Individuals recognized by the Orange County Board of Supervisors for the 50th anniversary commemoration of the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse on Nov. 10 in the Orange County Civic Center in the City of Santa Ana. Pictured (from left) are Ron Ono, City of Santa Ana; Mayor Pro Tem Juan Villegas, Santa Ana City Council; Supervisor Lisa Sato Bartlett, OC Fifth District; the Hon. Consul General of Japan Akira Muto; Vice Chairman Andrew Do, OC First District; Supervisor Doug Chaffee, OC Fourth District; Supervisor Donald P. Wagner, OC Third District; Patti Hirahara, Orange County Japanese American History Preservationist; Chris Jepsen, Orange County Historian; and Jesse James, treasurer representing the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council.

PHOTO: 7 DREAMS PRODUCTIONS

A GARDEN FOR ALL GENERATIONS

The Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse Celebrates Its Milestone 50th Anniversary.

PHOTO: 7 DREAMS PRODUCTIONS

JACL National Board Meets to Discuss 2021 Goals and Initiatives.

Support Is Needed to Save SF Japantown Small Businesses.
FULL-STEAM AHEAD FOR JACL NATIONAL AS 2021 APPROACHES

The organization meets virtually as it discusses organizational plans for the new year.

By P.C. Staff

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lthough still not able to meet in person because of the ongoing (and worsening) COVID-19 pandemic, the JACL National Board met virtually on Nov. 14 to solidify plans for the upcoming new year.

In attendance were several newly appointed National Board members, including Secretary/Treasurer Matthew Farrells, VP of 1,000 Club, Membership and Services Saki Mori and former JACL National President David Lin, who returns to a leadership role as vp of planning and development. All three individuals were named to the board by National President Jeffrey Moy and approved during a recent board conference call.

With the JACL National Board now complete and in place for the next biennium, Moy proceeded to welcome updates following a presentation by JACL National Legal Counsel Brandon Mita on “Nonprofit Board Governance and Your Duties as a Board Member.”

Executive Director David Inoue then discussed JACL’s recent organizational activities, including its work with NCAPA partners to follow up on the electoral process to begin identifying potential appointees to recommend to the incoming Biden administration across all levels of government, as well as supporting the Japanese American Confinement Education Act, introduced recently by Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA) and Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) that will reauthorize $38 million in funding to support education programs on the Japanese American incarceration experience.

In his report to the board, Inoue stated, “The next two months and upcoming year will be very crucial to engaging our membership on our policy priorities to ensure we make progress. The JACE Act, HR 40 and Neighbors Not Enemies Act are three prime pieces of legislation where Japanese Americans and JACL can make a powerful impact. As we continue to find our footing as a membership and chapter-driven organization during COVID, how we engage our members will be especially important.

“We want to emphasize how important our chapters are,” Inoue concluded. “We need to uplift our chapters and the work that they do and engage our members because that’s what keeps us alive and active and moving forward.”

VP of General Operations Marissa Kitazawa gave an update on the big question of the day: the status of the 2021 National Convention. JACL had to forego its planned Las Vegas Convention this year and instead held a virtual gathering due to the pandemic. With the administration of an approved vaccine still potentially months away and with coronavirus cases spiking to new records across the nation, holding an in-person meeting this summer remains highly uncertain.

To discuss all options, the board passed a motion suggested by Kitazawa to create a special committee to potentially ways to conduct business virtually, as the health and safety of its staff and members is its No. 1 priority.

Inoue also stated that a final convention decision needs to be made in early January. “We need to decide sooner rather than later if we are going virtual to make it easier to negotiate with the hotel (Bally’s Hotel and Casino). . . . The sooner we decide, the more flexibility the hotel will have in shifting things to where we can carry things over into 2022,” he said.

Among other highlights:

• Secretary/Treasurer Farrells reported that JACL’s net asset base continues to grow, resulting in $358K over 2019 through Sept. 30, with total assets of $14.28M.

• Deficit has been reduced since the end of Q2 and through Q3. Will continue to drive toward further reductions into year’s end.

• Membership revenue was strong for the period, 17 percent above budget and 12 percent above 2019, period over period.

• 2021 will bring a more realistic budget regarding revenue expectations for the P.C., and more staff resources will be allocated on fundraising and development activities.

• According to Membership Coordinator Phillip Ozaki, new JACL members lean female (60 percent vs. 40 percent male) and under age 25, but still 33 percent are 40-plus.

• Students are 43 percent of new members, followed by regular/individual at 39 percent and couple/family at 13 percent.

• Half of all members are from California, but 1 in 8 are from other regions (NCWNP 32 percent, PSW 17 percent, PNW 13 percent, EDC 12 percent, MDC 12 percent, ICD 11 percent, CCDC 2 percent, National A. 1 percent).

The next National Board meeting will be held in March 2021.
The original Japanese American Confinement Sites Program was signed into law in December 2006 with strong bipartisan support. In fact, the bill was led in the House by Rep. Bill Thomas of California, the powerful chair of the Ways and Means Committee. The Senate bill was led by the late-Sen. Daniel Inouye. Unfortunately, neither Thomas nor Inouye are still in Congress, and the original JACS program is running out of money.

Fortunately, just a month ago, Rep. Doris Matsui, the first co-sponsor on Rep. Thomas’ bill, introduced HR 8637, the Japanese American Confinement Education Act. This legislation would renew the JACS program with fresh funding of $38 million, which should continue the program for another 12 years. In addition, the JACE Act establishes a new museum-based program to promote education regarding the Japanese American experience during World War II. This new program, in addition to the original JACS program, will bring with it $10 million in new funding and comes at the suggestion of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The program is modeled after the recently signed-into-law Holocaust Education Act and similarly would be implemented through the leadership of a museum setting. While this bill is led by a Democrat, the first co-sponsor in the House is Republican Congressman Rob Bishop, the ranking member of the Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over this legislation.

We could not have asked for a more ideal co-sponsor, as Bishop’s career before coming to Congress was as a high school history teacher who chaired the history department at the high school where he taught. Congressman Don Young (R-Alaska) stated upon introduction of the bill, “The forced internment of our fellow citizens through Executive Order 9066 is one of the darkest chapters in American history. The fact that it occurred during my lifetime highlights just how fresh of a wound this is for Japanese Americans across our country.”

The House bill has 21 co-sponsors, including five Republicans. The original JACS bill had 114 co-sponsors, with 22 Republicans among them, so we have quite a bit of work to get to similar numbers.

This is where you, JACL’s membership, are important. Congress is not done yet for the year, and we are making a push to gain support for this legislation. On Dec. 1, the first of three days in our GivingTuesday Series, we want you to call your representative and ask him or her to support HR 8637 to ensure that the National Park Service will be able to continue to fund programs to enhance our understanding and knowledge about the incarceration experience through the lens of the confinement sites. The new education program would help to ensure more students have the opportunity to learn about the Japanese American experience with quality curriculum and resources.

For more information about the JACS program and the GivingTuesday Series, visit the JACL website, where we have fact sheets, reference materials to see if your congressional district has received JACS funding and more. You can also see the information box on this page. When we gather together for the last Tuesday of the GivingTuesday series, let’s plan to be thankful for the broad bipartisan support created for the JACE Act.

David Inoue is executive director of the JACL. He is based in the organization’s Washington, D.C., office.
A MOTHER'S TAKE
ELECTION REFLECTION

By Marsha Aizumi

Like so many of us, I unplugged from the television on election night, unable to hear another word about the votes being cast. It was disheartening to think that we might have another four years of a person who didn’t care about my son and so many other families and communities. But then each passing day brought more news seeming to signal a positive trajectory for the Biden/Harris ticket. Cautiously, I began to have hope again.

Since I am an educator, lessons have always been a part of my life. Whether faced with joy or sorrow, I believe that learning something for my future self could be gleaned from any experience, and so here are just a few lessons that touched me as I moved through the Biden/Harris campaign and election.

I learned from Stacey Abrams that even in the midst of defeat, perhaps there is a greater plan — I just have to look for it.

Stacey worked so hard in Georgia to fight the voter suppression that I believe caused her loss for governor in 2018. She registered 800,000 voters for 2020! She also took her knowledge and taught others how to organize and get out the vote. Thank you, Stacey Abrams, for being a ray of hope and voice for Georgia and eventually to so many others, like me. We still have work to do . . . let’s take back the senate on Jan. 5, 2021.

I learned from now-President-Elect Joe Biden that age is just a number. By listening to his heart, he overcame two failed presidential attempts and multiples losses in the 2020 Democratic primary for president. Sometimes, timing is everything.

In Biden, I saw that being there for your children, whether it be by their hospital bedside, tucking them in at night or saying on national television that I am proud of my son who has recovered from drugs, can give them the best chance to find success and know they will always have a place to belong. A father is not determined by biology, but by being there where your children need you.

President-Elect Biden also taught me that the ability to forgive might be one of the most courageous and unselfish things I can do. Even after Sen. Kamala Harris criticized him as one of the more presidencial debates, he still chose her to be his running mate because she would be the best person to lead the country with him. Wisdom comes in many forms.

I understand that leadership often means taking a stand, even if I don’t think it will make a difference. Rep. Jim Clyborn (D-S.C.) took a stand after a woman told him, “We need to hear from you,” and the Black voters were the turning point for Joe Biden’s campaign. One voice CAN make a difference.

I believe that coming from humble backgrounds, raised by a single parent, does not define who you are. Only YOU can define who you are. And what we see today is the first mixed-race, Black and Southeast Asian woman, vice-president-elect of the United States. How many little girls are now dreaming bigger because of Harris?

Finally, I believe you can be scared and brave at the same time. Whenever I picked up the phone to make a call for Japanese Americans for Biden/Harris, I felt scared. And then when I hung up the phone, I felt brave. We can all be courageous in small ways. On Jan. 20, Joe Biden will be the new leader of our country, I saw cities around the world gather to rejoice, a country bell tolls, world leaders say, “Welcome back, America.” A political commentator named Van Jones expressed his relief through tears as he shared, “It’s easier being a parent this morning . . . easier to tell your kids character matters, telling the truth matters, being a good person matters.”

On the day Joe Biden was elected, I also received a message from my cousin who has children and grand-children who are both Japanese and Black, a text from a mother who has lesbian and transgender children and a Facebook friend who messaged me that we were a beacon of light for the world.

Grandmothers were celebrating, mothers and fathers were celebrating and the world was celebrating. I broke down in tears because I know that even though the days ahead will be challenging, the world is going to be better for so many people that I love. . .

Marsha Aizumi is an advocate in the LGBT community and author of the book, The Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance.

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A diagnosis of early-stage Alzheimer’s disease doesn’t just affect those with the disease — it affects everyone who loves and cares about the person affected. In the early stage of Alzheimer’s, most people are still able to function independently. He or she might still drive, take part in social activities, volunteer and even work.

As a care partner (a term many choose to use rather than “caregiver,” since a person in the early stage of dementia might not need much assistance), you might find yourself in a new and unfamiliar role. Your role as care partner is an important one: to provide support and companionship and help plan for the future.

With an early diagnosis, you and the person with dementia now have the opportunity to make decisions about the future together, including legal, financial and long-term care planning. The person living with dementia can take advantage of available treatments, participation in clinical trials and you both can benefit from local resources and support services.

One of the greatest challenges care partners face is not knowing how much assistance to give or when to give it because the person with early-stage dementia is primarily independent with dressing, bathing, walking and might still drive, volunteer or work. The most difficult tasks might involve managing a daily schedule or household budget.

As a care partner, your support with these everyday tasks can help the person with dementia develop new coping strategies that will help to maximize his or her independence.

Every relationship is different, but finding balance between independence and dependence might increase confidence for both of you.

Remember, you are still the same person you were before the diagnosis, but now, everything has changed.

As the care partner, you might be feeling overwhelmed by emotions that range from anger to hope. Emotions might be triggered by thoughts about how this diagnosis will impact your life and the anticipation of future challenges. These questions and feelings are normal.

Learning to recognize your emotions can help you move forward and help the person with dementia live the best life possible. You might be unsure of where to go for information, anxious about what to expect as the disease progresses and concerned about your ability to support the person living with dementia.

Let’s be honest — if you get sick, at one time or another, you’ll be of no help to your loved one. Caregiving can tax your patience and your personal and professional life. The effects on physical and mental health are well documented:

• 36 percent of family caregivers characterize their situation as highly stressful, according to a 2020 report from AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving.
• A 2018 study from insurance firm Genworth found that four in 10 caregivers experienced depression, mood swings and resentment as a result of their labors.
• Research cited by the American Psychological Association found that among people age 55-75, those who are caregivers show a 23 percent higher level of stress hormones, which can lead to high blood pressure, and a 15 percent lower level of immune response, making them more vulnerable to the flu and other infections (like Covid-19).

Over time, that physical and psychological wear and tear can lead to caregiver burnout — a condition of feeling exhausted, listless and unable to cope. It can cause caregivers to make mistakes that could endanger a loved one, such as mismanaging medication, or lead to unhealthy behaviors such as smoking or alcohol abuse.

That’s why it’s so important to watch for signs of caregiver burn-out and take proactive steps to deal with it before it spirals out of control. The following are tips to reduce caregiver stress (see www.aarp.org/caregiving, www.aarp.org/caregiving/life-balance-info-2019/caregiver-stress-burnout-for-a-complete-list):

• Give yourself a break. Ask a friend or relative to fill in for you for a few hours occasionally. If you need to take a walk, watch a movie or go out to dinner.
• Simplify your communication. Keeping extended family and friends up to date about your loved one’s situation through phone calls or individual emails can be time-consuming. You might want to broadcast that information on social media.
• Join a support group. If you feel like you’re alone in your struggle, talking with other family caregivers can lift your spirits and help you think through solutions to various problems.

Nurture positive relationships. You may be overwhelmed, but take the time to talk with your closest friends and family members.

• Speak with someone who is a good listener. Limit your interactions with negative people who will drag down your mood and perspective.
• Take care of your own health. Set a goal to establish a good sleep routine. Plan a certain amount of hours every week.
• Be sure to eat healthy foods and drink plenty of water. See your doctor for recommended immunizations and screenings.

Tell your physician that you’re a caregiver and bring up any concerns you might have. A daily relaxation and meditation practice can be beneficial as well.

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The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Pacific Citizen or constitute legal or tax advice and should not be treated as such.
SAVE JAPANTOWN!

The future of San Francisco Japantown’s small businesses hangs in the balance as the unrelenting pandemic continues.

By Haruka Roudebush, Contributor

Like communities everywhere throughout the United States, San Francisco’s Japantown community has witnessed dramatic changes in day-to-day life since COVID-19 shelter-in-place restrictions took effect in mid-March.

In addition to the stress and necessary adjustments stemming from the disruption to everyday life and concerns for public health and safety, Japantown is now faced with increasing anxiety for the future of the community as the pandemic continues to take its toll on the economy.

As the small businesses of the neighborhood have struggled to survive despite the earnest support of the community, Japantown’s two major commercial landlords in the main Japan Center shopping mall have remained unresponsive to attempts by mall tenants to negotiate rents, late fees and repayment of back rent from the months COVID kept neighborhood businesses shuttered or operating at greatly reduced capacity.

Many are concerned that the continuing demands of the Japan Center mall landlords threaten the imminent closure of small businesses in the mall, and with the potential loss of Japantown’s shops and restaurants en masse, the fate of the community grows precariously uncertain.

San Francisco’s shelter-in-place order took effect in March and forced the temporary closure of businesses in Japantown.

Japantown is now faced with what seems to be the next iteration of challenges to its survival since the forced relocation and incarceration of the community during World War II. The shopping mall itself has its own controversial history in the community.

It opened in 1968 as the Japanese Cultural and Trade Center following the displacement of 8,000 neighborhood residents and family businesses, as the city Board of Supervisors deemed the area as blighted and designated it to be redeveloped by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency in the late 1950s.

Since the opening of the shopping center, the Peace Plaza, with its iconic concrete pagoda flanked by the mall buildings to the east and west, has dominated the neighborhood’s remaining square blocks and is a main attraction and gathering point for visitors and locals alike.

Within the mall, the main building landlords are currently the Kinokuniya Bookstores of America, the corporate entity of one of the mall’s anchor tenants, as well as Beverly Hills-based real estate investment firm 3-D Investments, whose quick purchase of its holdings in the Japan Center in 2006 from Japan-based corporation Kintetsu Enterprise Company of America also evoked outcry from the community.

The possibility of the new ownership deciding to tear down the mall to redevelop the property into market-rate high-rise housing was a primary concern of the community at the time of the sale. Community leaders and organizers concerned for the preservation of Japantown’s cultural heritage then turned to the city government for support that resulted in a set of agreements made by 3-D Investments and enforceable by the city government that promised that the developers would not sell the properties for 15 years and that they would maintain the cultural heritage of the neighborhood by retaining Japanese-themed commercial tenants in the mall, as well as commitments to allow the community to use the malls for annual celebrations such as the Cherry Blossom Festival and make financial contributions to local community organizations.

The covenant made under then-Mayor Gavin Newsom is currently set to expire in 2021, at which time it is uncertain what the developers will choose to do with their mall properties.

Shortly after the COVID-19 shelter-in-place order took effect in San Francisco on March 17, the entire mall was also forced to close for what was initially assumed a limited time. However, as the pandemic has dragged on for months, back rent and bills have been mounting, already resulting in several businesses in Japantown closing permanently.

While restaurants in the Japan Center have continued to operate to serve take-out and delivery orders, restaurants inside the mall without immediate street access to set up outdoor dining have suffered major losses of revenue from indoor dining.

San Francisco’s shelter-in-place restrictions began to ease in June, allowing for patrons to re-enter the mall for limited capacity and contactless shopping. But with severe declines in foot traffic to retailers and restaurants, businesses have only been able to generate a fraction of their normal volume of business.

“From talking with some of the other businesses in the malls, most of us were only bringing in about 20-30 percent of the revenue we’d normally be bringing in,” said Ryan Kinura, owner of Pika Pika, a shop operating Japanese photo Booths in the Kinokuniya building. “It’s not enough to cover our overhead.”

For businesses like Pika Pika that are designated as entertainment spaces — including bars, arcades and karaoke lounges — COVID-19 restrictions have prevented them from reopening at all since March. Unfortunately, now with the recent spike in COVID cases nationally, all indoor dining in San Francisco was suspended on Nov. 13, presenting another slowdown in business for the immediate future.

Meanwhile, as the mall’s businesses have suffered, Kinokuniya and 3-D have continued to demand full rent from their tenants, as well as continuing to charge for Common Area Maintenance (CAM) fees and utilities, as well as adding on late fees for rent.

The charges for CAM fees in the mall had already been an existing issue of contention with tenants, as CAM charges had increased over...
A GARDEN FOR ALL GENERATIONS

In honor of its 50th anniversary, the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse celebrates its milestone with a COVID-19-safe event.

By Guadalupe Carrasco, Contributer

Due to the ongoing pandemic brought on by COVID-19, opportunities to share historic milestone stories with the public have been challenging. However, in keeping with strict city and county health guidelines, the County of Orange was able to hold a safe event to celebrate a cultural landmark within the Japanese American community. The County of Orange, in cooperation with the City of Santa Ana and the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council, hosted a commemoration event in honor of the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse’s 50th anniversary on Nov 10. The event, opened to a small number of invited guests, honored the traditions of the Japanese culture and heritage of the Japanese American community.

One year ago, the county was made aware of the upcoming anniversary of the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse due to a bronze plaque commemorating the structure’s dedication on May 27, 1970, which is on display in the garden. After numerous communications, the wheels were put into motion to have the garden and teahouse renovated by the Orange County Civic Center Authority (City of Santa Ana/County of Orange), find documentation about the history of the garden to create a special commemoration event on its 50th anniversary and find both the people who were part of the original fundraising committee of the Japanese American Community Services Inc. (JACS), as well as the original Issei adviser descendants.

With the garden being in the jurisdiction of the Orange County Board of Supervisor’s First District, Vice Chairman Andrew Do’s office began working on creating a large special commemorative event. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic grew into epic proportions earlier this year, staff began brainstorming alternative ways to safely commemorate such a special occasion.

Documents found in the Orange County Archives by local historian Chris Jepsen showed the actual dedication was held on Nov. 15, 1970. This information gave the planning team more time to allow the garden renovation to be completed. It also created an opportunity for a smaller group to be assembled to mark this historic anniversary.

Unfortunately, many of the Japanese pioneers who were a part of this milestone garden project, as well as their descendants, had already passed away, so few clues were left of what had transpired. However, in looking at the County agreement filed on July 2, 1969, the project was delayed by seven months but completed six weeks after the original projected completion date of Sept. 30, 1970. The county also agreed to accept the gift and maintain it as a Japanese garden with the recommended help of those that had the skill to prune and maintain the site for future generations.

With Jepsen doing further research, the County of Orange Civic Center Commission approved the plans for a 75-foot-by-102-foot Japanese garden, which replaced a portion of a dusty parking lot along the east wall of the new Richard Neutra-designed courthouse, that was dedicated in January 1969 (see Pacific Citizen’s Oct. 23-Nov. 5, 2020, issue). According to County of Orange documents, “The garden, to be a gift to the County by the Orange County Japanese American community, was first proposed to the OC Board of Supervisors on Jan. 16, 1968, and approved in principle by Resolution 68-63.” This proposal was unique since the county’s chief administrative officer in an oral presentation in which no written documents were presented. It was understood that the Japanese garden was going to be funded by private donations.

In looking at the County agreement filed on July 2, 1969, the project was delayed by seven months but completed six weeks after the original projected completion date of Sept. 30, 1970. The county also agreed to accept the gift and maintain it as a Japanese garden with the recommended help of those that had the skill to prune and maintain the site for future generations.

In honor of its 50th anniversary, the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse celebrates its milestone with a COVID-19-safe event.

The check-in and temperature check table was created with both cultural and Covid-19 requirements in mind. Pictured is Joyce Rivero, wearing a Japanese women’s haori jacket, who welcomed guests.

The event’s official program

The 50th Anniversary Commemoration Plaque of the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse, November 1970-November 2020

Orange County and Santa Ana Officials gather for group photo at the OC Japanese Garden’s 50th Commemoration Ceremony. Pictured (from left) are Fourth District Supervisor Doug Chaffee, Fifth District Supervisor Lisa Sato Bartlett, Vice Chairman and First District Supervisor Andrew Do, Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles Akira Muto, Third District Supervisor Don Wagner and Santa Ana Mayor Pro Tem Juan Villegas.

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Having worked for the City of Santa Ana for 51 years, Administrative Services Manager and Landscape Architect Ron Ono was honored for his work on acquiring funding for the renovation of the Orange County Japanese Garden and overseeing the renovation in time for its 50th anniversary and rededication on Nov. 10.

Once the Japanese garden was accepted by the county, the county would take full responsibility for the garden and the liabilities that would arise from those that used the garden in the future. This agreement was signed by Chairman of the OC Board of Supervisors William Hirstein and Orange County JACS Chairman Hitoshi Nitta.

The Japanese Garden and Teahouse was dedicated on Nov. 15, 1970, and now, 50 years later, another significant ceremony was held on Nov. 10 at a small outdoor setting to rededicate and commemorate its establishment.

Orange County Supervisor Lisa Sato Bartlett, Fifth District, served as the event’s master of ceremonies, and she led the Pledge of Allegiance with the event’s honor guests, which included the Hon. Conal General of Japan in Los Angeles Akira Muto and his wife, Misako; Supervisor Do, representing the First District and Vice Chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors; Supervisor Doug Chaffee, representing the Fourth District; Supervisor Don Wagner, representing the Third District; Juan Villegas, Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Santa Ana; the Hon. Kirk Nakamura, presiding Judge of the Orange County Superior Court; David Yamasaki, court executive officer of the Superior Court of California, County of Orange; Ryan Yoshikawa, SELANOCO JACL president; Miyiada and his wife, Setsuko, representing the Kazuo Masada VFW Memorial Post 3670; Takashi Kushi, Orange County Gardeners Assn. vp; and Michael Komai, publisher and president of the Rafu Shimpo, Los Angeles Japanese Daily News.

Representing the JACS, the original organization that spearheaded the fundraising efforts for the Orange County Japanese Garden 50 years ago, were Diane and Hitoshi A. Nitta, whose father, Hitoshi, was chairman of JACS and whose grandfather, Shouke, was a garden Issi advisor; JACS Charter Board Member Keiko Sadakane and Janice Munemitsu, whose father, Tad, was a JACS board member and canvassing chairman and whose grandfather, Seima Munemitsu, was a garden Issi advisor.

In attendance from the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council were Jesse James, president, and Orange County Japanese Garden project coordinator; and Kenneth Inouye, who was the 2019 OCNCC Nisei Week Japanese Spirit honoree and an OCNCC representative.

Supervisor Do was then asked to give welcome remarks on behalf of the First District. “The Japanese Garden and Teahouse is an expression of the resilience and vibrancy of the Orange County Japanese American community. . . . The history of the garden has been a well-kept secret for 50 years. But with this rededication, especially with the upcoming completion of the County Civic Center and our new soon-to-be-completed County Administration North building, the Japanese Garden and Teahouse will continue to thrive and be used by our residents for the next 100 years,” said Do.

Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles, Akira Muto, stated that he and his wife were honored to join in this special occasion. “I extend my gratitude for all the contributions made by the Japanese American pioneers who established the foundation of the dynamic community we have been blessed with today,” Consul General Muto said.

LISA BARTLETT: A PROFILE OF MORAL COURAGE
A personal perspective of the Orange County Board of Supervisors

By Kenneth K. Inouye, Contributor

L isa Sato Bartlett is a member of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, serving the Fifth District. She was elected to this position in 2014 and has served as the chair of the Orange County Board of Supervisors on two separate occasions; she is currently serving her second term as a member of the Board of Supervisors.

I had the privilege of working with Supervisor Bartlett while I was serving as an appointed member of the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

During the time that I worked with her, I noted that Supervisor Bartlett consistently supported activities that recognize the needs of the diverse population that lives/work in Orange County.

She is truly one of the best examples of an elected official who advocates for the rights and interests for all the people in Orange County, not just those from her political party or supporters.

Supervisor Bartlett recently received the JACL’s Japanese American of the Biennium award in the field of political/public affairs for her many years of public service and the moral courage that she exhibited when she publicly accused a sitting member of the California Assembly of harassment.

The assemblyman sought the endorsement of the powerful Orange County Republican Central Committee as he sought to run for another term.

She made these accusations even though her prior allegations against this assemblyman had been previously swept under the rug (the assemblyman had strong allies within the Republican party).

It should be noted that since Supervisor Bartlett filed her complaints, three other women have stepped forward to accuse the assemblyman of having made unwanted advances toward them as well.

By making these allegations, Supervisor Bartlett placed herself in the awkward position of being a whistleblower against a senior elected official from the same political party.

When she was questioned why she would “betray” her own political party, Supervisor Bartlett stood firm and said, “We cannot continue to endorse someone who uses his title and the powers of his office to prey on women.”

She also knew that her willingness to come forward would encourage others who might have similar circumstances to also come forward as we strive to create an America where ALL WOMEN can live free of harassment of any kind.

My fond hope is that Supervisor Bartlett’s actions will help pave the way for other policy makers to make their decisions based upon principles and what is right for their constituents as opposed to sticking to the “party line,” which is often based on self-interest and political gain.

America can truly be a better place if ALL OF OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS had the moral courage of Supervisor Bartlett.

Descendants and board member of the original Japanese American Community Services Inc. Pictured (from left) are JACS Board Member Keiko Sadakane, Diane and Hitoshi A. Nitta, whose father, Hitoshi, was JACS chairman, and Janice Munemitsu, whose father, Tad, was a JACS board member and canvassing chairman.

The garden is an excellent example of where grass-roots exchanges have brought greater understanding.

Juan Villegas, mayor pro tem of the City of Santa Ana, then presented a Certificate of Recognition to the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council. Villegas reminisced about his 31-year career in law enforcement and how one of his favorite memories was being assigned to look after this Japanese garden as a member of the Orange County Sheriff’s Department.

The Orange County Board of Supervisors also presented a proclamation to the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council for their support on the project.

To conclude the rededication ceremony, a special plaque unveiling was made by the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council to honor those that made the 50th anniversary of the Orange County Japanese Garden and Teahouse possible.

> See GARDEN on page12
The past year without itemized justification from the landlords’ property management companies has been hard.

Over the past year and a half when Kinokuniya brought in Davis Property Management company to administer rent and CAM fees in the building, CAM fees had more than doubled for tenants.

Kimura elaborated: “Once Davis Property Management came in, my CAM fees and utilities went from about $1,000 a month to $3,500. Restaurants that use gas and water probably had to pay even more than that. With back rent, I owe over $50,000 since March. We’ve been closed since then, and we haven’t been bringing in any revenue during that time.

“We weren’t sure at that point when we’d be able to reopen,” Kimura continued. “The tenants in the Kinokuniya building collectively asked Kinokuniya’s property management company in late March for some sort of rent relief. We were initially told in April that they would defer one month of rent and have us pay it back over the period of six months, starting in August.”

It quickly became evident that the initial remedy offered by Kinokuniya would be insufficient. However, Kinokuniya did not offer any further relief or leniency after its tenants requested additional assistance.

By May, the tenants of the Kinokuniya building had enlisted the help of attorneys Diane Matsuda and Dean Ito-Taylor from community advocacy organization Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach (APILO) and attorney Alan Low of law firm Perkins Cole, who agreed to provide legal counsel to the Japan Center businesses in negotiations with Kinokuniya and 3-D pro bono.

The tenants’ attorneys’ attempts in May to initiate further rent relief negotiations with Kinokuniya and 3-D have not progressed since.

At public meetings, our landlords have claimed that we’re all in this together, but what they’ve shown is that they’re not willing to negotiate,” said Stephen Jordan, proprietor of the Sakura Sakura shop in the West Mall. “They’re more concerned about collecting rent than the livelihood of our community.”

Newson issued an executive order establishing a statewide eviction moratorium by the end of March 2020, which has since been extended through the end of March 2021.

Simultaneously, San Francisco Mayor London Breed placed a COVID eviction moratorium for the city of San Francisco that was extended through the end of September, and again through the end of November.

By October, with the expiration date of the city’s eviction moratorium approaching, the tenants began working with San Francisco city officials to draft an ordinance to extend the moratorium deadline to match the state’s deadline to the end of March 2021, as well as provide a pathway for the city’s small businesses to repay back rent owed over the course of the following two years without the threat of eviction.

Kimura and other Japan Center businesses initiated a citywide campaign titled “Save SF Small Businesses” to lobby the city Board of Supervisors to pass the ordinance, which was sponsored by city district supervisors Aaron Peskin, Ahsha Safai and Japantown’s own district supervisor, Dean Preston.

The campaign garnered more than 1,000 signatures for its online petition and inundated district supervisors with emails and phone calls from constituents, with additional social media support from primarily Yonsei community activists and organizers from the recently formed Japantown for Justice organization.

Voices in support of the ordinance during public comment at the Board of Supervisors’ hearings came prominently from small business owners and community members from San Francisco’s Chinatown and Japantown communities, including Judy Haraguchi, San Francisco JACL chapter board member.

During the Land Use and Transportation committee hearing on Nov. 2, Supervisor Peskin stated, “...our imperative is to maintain the cultural fabric of different neighborhoods in San Francisco ranging from Chinatown to Japantown that Supervisor Preston represents, and other neighborhoods across the city, and we cannot afford to delay this because if we do, we will wake up to communities like Chinatown that are decimated with the unique cultural heritages that they represent.”

The ordinance was passed by the Board of Supervisor’s Land Use and Transportation Committee on Nov. 2, and with a unanimous 11-0 vote by the full city board on Nov. 10. The ordinance was further amended on Nov. 17 to clarify provisions in the law by allowing small businesses with under 10 employees to terminate their leases early upon paying back rent owed.

While passing the ordinance has provided a temporary sense of relief to Japan Center tenants from the threat of eviction, businesses are still burdened with what might be insurmountable debt, even with a two-year repayment period for back rent.

Mall tenants hope that the ordinance will apply pressure for the landlords to respond to requests for relief, as attorney Matsuda explained: “Landlords and tenants can continue to negotiate on their own, but what this ordinance does is provide a framework that they can work off of.”

It remains to be seen if Kinokuniya and 3-D will open up negotiations with their tenants moving forward, and small businesses still face the daunting challenge of recovering in the economic downturn while having to find a way to repay back rent once the eviction moratorium ends.

Beyond reliance on the city government to provide a legislative remedy, the pandemic has prompted months of heightened community support for Japantown’s small businesses and organizations.

In an effort to generate foot traffic for the remaining businesses and restaurants, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California, with financial support from the Henri and Tomoye Taka-hashi Charitable Foundation and the Japantown Community Benefits District (JCBD), coordinated the “Picnic at the Plaza” program, which provided socially distanced and sanitized outdoor seating for Japantown restaurant patrons to enjoy their takeout orders every weekend from mid-July through the end of November.

While weekday foot traffic remains slow due to the lack of tourists, weekend patronage has been bolstered, and the program has helped generate an estimated 70 percent of Japantown restaurant revenue since its start and more than 18,000 patrons served.

Other community efforts to support small businesses have come from the City of San Francisco and surrounding counties, including the San Francisco Japantown Foundation, which has raised over $140,000 to be disbursed to Japantown businesses and organizations through grants, as well as the JCBD’s “Heart of Japantown” COVID relief campaign, which raised $500,000 from the community within a month of its launch in late May.

Neighborhood businesses were awarded $5,000 grants from this fund, which JCBD Director Grace Horikiri said were used to help cover overhead expenses such as rent, employee wages and other expenses.

“It’s times like these when the strength of our communities and connections really comes through.”

Added Pika Pika’s Kimura: “I’m truly thankful for the community’s individuals and orgs that really stepped up to help the small businesses, and I think even more so in the community, we’re realizing the power of our [community’s] ecosystem, how important our landlords and property owners are a huge part of it. If they’re not at the table with us, a whole lot of the burden will fall on everyone else.”

The community remains anxious for the future as the possibility of the collapse of Japantown’s small business community remains, and much will depend on what relief, if any, the Japan Center’s landlords are willing to provide.

For updates on future developments between the Japan Center mall tenants and Kinokuniya and 3-D, APILO will provide additional information at https://www.legaloutrach.org/save-japantown/.

Haruka Roudebush is the immediate past JACL National VP of 1,000 Club, Membership and Services. He currently serves on the JACL NCWNP District’s Executive Board and works as the senior programs manager at the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California.
Adhering to health safety guidelines, the organization holds its traditional event to honor America’s heroes.

By JAVA Research Team

While many traditions have been upended this year, the Japanese American Veterans Association, along with the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, kept to tradition and held its annual Veterans Day Ceremony on Nov. 11 at the National Japanese American Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Instead of audience applause, heart and thumbs-up emojis floated over the JAVA Facebook feed, as viewers from far-away locales such as California, Florida and Hawaii expressed their gratitude for the sacrifices made by Nisei veterans and their families.

JAVA VP and U.S. Army Veteran Howard High served as the program’s emcee. He opened the ceremony noting that the JAVA/NJAMF Veterans Day Program was selected by the Veterans Day National Committee from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as one of the “Veterans Day observances throughout the country to represent a fitting tribute to America’s heroes.”

High then introduced JAVA President Gerald Yamada, who welcomed viewers and noted that the day’s damp weather reminded him of his days in basic training in Fort Lewis, Wash. Yamada then reflected on the “huge debt of gratitude” owed to the Nisei soldiers who served during World War II.

“They served with valor,” Yamada said. “They amassed a heroic combat record, which is yet to be surpassed. They left us a legacy from which we have benefitted and will continue to benefit. They are an inspiration for all Americans. Their service kept America safe and free. Their service proved their loyalty in spite of the prejudice, war hysteria and distrust that confronted them. They truly are America’s heroes.

“Let us also honor the 800 Nisei soldiers whose names are inscribed on the granite panels of this memorial behind me,” Yamada continued. “They died defending America’s freedoms — not knowing whether their sacrifice would make a difference. History would know to serve tomorrow’s veterans because they know that our nation and our military are strengthened by its diversity. It’s our responsibility and honor to share that history.”

Taniguchi also encouraged listeners to go beyond words and find a way to reach out to a veteran. She urged all to consider mentoring a veteran at work, donate money to a veterans organization and learn about veterans issues like PTSD. She finished by sharing her hope that on this Veterans Day, “each and every one of us can make a difference in the life of a veteran.”

“The story of Japanese American military service during WWII reminds us that no matter what race you may be, what language you may speak or what religion you may practice, all Americans have a place in our country and in our ranks,” Taniguchi said. “Those who know their story are well-equipped to serve tomorrow’s veterans because they know that our nation and our military are strengthened by its diversity. It’s our responsibility and honor to share that history.”

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“In his remarks, U.S. Coast Guard RDML Andrew M. Sugimoto said he is “hopeful for the future” because of the sacrifices and “service of our nation’s veterans.”
**NCWNP**

Virtual Yosakoi Dance With Ito Yosakoi San Francisco, CA

**PSW**

Japanese American in New York: Nikkei Trans-Regional Dialogue
Los Angeles, CA
Dec. 5; 2-3:30 p.m.

**CCDC**

Book Discussion With John Tateishi
Ithaca, IN
Thru Nov. 29

**MDC**

‘Vibrant Line’: Works on Paper by Tanaka, Shinoda and Tawara
Ithaca, IN
Thru Nov. 29

**PNW**

Wing Luke Museum Online Digital Content
Seattle, WA

Wing Luke Museum Although the museum’s doors are temporarily closed, there is still a plethora of curated stories, digital content and neighborhood resources available to access and view. Viewers can check out Education, YouthCAN, Collections and Community Art all online!

Info: www.digitalwingluke.org.

**IDC**

‘Abstract and Form’ Exhibit
Yuma, AZ

This exhibit features the abstract multimedia paintings of Kathleen Unemoto and the prints, collages, drawings and paintings of Richard Farley. Unemoto works with natural materials such as coffee or tea and common castaway objects to imprint, stain and texture her pieces of art. Farley, a career urban designer and architect, uses various media such as acrylic, watercolor, and ink wash on his pieces.

Info: The exhibit is open Tues.-Sat. from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Sun. 1-4 p.m. Visit or phanageyuca.com for more information.

Price: Free

**CCDC District** presents this book discussion with John Tateishi, author of “Redress: The Inside Story of the Successful Campaign for Japanese American reparations. Moderated by the Hon. Dale Ikeda, this event will explore Tateishi’s first-hand experiences with helping to win redress for Japanese Americans.

Info: Email ccdcgov@jacl.org for more information and the Zoom link.

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**NCWNP**

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**Online Series**

Eight episodes of “Making Home From Here,” the first oral history series tailored for the Japanese American community:

Get more information and RSVP.

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SHIGEKO KAWANO  

Feb. 22, 1926-Oct. 9, 2020

Shigeiko Kawano passed away peacefully on Friday, Oct. 9, 2020, in Medford, N.J., at the age of 94. She was born in Los Angeles and was the oldest daughter of Seizo and Toshiko Sakamoto. Shigeiko and her family lived in the Boyle Heights area and her father owned a pharmacy in nearby Little Tokyo. In 1942, after President Roosevelt authorized the removal of all people of Japanese descent (including U.S. citizens) from the coastal areas of the western U.S., Shigeiko and her family lost their home and livelihood. The Sakamotos were incarcerated at Poston I, one of three concentration camps located in the desert of western Arizona. Shigeiko often recalled the searing heat and dust storms that leaked through the thin walls and floor of her family’s one-room barracks quarters.

While incarcerated, Shigeiko graduated high school. She was released from the camp to attend Temple University in Philadelphia with the help of the National Japanese American Student Relocation Council (NJASRC) that was led by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). So, at the age of 17, Shigeiko left her family behind and traveled by train to Philadelphia. During most of her train trip, she had to sit on her suitcase or stand as soldiers refused to allow her to use a seat.

On the way to Philadelphia, Shigeiko stopped in Kansas City, Mo., to visit her future husband, James. She first met James in 1940 when he worked in her father’s store while attending pharmacy school at the University of Southern California. While Shigeiko and her family were in Poston, James was in the Heart Mountain concentration camp in Wyoming. Through the help of the NJASRC, he was able to leave the camp to complete his studies at Drake University (Des Moines, Iowa). After working in Kansas City, James moved to Philadelphia where he would later open his own pharmacy. After a period of dating, Shigeiko invoked an old saying that a woman can propose and Shigeiko and James married during a leap year (1944). They got married that year and Shigeko and James moved from Philadelphia to the western suburb of Merion, Shigeko played an active role in Merion Friends Meeting (Quaker) and her sons’ scouting activities. After her sons left home for school, she became a licensed practical nurse and worked part-time at Lankenau Hospital in Wynnewood, Pa.

Shigeko also had many artistic interests. She was accomplished in Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, with exhibits at the Philadelphia Flower Show, Philadelphia Museum of Art and Longwood Gardens. She enjoyed painting, quilting, sewing, knitting, baking and cooking. Additionally, she took classes in carpentry, sculpture, pottery and stained glass among others. All the while, Shigeko worked tirelessly as the bookkeeper for James’s pharmacy.

After James and Shigeko moved from Philadelphia to the western suburb of Merion, Shigeko played an active role in Merion Friends Meeting (Quaker) and her sons’ scouting activities. After her sons left home for school, she became a licensed practical nurse and worked part-time at Lankenau Hospital in Wynnewood, Pa.

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After James retired, Shigeko and James moved to Medford Leas, a Quaker-sponsored, senior independent living continuing care community situated in a Quaker community of Cortez, near Ballico, Calif. Together they raised three children, Ko, Holly and Victor on the family farm while growing almonds, peaches and grapes. After the children reached high school age, Naomi came back to teaching, working as a special education teacher at Ballico-Cressey Elementary School for 18 years. Naomi is survived by her children Ko (Elaine) Yamamoto, Holly (Tom) Smith and Victor (Gayle) Yamamoto, and four grandchildren: Westin Smith, Cara Smith, Ryan Yamamoto and Joshua Burch. She is predeceased by her parents Ichiro and Shimako Shibata, her brothers Eichi and Keiji Shibata. In lieu of flowers or koden, donations can be made in her name and directed to the charity of your choice. See www.allenmortuary.com for an expanded obituary.

KITA, SUZANNE, 76, Hilo, HI, April 4; she was predeceased by her husband, Robert Susumu Kita; she is survived by her sons, Scott Kita and Oran Kita; sisters, Carol Rimmer and Eileen Therrell.

KOBATA, AKIKO, 101, Long Beach, CA, March 27, she is survived by her son, Brian (Nancy); gc: 2.

KONO, MITSUKO, 94, Harbor City, CA, March 4.

KUBOSHIGE, SHINOBU, 96, Torrance, CA, March 2.

KUMADA, YO, 71, Torrance, CA, March 30.

KUSBABA, SADAKO, 84, Long Beach, CA, April 10; she is survived by her siblings, Katsu (Kyoko) Kusaba, Masako Tani and Eiko Hamachi; she is also survived by cousins, nieces and nephews.

Murakami, Patrick, 83, Kahului, HI, April 1; he was predeceased by his wife, Jessie; he is survived by Michael, Scott, Susan (Jun) Castro and Cindy Richardson; siblings, Ralph Murakami, Hazel Nitta and Myrtle Tajiri; gc: 1.

NAKATANI, MASAYOSHI, 93, Kahului, HI, Feb. 13; he was predeceased by his wife, Kazue Nakatani; he is survived by his daughter, Debie (Mike) Amby; gc: 3.

NAMBA, LYDIA CUIZON, 65, Kurtstown, HI, Feb. 19; she is survived by her husband, Kenneth Namba; children, Phillip Namba, Christopher (Joy) Namba and Hisae Namba; sisters-in-law, Shirley Andre and Doris (Kermit) Johnson; gc: 3.

Oshiro, Betty, 88, Paramount, CA, March 22 and Oshiro, Eric Yuichi, 61, La Mirada, CA, April 8; both deaths related to COVID-19; Betty was predeceased by his husband, Larry Masao Oshiro; she is survived by her children, Brenda (Kenneth Harada, Eric (Lori) Oshiro and Cheryl-Ann (Alan) Kamikubo; siblings, Irene (Henry) Yamashita, Jeanne (Francisco) Yamada and Herbert (Lana) Oshiro; gc: 4; Eric was predeceased by his parents, Larry and Betty Oshiro; he is survived by his wife, Lori; sons, Ryan and Steven Oshiro; sisters, Brenda (Kenneth) Harada and Cheryl Ann (Alan) Kamikubo; he is also survived by a niece, nephew and many extended family members and friends.

SUMIDA, Henry Shuichi, 80, Long Beach, CA, Feb. 26; he is survived by his wife, Carolyn (Yumi); daughters, Laura Sumida-Aoyagi (Kevin) Aoyagi, April (Nicholas) James; gc: 3; ggc: 1.
FOCUS ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

By Ron Mori

L ast month, I wrote about how two-thirds of adults report experiencing social isolation and high levels of anxiety since the beginning of the pandemic. Unfortunately, we are now in the second wave of the pandemic, and health experts are warning us to keep our guards up as we enter the holiday season. For me, each month is getting tougher to cope with the stress and anxiety of the unknown.

I try to cope with humor, and I often joke with my co-workers about my nine months working in my basement home office. Now that the days are shorter, there have been times when I come up from my basement, and it’s dark outside.

I have to admit, it is taking a toll on my mental health. However, a new free monthly Livestream event series focused on mental health is helping me stay focused and feeling empowered.

Our new AARP AAPI series, “Reimagine Asian America,” features Dr. DJ Ida, executive director of the National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Assn., as well as other experts and storytellers committed to creating a more humane and equitable world for Asian Americans across generations.

Tough topics are discussed, and viewers of our Facebook livestream can ask real-time questions of our distinguished panel. Our next livestream will focus on “Building Togetherness: COVID-19 and the Holiday Season.” It takes place on Dec. 9 at 4 p.m. EST on the AARP AAPI Facebook page. You will need to register in advance in order to participate in this free event.

Dr. Ida will moderate a conversation with experts on how we build togetherness as communities practice social distancing during the holiday season. Especially important are the alarming statistics that I have written about before on the negative impact of social isolation as a public health crisis.

According to “The Pandemic Effect: A Social Isolation Report” — a study conducted by AARP Foundation in collaboration with the United Health Foundation — many of those affected have not turned to anyone for help, perhaps because many don’t have reliable social support networks.

Social isolation is defined as an absence of meaningful social relationships. Studies have found that the health risks of social isolation can be more harmful than obesity, and prolonged isolation is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

Unpaid family caregivers also reported having more symptoms of depression and anxiety and starting or increasing substance use to cope with the stress of COVID-19 on top of caring for their loved ones, compared to the other respondents. The survey included almost 5,500 adults.

A recent report based on a nationwide survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the types of mental health challenges people are facing during the pandemic found that nearly 31 percent of unpaid family caregivers reported seriously considering suicide in the preceding 30 days, compared with 11 percent of the other adults taking the survey who were not caregivers.

This new data has mental health experts concerned about its ripple effects. A lot of the services available for caregivers, such as respite and home health care, have been affected by the pandemic. With only online social support available, experts worry that the isolation of caregivers can make the situation worse.

The survey also indicates that unpaid caregivers are doing worse over time. Experts say this is worrisome. Most unpaid family caregivers say they don’t have a choice, and half of them are very stressed, according to the report “Caregiving in the United States 2020” by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP.

Seventy-two percent of people who say they feel alone as an unpaid family caregiver say they have high emotional stress, according to the study. During this holiday season, don’t forget to think about family caregivers you know, and reach out to them during these difficult times.

For additional articles on mental health, check out the AARP Mental Health Resource Center page at https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/mental-health-resource-center.

Ron Mori is a member of the Washington, D.C., JACL chapter and manager of community, state and national affairs — multicultural leadership for AARP.

FOR HELP:

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255)
• Veterans Affairs Caregiver Support Line: (855) 260-3274
• National Alliance for Caregiving resource page
• AARP Community Connections
• AARP Support Line: (877) 333-5885
• AARP Family Caregivers Facebook Discussion Group

The following three individuals were honored on the plaque for their significant work on this yearlong project.

They were Ron Ono, administrative services manager/landscape architect for the City of Santa Ana; Chris Jepsen, Orange County Archives assistant archivist and president of the Orange County Historical Society; and Patti Hirahara, administrator of the Hirahara Family Collections and Orange County Japanese American history preservationist.

Ono was responsible for securing funding for the renovation of the 50-year-old garden. In asking him why he felt it was important for the garden to be renovated, he said: “The Japanese Garden and Teahouse represents a proud and unique symbol of the Japanese culture. The many Japanese American families that originally donated to build this unique facility were someway affected by the tragedy of the Japanese American incarceration and their displacement. These pioneers and their children wanted to give back to Orange County a symbol of peace, gratitude and respect in this beautiful place.”

“I feel their efforts to give back should be preserved for all to remember as a gift that keeps on giving,” he concluded.

Jepsen was critical in finding documents that provided historical reference for this Orange County Japanese Garden project. Since there was no central file of information, the Orange County Archives is now creating a file on the Orange County Japanese Garden with original blueprints, photographs, documents and news clippings that will tell the history of the garden for years to come. The original documents will be stored at the archives and a copy of all the information will be placed in the time capsule.

The final person named on the plaque is Hirahara, who made the original inquiry about the garden to notify the County of Orange and the City of Santa Ana about its milestone anniversary, worked to find descendants of the original committee, as well as those that worked on the project, helped to share original documents she had found in her family’s records to honor the more than 643 organizations and families that donated to the garden and worked with Supervisor Do’s office to help organize the rededication.

The County of Orange and the Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council are hoping to have a community event next year where members of the Japanese American community will be able to view the garden and witness the time capsule ceremony. The event is subject to COVID-19 restrictions and guidance.

The Orange County Japanese Garden has survived for 50 years, and its Japanese pioneer spirit still shines through this pandemic. With the current renovation completed, it is the Japanese American community’s wish that this special gift will be enjoyed by all who visit. Currently, the garden is closed to the public but hopefully will be reopened soon.