Connect and Converse
Keiro no Hi Festival: Connecting Back to Little Tokyo

When Yoshi and his wife, Masako, heard about a festival for Japanese American and Japanese older adults, they were both surprised and a little curious. “We wanted to spend the weekend out,” said Yoshi, who just turned 96. They live close by in a condo, but rarely made their way around Little Tokyo. This event became a perfect reason for them to spend a weekend together and enjoy something they had not experienced before.

Yoshi and Masako were among the 1,100 attendees of the second annual Keiro no Hi Festival in Little Tokyo. Families, caregivers, friends, and volunteers from across Los Angeles, Orange, and Ventura counties descended on the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center plaza for the special day.

On stage, a host of entertainers and performers kept the plaza tent busy. The San Fernando Valley Japanese American Cultural Center Meiji Ondo group, Fujima Kansuma Kai, and Asian Persuasion were only some of the groups who performed. The ensembles ranged from dancing to singing and taiko drumming.

Jenny from Palos Verdes said the stage performance schedule was a big reason why she came this year. “They played my favorite songs,” she said.

And during the Rajo Taiso exercise, Jenny even made a new friend, Mizue.

Together, they enjoyed the performances and even exchanged numbers, spending the lunch hour together. “Yes, I met a new friend,” said Mizue, gesturing to Jenny.

“This is the first time we had something like this, so you know, I felt like aging...is not so bad after all,” said Shoko. It was the first time in a while that she and her friend, Eleanor, had been in Little Tokyo. Together, they enjoyed the free bentos and were thankful for the bus transportation from South Bay so they did not have to drive to Little Tokyo.

Complimentary bus transportation was popular among attendees, with an increase in the number of buses provided this year. People rode from five different locations across Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Keiro no Hi is meaningful not just to those enjoying the activities, food, and resources, but also to those behind the scenes. Close to 70 young volunteers turned out, many of whom were university students. They dedicated hours to supporting the event’s services and needs.

"The amount of young people here this year is great," said Sandy, while sitting at lunch with her friend, Caroline. "I wasn't as active when I was younger and I recommend young people now to get active in culture and community."
What Does Iyashi Care Provide?

Since 2017, our Iyashi Care team has assisted more than 150 older adults and their families with the challenges of living with serious illnesses and debilitating symptoms. This ongoing series of articles explains how Iyashi Care can provide meaningful services to you and your loved ones.

Goals of Care Discussions

Goals of care discussions are led by trained professionals to help identify the patient’s level of understanding about their situation, and lead to a deeper understanding of the patient’s true needs. This is a key service that Iyashi Care provides, with the team conducting these conversations on almost every visit.

“A good part of our two-hour visit is to clarify what they want and what they hope for,” said Kanako Fukuyama, Iyashi Care social worker.

The conversation always begins with the question: What is your current understanding of where you are with your illness? The Iyashi Care team then guides the patient through a series of questions to further understand the preferences of the patient and what they hope for, and tools for them to make these decisions.

And our role as the Iyashi Care team is to provide resources with all three siblings to be able to express their hopes and concerns, and reach a consensus. “At the end of the day, we do not make the decision; it’s ultimately up to the family members.

“Quality of life is taken differently for each person. In this situation, the definition differed amongst the siblings,” Kanako said. For this case, the Iyashi Care team facilitated a meeting with all three siblings to be able to express their hopes and concerns, and reach a consensus. “At the end of the day, we do not make the decision; it’s ultimately up to the family members.

Kanako recommends that goals of care discussions should be led by professionals, it does not hurt to have such conversations now amongst the family. Sometimes, lack of conversations can result in disagreements within the family.

Tony was diagnosed with dementia and had life-limiting symptoms. There was an option for him to receive intensive treatment for his symptoms, but with Tony approaching his 90th birthday, two of his children felt that was not a good choice. However, his youngest child wanted his father to continue treatment as long as options existed.

“Quality of life is taken differently for each person. In this situation, the definition differed amongst the siblings,” Kanako said. For this case, the Iyashi Care team facilitated a meeting with all three siblings to be able to express their hopes and concerns, and reach a consensus. “At the end of the day, we do not make the decision; it’s ultimately up to the family members.

Our role as the Iyashi Care team is to provide resources and tools for them to make these decisions.”

For the full article, visit keiro.org/news.

Food for thought: What would your answer be and why?

Keiro interviewed community members about whether they considered themselves “old” or not. While many said no, there were some who said yes, and others in between.

Those who answered no responded that it’s a matter of attitude, that “age is just a number.” They consider people old when they don’t have hope, can’t give love to others, or when they just sit around and don’t do anything.

Those who answered “yes” often referred to their age as a reason. A 66-year-old commented he never thought he would live this long, so he thought he was old. There were also answers of “yes and no.” While they mentioned their physical ailments, they feel they are young at heart. One participant said he would have answered no three weeks ago but his recent back pain has proven that he is “bound to be old.”

The definition of “old” differs for everyone and changes throughout their lives.

Keiro Challenge: This holiday season, try asking this question to your family and friends. Check out our YouTube Channel, @KeiroConnect for our community members’ answers.

Contact us today about how Iyashi Care can help you or a loved one!

213.873.5791 | keiro.org/iyashi-care

Here are some ways in which our community members communicate with their loved ones and/or family members who are also caregivers:

“To communicate about my mother with the large extended family, I used email. When the family played the telephone game, the message became so inaccurate and misleading it started a family panic. I wrote my email with short sentences to avoid misunderstandings. Bullet points were very useful.”

“My father-in-law was a challenge due to his hearing loss. He tried very hard to lip-read, but that was no good. When asked, ‘Dad where is your KEY?’ he would answer, ‘I don’t have to PEE.’ Funny, but frustrating and sad. The whiteboard and marker were very successful. We wrote our questions and comments on the board and he would verbally answer back. This worked great.”

“For my mom we set up a Nest Cam in the TV family room. This is where she usually is after dinner, so my siblings can track if she’s there or not. We used to call her on the phone, but sometimes she didn’t answer. Now we can talk to her via the camera too.”

Share with us how you communicate by emailing contact@keiro.org or messaging us through our Facebook page!
Supporting the Strong Ties of Hibakusha:
American Society of Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-Bomb Survivors

Haruyoshi was on his way to deliver food to his older sister, who was a patient at a prefectural hospital, when he experienced a flash from behind. He was just 14 years old on August 6, 1945, when American forces dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. He never made it to see his sister, whose hospital was just feet from the blast’s epicenter, and he never saw her again.

To this day, it is a memory that still scares him. He is among the dozens of hibakusha members from the American Society of Hiroshima-Nagasaki A-Bomb Survivors, better known as ASA. The group formed in 1972, dedicating its work solely to helping hibakusha and their families. It’s a word designated for people affected by the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Currently, 176 members are active with the Los Angeles group, and the members’ average age is 86.

Haruyoshi’s family story is one of the memories that keeps them connected in ways others cannot imagine. It’s their shared trauma and survival that keeps them connected in ways others cannot imagine. ASA Director Darrell Miho is now working to further share these stories, and to continue providing a place for these hibakusha to gather and just chat.

For the full article, visit keiro.org/news.

Keiro Superstar:
Dr. Bob Yonemoto (98)

Even after two open-heart surgeries, a pacemaker, and nearly a century of sweet memories, Dr. Bob Yonemoto says he has a few secrets to living a healthy and full life, aside from daily exercise and eating sensibly.

“I’m very moved by the goodness in the world. When I hear or see goodness, I want to support them,” said Dr. Bob, who is quick to point out other people’s kindness and cherishes those special gestures, as it is a big part of his character. While his hands might have stopped performing medical miracles and surgeries, they continue to create beautiful pieces of music and art.

Today, the walls in Dr. Bob’s room look more like a gallery than a living room. On them, he hangs dozens of block prints, each of them hand-crafted through hours of dedication, time, and effort. The gallery ranges from portraits of Mother Theresa to his wife, and even a self-portrait. His hands have stopped performing medical miracles and surgeries, but they continue to create beautiful pieces of music and art.

For the full story, visit keiro.org/news.
JOIN US TO BECOME ECO-FRIENDLY

Keiro is helping the environment by decreasing the number of printed publications.

If you opt to receive our future publications via email only, you will:

1. Be the first to read our publication, one week before it gets mailed out, and
2. Be helpful to the environment by saving trees!

Please email contact@keiro.org today if you would like to receive our future publications electronically.

#GivingTuesday is a global online celebration of generosity through charitable giving. This year, Keiro is dedicating #GivingTuesday to Iyashi Care, our culturally sensitive palliative care program. We hope you will join us on this day to support this innovative program through online donations to continue enhancing the quality of life for our older adults in Our Community!

More at: keiro.org/Giving_Tuesday

Stay tuned through social media:

facebook.com/KeiroConnect
@KeiroConnect