre-k children did a great taiko accompaniment to the songs our preschoolers sang at the annual *mochitsuiki* in December.