

California-Japan Sister Cities Network

Holiday Letter 2021

Dear Friend,

December 31, 2021

Much to our disappointment, 2021 did not bring much change from the difficulties of 2020, but we hope you are persevering just the same. We at the California-Japan Sister Cities Network (CJSCN) are pleased to share our third annual Holiday Letter with you, so that the CJSCN Board, sponsors, partners, and network organizations can celebrate our mutual achievements together.

With the still-ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, sister city events, international exchanges, etc., are still few and far between, although luckily 2021 did see the return of some large festivals and other gatherings. Sister city organizations are also learning how to work within the restrictions of the pandemic, hosting more events online and becoming more creative in how they connect with their Japanese counterparts, from art exchanges to smartphone applications and more. CJSCN has still been unable to hold our regular events in person, but we were pleased to co-host two large virtual events in 2021. Perhaps most importantly, CJSCN expanded its board to include members from Southern California, finally achieving our goal of representing the entirety of California-Japan sister city relationships. As we look to 2022, we sincerely hope it will bring a return to more “normal” sister city activities, while continuing to build on the new skills we’ve all learned during the pandemic.

See you in 2022,
CJSCN Board



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Board Member

Looking Back at 2021

CJSCN Expands Its Board to Include Southern California

While CJSCN has represented all sister city relationships in California and Japan “in spirit” since our conception, it was not until 2021 that we were finally able to collaborate with the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles to officially include Southern California in CJSCN’s network. In light of this, CJSCN added three new board

members, representing sister city organizations in Southern California: Mr. Bryan Takeda (Pasadena Sister Cities Committee), Mrs. Teruko Weinberg (Los Angeles-Nagoya Sister City Affiliation), and Mr. Steven Sigafus (San Diego-Yokohama Sister City Society). We look forward to facilitating regional collaborations in the entire state of California. Additional information on these developments will be shared in the CJSCN newsletter and on our website.

2021 CJSCN Virtual Spring Workshop

The 2021 Spring Workshop was held as an online event for all cities in California and Japan on May 14, 2021. It was co-hosted with the Consulates General of Japan in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The theme was “Citizen Diplomacy through Technology and Innovation.” Approximately 200 people registered, representing 63 Californian cities and 9 Japanese cities.

Of those attendees, around 20 people participated from Japan, and 22 JET Alumni were present. We had comments from the Consuls General from the San Francisco and Los Angeles Consulates General of Japan, as well as the California State Senate President Pro Tem, Toni Atkins. A special presentation from the San Diego Yokohama Sister Cities Society focused on their many successes with virtual exchanges and events since the pandemic began, and how other sister city programs could implement similar programs. [Please click here for a full write up of the event, photos, and resource links.](#)

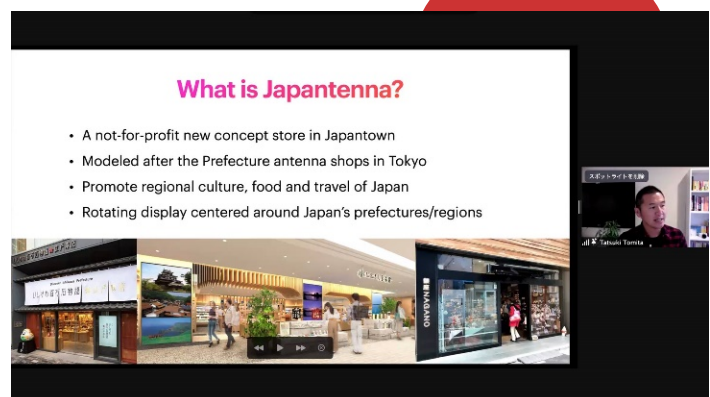


Certificate of Commendation from Japanese Consuls General in California

During the CJSCN 2021 Spring Workshop on May 14, the CJSCN Board was honored to be presented with a Certificate of Commendation from Consul General Toru Maeda of the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, and Consul General Akira Muto of the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles, in recognition of CJSCN’s work in connecting the 100+ Japanese sister city organizations in California. We are extremely grateful for this recognition, and will strive to continue providing quality support and resources for our network. [You can view the certificate and its translation on the CJSCN website here.](#)

2021 CJSCN Virtual Fall Workshop

On October 22, 2021, CJSCN held its fourth annual Fall Workshop for all California sister city supporters, co-hosted with the Consulates General of Japan in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The theme was “Beyond Cultural Exchange: Creative Economic Collaborations,” and approximately 180 people registered, representing 55 Californian cities and 18 Japanese cities. Mr. Anis Uzzaman, Founder & CEO



of Pegasus Tech Ventures and a CJSCN Gold Sponsor, touched on economic trends in Japan and how his company is promoting innovative global economic exchanges. Ms. Elizabeth Costello, President of the Naoko Mitsui Shirane Foundation in San Antonio, TX, shared how a sister city relationship with Japan became a vehicle for successful economic collaborations in her state. Following these comments, the first featured presentation was an inspiring overview of the economic opportunities that have been fostered between Crescent City/Del Norte County and Rikuzentakata thanks to Seaquake Brewing, Rumiano Cheese, and the Kamome Foundation. The second featured presentation was from Mr. Tatsuki Tomita about an exciting new initiative called Japantenna, a pop-up store project in San Francisco Japantown that will feature goods from a rotating selection of Japanese locales. The third featured presentation was by CJSCN Board Member Bryan Takeda, wherein he showcased how we might reimagine what economic collaborations look like for sister city relationships, and provided examples of current efforts to connect sister cities and economics.

New CJSCN Online Resource – Japanese Friendship Gardens

Inspired by sister city organizations' interest in Japanese gardens connected with sister city relationships, CJSCN has created a list of gardens and related resources on its website. [You can view the current list here.](#) If you know of additional gardens or outdoor areas with sister city connections, please share them with us at info@caljapansistercities.org and we will add it to the website. Gardens can be located in either California or Japan. Photos of the gardens are also welcome.

Looking Forward to 2022

Plans for CJSCN Events in 2022

CJSCN will continue to host one Spring Workshop and one Fall Workshop each year. If possible, we plan to host the Spring Workshop online, and the Fall Workshop as two separate in-person events, one in Northern California and one in Southern California, to allow for maximum participation (content will be the same for both events). We also encourage sister city organizations to continue holding regional meetings to share ideas and collaborate, as pandemic conditions allow. Additionally, the CJSCN Board is always thinking about other activities that we can host or support to help strengthen sister city activities. If you have suggestions for presentation or discussion topics for CJSCN's annual events, or ideas for other activities, please feel free to contact us at info@caljapansistercities.org.

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