

FALL 2023

KeiroConnect



**New Approaches to
End of Life**





SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

KEIRO NO HI FESTIVAL

Keiro hosted its sixth annual Keiro no Hi Festival at the Japanese American National Museum – the first time since 2019 that the festival returned in-person to Little Tokyo. Eager volunteers and Keiro staff greeted and celebrated 500 older adult attendees with a variety of tailored activities and experiences for them to enjoy and explore, rediscover, and showcase their individual purpose.

To hear about participants' experiences, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



Use your smartphone camera or a QR code scanning mobile application to read the full versions of the articles throughout this publication!



Beverly Ito

Beverly Ito
Keiro President & CEO

Welcome!

A MESSAGE FROM KEIRO PRESIDENT & CEO

During this season of thanksgiving and holiday cheer, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your generous support of our events and Quality of Life programs, as well as participating in our community needs survey. I've participated in a whirlwind of community engagements since taking on this position in January, and my greatest pleasure has been having the opportunity to connect or reconnect with so many of you in Our Community.

In this publication, we are challenging and empowering you to think about a very sensitive subject. There is really no "good time" to talk about end of life, or to reflect upon our own mortality. However, it's an important conversation to initiate with your loved ones to promote autonomy and ensure that your individual preferences are clearly understood by those that may unexpectedly be called upon to make decisions on your behalf. Going through The Death Deck, a card game with questions about end of life, made me reflect on this more deeply.

We hope this unique edition allows you to start pondering this often-avoided topic, or even challenges you to initiate this conversation during the holiday season to connect heart to heart with your loved ones.

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感謝祭や年末年始の心温まる季節にあたり、皆様からのKeiroのイベントや生活の質向上プログラムへの寛大なサポート、またコミュニティのニーズ調査へのご協力に心より感謝申し上げます。今年1月にこの役職を引き継いで以来、地域活動にめまぐるしい日々が続いていますが、コミュニティのさまざまな活動に参加させていただき、多くの皆様と再会できたことが、私の最大の喜びでした。

この号では、非常にデリケートで避けられがちなテーマについて考えてみる事をご提案しています。終期末や自分自身の死について考えたり話すのに「良いタイミング」はなかなかやっとならないものです。しかし、もしもの時にあなたの代わりにあなたの希望に沿った意思決定をしてもらえるように、大切な人との会話を始め、あなたの希望を明確に理解してもらうことが、あなたの自律性を促すという意味においても重要です。

このユニークなエディションが、避けられがちなこのテーマについて考え始めるきっかけとなったり、ホリデー・シーズンに大切な人たちと心と心通わす会話を始めるきっかけになれば幸いです。

ベバリ・イトウ
代表兼CEO

A New Way to Start a Difficult Conversation

How do you start talking about the end of life? One casual way to have such conversations is by playing a card game called *The Death Deck*. This simple card game has both open-ended and multiple choice prompts that engage people in various topics surrounding end of life. Keiro staff members, Makoto Kotani, Beverly Ito, and Michelle Obi, played *The Death Deck*. Take a look at some of their conversations based on these prompts.



The World's Toughest Job

The hardest part of caregiving for my terminally ill partner would be:

- A Feeling helpless and unable to control everything
- B The physical challenge of caring for them 24/7
- C Watching them in physical and emotional pain

RESPONSES

Beverly: Can we say all of the above? Especially with a life partner, it would be hard to go through any of those phases. To watch somebody that you care about very deeply decline, and you really have no control over that.

Michelle: I think they all go hand in hand, one leads to another. I am very much a planner... They are in pain, and there is nothing I can do about it.

Makoto: I would say it would be the helplessness too. You can be there for them, but not being able to help the situation would be the most challenging for me.

A Toast to Loved Ones

Oh, wise one - Talk about a person in your life who you would consider wise. What have you gained from them?

RESPONSES

Makoto: [My mom] built in me my work ethics and how I go about my lifestyle... I think me being 31 years old now and my mom seeing me become a parent, I feel like she would say she is proud of me.

Michelle: I would say my mom as well. She is my best friend and has taught me everything that I know now. I look to her for a lot of guidance and she is definitely someone that has a lot of experience and world knowledge.

Beverly: I would have to say my dad. He was really wise, and he passed on his life experiences so that we wouldn't have to repeat some of the hardships he had gone through.

The Big Picture

Makoto concluded that, "I probably don't talk about [death] enough or consider talking about it enough. This conversation has helped me to frame things in a way to be more open about talking." Overall, the card game helped Keiro staff open up and share about death and dying in a fun and engaging way. Are you courageous enough to play *The Death Deck* with your loved ones and friends?

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



Reflecting on Life Goals Through a Bucket List

Having purpose – something that brings you meaning and joy – is one of the key elements to a good quality of life. A bucket list may be one way to help you to visualize what your aspirations are and how those align with your personal values.

Keiro anonymously asked community members, “What is one thing you would like to do before you pass away?” We received many common, as well as unique, responses. Interestingly, some participants responded that they did not have a bucket list, because they have accomplished everything they wanted in life.

Here are a few of the responses we received:

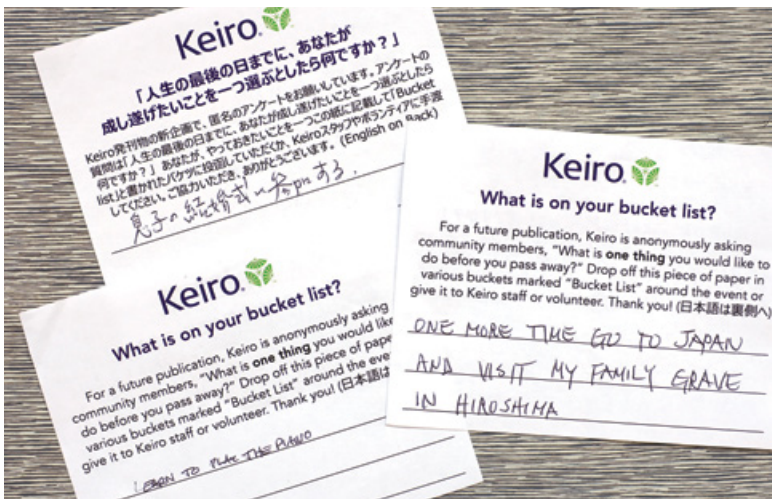
Top 3 Most Common Bucket List Items:

- 1 Travel to Japan / Travel
- 2 Learn to play an instrument / Play music with family
- 3 Go skydiving

Additional Responses:

- Become a solid 4.5-5.0 level pickleball player
- 日系人の歴史を通じて、学んだことを一つでも多く次世代に伝えたい。(I want to share what I learned from Japanese American history to as many future generations as possible.)
- Go back to work
- 家族、友人、知人に感謝を伝えたいです。(I want to express gratitude to my family, friends, and acquaintances.)

To read more bucket list responses, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

Write down three things you would like to do before you pass away:

1

2

3

Once you finish writing them down, share it with your family and friends and make it a goal to try to accomplish them!

Moving Forward from Grief – A Common Experience as we Age

Grief is an inevitable part of our lives but is more frequently experienced by older adults. How can we keep on moving forward despite the loss of a close loved one? Keiro interviewed Bill Watanabe, a community leader, who shared what helps keep him going during times of loss.

Bill recently attended three funerals within a few months. He describes these deaths “like losing a part of your body.” He shared how he lost his younger brother during college, which “felt like losing an arm.”

For Bill, the best remedy to process a loss is to “keep busy with life” and move forward. “My circle of friendships may change. You lose people through death, but there are always new people coming into the circle.” But occasionally, he remembers his loved ones. “Every now and then, I’ll think — gee, my brother would be 77 this year, I wonder what he would be doing... it never fully goes away.”

Talking about death before it happens could be another way to have meaningful conversations with those around us. Bill has been talking with his longtime friend of 60 years, who is in hospice. As one of his closest friends, he knows that he needs to prepare for his death. They recently expressed gratitude to each other for their long-standing friendship. “I guess I’ll have to deal with it the best I can, and realize you just have to keep moving forward. I guess I am ready, but... when it happens, I know I’m going to lose another arm.”

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



Models in the photo are not the individuals in this article.



Rest Easy Knowing You Have a Funeral Plan

Discussing funeral plans is not a common family conversation, and thinking about your eventual passing is often an avoided subject. However, funeral planning early will result in less stress and burden for yourself and your loved ones. You may ask, "So where do I start?" Keiro spoke with Fukui Mortuary's Sarah Fukui, vice president of community relations, and Russell Takashi Martinez, preneed counselor, for insight on considerations for funeral planning.

What Haven't I Been Told About Funeral Planning?

Funeral planning is not an everyday task, so many people may think, "How was I supposed to know?" Here are common things about funeral planning that people may not be aware of:

Current prices are locked in.

Families who planned their funerals years ago save a significant amount because they are paying the price from the year they initially planned, not the industry's current rate. From September 2007 to September 2017, the average cost for funeral expenses rose 72.3%. Additionally, most mortuaries or funeral homes offer funeral payment plans, and the price does not have to be paid in full up front.

Your plan can be changed or transferred.

You can make changes to your plan whenever you want, such as deciding to do a casket rather than cremation. Additionally, even though you may have planned your funeral at a certain mortuary or funeral home, it is possible to transfer those plans to another place in the United States. International transfers may be more difficult, but if, for example, you move to Japan or would like to have your services there, most plans in the United States are fully refundable if unused.

There are small decisions you may not think about.

There are smaller, yet important, decisions to make such as thank you cards, music, program booklets, etc. Regarding unexpected deaths or unplanned services, Sarah shared, "It can be overwhelming, and people may experience decision fatigue when having to make so many of those tiny decisions in such a short amount of time." Pre-planning with a mortuary or funeral home can help reduce those decisions in the future.

"If you have your plans set up ahead of time, it leaves answers and not questions for the family."

- Russell Takashi Martinez

Misconceptions vs. Reality

Due to the uncommon nature of talking about funeral planning, there are often some misconceptions of what the planning entails.

Misconception: You only need to buy a cemetery plot.

Reality: There's more to do after buying a plot. Purchasing a cemetery plot does not mean that everything regarding your funeral is taken care of. It is just one step of the whole process...

To continue reading about the misconceptions and reality about funeral planning, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



Thank you to Fukui Mortuary's Sarah Fukui and Russell Takashi Martinez for providing insight and information for this article.



What does a Health Care Chaplain do?

Spiritual support is an often misunderstood component of caring for an older adult. It is a common misconception that if an individual is not religious, they cannot benefit from spiritual support in times of need. However, when faced with a serious illness or other challenges of aging and caregiving, spiritual care can provide an added layer of support to improve quality of life.

Keiro interviewed Ethan Halliday about his role as a palliative care chaplain at Providence. As a chaplain, Ethan helps families through discussing the struggles they face. A chaplain's role is not to convert anyone to a specific faith or to convince them to think differently.

Ethan shared that the most important skill is active and reflective listening.

He explained, "Only the patients can truly answer [their] questions and come to terms with what is happening, if given the space and time to do so. My role is to empower them to pause and

mindfully reflect on what is important in order to find strength, meaning, and purpose."

In today's health care system, people are often expected to make decisions quickly, without fully understanding the implications. Chaplains can provide that additional space to slow down, giving patients time to think and reflect on what is most important to them, and what would most enhance their quality of life.

Note: Chaplain services in health care vary widely, and availability may be limited. This article reflects the services at Providence.



For the full article, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.



For more information about Iyashi Care, contact us at

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Remembering Loved Ones with Our Community

End of life is difficult to talk about, but having this conversation can be the most important one for someone who is caregiving. *Let's Talk About Death (Over Dinner)* by Michael Hebb, has inspired Keiro to bring this concept to Our Community, hosting the Caregiving Café at the JACL National Convention in July 2023 held in Little Tokyo, co-hosted with AARP.

Kevin Onishi, Keiro's chief operating officer, guided attendees in the Caregiving Café experience. Kevin broke the ice by beginning with a toast for those who have passed away and asked attendees, "Why are you toasting to this person?" Brave individuals stood up and shared about the people who have passed away — already bringing tears to those listening.

As the restaurant cheered a loud "Kanpai!" Kevin asked additional questions that — if willing — they could converse about amongst their tables. Gil Asakawa, a journalist in attendance, shared that the biggest takeaway he had was "the

"We need to fully grieve someone to fall back in love with them."

- Michael Hebb

need for openness" and the importance of having such safe space for community members.

Michael Hebb said in his book that, "We need to fully grieve someone to fall back in love with them. It's in the acceptance of their loss that we can regain the enchantment of their gifts to us." Having these difficult conversations with your loved one might be the first step to to know more about your loved one and to fulfill their wishes to the best of your ability.

As for the future, Kevin is "excited to continue creating spaces for these conversations across Our Community to support everyone's journey as they take on the responsibilities of providing care to their loved ones."

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit keiro.org/news.






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Caregiver Conference

Saturday, April 13, 2024
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**San Fernando Valley Japanese American
Community Center**

Keiro understands that all caregivers need
support and a space to develop skills to be the
best caregiver possible. Join us for the 2024
Caregiver Conference to gain useful knowledge
and hands-on skills for your caregiving journey.

Registration opens Monday, January 15, 2024

For more information: keiro.org/CC24

