

# KeiroConnect



**LET THE  
GAMES BEGIN!**

The pursuit of healthy aging







## FROM THE ARCHIVES

JULY 30, 2010 | FORMER KEIRO RETIREMENT HOME

## WE COULD HAVE DANCED ALL NIGHT!

*Dancing was a popular activity among the residents and guests of Keiro's former facilities. Dances in the social hall were regularly held to get everyone moving and grooving together to some great tunes!*



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  
President & CEO

# Welcome!

A MESSAGE FROM KEIRO PRESIDENT & CEO

In anticipation of the summer Olympics, Keiro is highlighting community members as they “go for gold” in their own pursuits of excellence in aging. Whether cheering on grandchildren, connecting through pickleball, or carving out time for nature walks (as I often do), engaging in regular physical activity has been proven to reduce fall risk, lower blood pressure, help manage weight, and support a healthy brain.

As Keiro continues to support older adults living at home, we also recognize the needs of those who require additional care. This summer, Keiro will conduct focus groups and surveys to engage with Our Community on advanced supportive services with the intent to develop small-scale board and care homes focused on memory care. Knowing that one in six persons age 65 and over will be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and one in five will have other types of dementia, Keiro is exploring different service options that support those with memory loss and their caregivers.

In true Olympic spirit, let’s move “Faster, Higher, Stronger – TOGETHER!” Connect with us as we launch phase two of our community survey and develop an additional layer of support for those with memory loss.

夏のオリンピックを目前に、今回は皆様が年齢を重ねる中、それぞれの「金メダル」を目指してご活躍されている姿を特集しております。お孫さんを応援したり、ピックルボールを通じてつながりを持ったり、あるいは私のように自然散策の時間を設けたり、定期的に体を動かすことは、転倒リスクの低減、血圧の低下、体重管理の助け、そして健康な脳のサポートに効果的であることが証明されています。

Keiroは在宅で生活する高齢者を支援し続けるとともに、さらに追加のサポートが必要な方のニーズを考慮することの重要性も認識しています。この夏、Keiroは、今後メモリーケアの小規模ボード&ケアホームを立ち上げる意志を踏まえ、コミュニティの皆様のご協力のもと、より高度な支援サービスとプログラムについてのフォーカスグループ及びアンケート調査を実施します。65歳以上の6人に1人がアルツハイマー病と診断され、5人に1人がその他の認知症を患う統計を考慮し、Keiroは認知症を患っている方とその介護者をサポートするための様々なサービスの選択肢を模索しています。

コミュニティ調査の第2フェーズを開始し、認知症を抱える方への追加のサポートを実現するにあたり、真のオリンピック精神に則り、「より速く、より高く、より強く」皆様とつながりを持てるよう目指したいと思います。ぜひご参加ください。

ベバリ・イトウ  
Keiro代表兼CEO

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## What's Up With Pickleball?

In 2018, Ryan started a small pickleball group at Orange County Buddhist Church (OCBC) with the hopes of finding a physical activity for their senior group to enjoy. Little did Ryan know that the pickleball craze at OCBC would soon grow to become one of the most popular activities at the church. Across Our Community, we have seen more senior pickleball groups appear. So this begs the question, **why is pickleball so popular among older adults?**



### The Rise of Pickleball

Keiro spoke with Susan Nardi, a certified professional tennis and pickleball coach, to gain insight on the rise of pickleball among older adults. Susan listed various reasons why older adults, in particular, are picking up the sport which include:

- Shorter learning curve
- Smaller court
- Extremely social
- Quick playing time (roughly 20 minutes a game)
- Very inviting and open to others
- Community building
- It is fun!

### Benefits for Mental and Physical Health

When watching the community members over the years play pickleball at OCBC, Ryan shared that he has noticed everyone has significantly developed their skills, flexibility, enthusiasm, and stamina. Susan mentioned that playing pickleball is a great sport because your glutes, quads, and hamstrings are constantly engaged which can build muscles. Along with

the physical benefits, playing pickleball challenges your brain just as hard. With the combination of benefits for your mental and physical health, studies have shown that people who play racquet sports, such as pickleball, are more likely to have an increased lifespan.

### Let's Socialize!

Not only are we seeing people across generations connecting through a common interest, but many people who have retired or been inactive are finding a new community with pickleball and creating friendships with people they may not have had the chance to meet otherwise. Due to the large size of OCBC's group and the limited number of courts, many people enjoy conversations with others in between games and during stretches as they wait for their turns to play.

When talking about the future of the pickleball group, Ryan is hoping to expand their social circle beyond OCBC by connecting with other pickleball groups in the Japanese American community. He finds this as a great opportunity to connect with older adults through their shared interests.



### Getting Addicted to Pickleball

When asked for advice on people who may be interested in playing, Susan said a few simple words, "Get ready to have a good time, and be prepared to get addicted!" Ryan is glad that the pickleball group has given people the opportunity to get out of the house, get some physical activity, and most importantly, connect with their community.

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).



**"Especially for seniors, it's an opportunity to meet like-minded people and for them to play together."**

- Susan





## Finding Passion with Taiko Drums

Taiko has been a part of Japanese culture for centuries, played at festivals, ceremonies, and large-scale events. But some like to play it recreationally. Keiro interviewed one of the participants at Asano Taiko U.S., Steve, about his experience playing taiko.

### Better Late than Never

Steve has been taking classes for the last decade with his wife. About five years ago, Julia, an instructor at Asano Taiko U.S., created the Golden Taiko class. This class is for older adults who want to learn how to play, and it is taught at an easier pace. Since the creation of the class, Steve has not only been able to develop his taiko skills and learn new songs, but he has also brought some of his friends to join. Steve said, “Being with the group and seeing the interaction that’s going on is a lot of fun.”



**“It is encouraging to be around [the group], and doing performances is equally exciting.”**

- Steve

### Physically and Mentally Beneficial

Attending the class goes beyond learning how to play taiko. It also has a very social aspect to it. The class begins with twenty minutes of stretching together in a circle where they talk and laugh as they warm up. Along with feeling connected with others, Steve has also noticed that his memory has improved. He said that his dad at his age already had symptoms of dementia and experienced sundowning. However, Steve currently does not have any symptoms of cognitive decline and believes that taiko has helped him to be cognitively healthy. When asked how long he is planning on playing taiko, Steve said with a chuckle, “As long as the legs hold on.”

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).



## Cheering on the Grandkids

Watching grandchildren pursue sports has been a treasured pastime for many grandparents. Keiro interviewed grandparents about the joys of supporting their grandchildren in playing sports.



### KIRK

Kirk’s love of sports was passed down to his children, and now his three grandchildren, Keira (softball and volleyball), Noah (basketball and volleyball), and Leah (softball), have excelled in various sports. Kirk is grateful that his retirement allowed him to play golf every week and attend all of his grandchildren’s games. Sports are one of the strongest connections he has with his grandchildren. “It is a very proud moment for me to see my grandkids excel in the sports that I love.”

### JAN

Jan’s oldest granddaughter, Avery, has taken on gymnastics and basketball. She goes to most of Avery’s basketball games and sometimes takes her to gymnastics. She loves to see her granddaughter become more confident, socialize, and learn how to be a part of a team. Jan shared, “It gives me purpose to get up every day and go out and exercise to stay healthy so that I can continue to support them.”



### HISAMORI

Hisamori’s love for sports remained constant even after he moved to the United States. He currently has three grandchildren, two of whom are high school students who play various sports, including volleyball, track, soccer, and basketball. Hisamori goes to cheer on his grandchildren at least once a month. “I think being present and cheering them on is the best support I can provide.” He finds joy in seeing his grandchildren play sports, but it also brings back nostalgic memories for him.



For the full article, scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).



# Healthy Body. Healthy Mind.



**“I do not want to undersell the social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of brain health.”**

*- Dr. Kevin Bickart  
UCLA professor and neurologist*



It is a common assumption that as we age, there is a higher chance of being diagnosed with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. What if by incorporating physical activities in your life, you could help reduce the risk? Keiro interviewed Dr. Kevin Bickart – a UCLA professor and neurologist, with a specialization in sports and behavioral neurology as part of UCLA’s BrainSPORT and Neurobehavior programs – on how finding a balanced and active physical lifestyle can help prolong your brain health.

## A Healthy Brain

Dr. Bickart said a healthy brain is one without any scars or shrinkage. Scars happen when there is a blockage of blood flow to certain parts of your brain. Accumulating various shrinkages or scars over time can affect your brain health and lead to cognitive decline. So how do we maintain a healthy brain?

## Achievable Physical Activity Tips

Believe it or not, Dr. Bickart said years of research shows that staying physically active as you age is one of the best ways to improve your brain health. Combining a cognitive exercise with a

physical one can improve your overall brain health. For those who are willing to try something new, Dr. Bickart highly suggests dancing. “Dancing covers so many aspects of brain health. It involves a moderate intensity of physical activity, like exercise, requires cognitive processes to coordinate the dance moves, and it is also a great social interaction.”

## How to get Started

For those who aren’t quite active yet, Dr. Bickart said when participating in any type of exercise, it can be helpful to create achievable goals for yourself. For example, he suggested trying to walk 10,000 steps in a day as a starting point. Once this becomes a routine, he

said you can move up to completing about 150 minutes of workouts over a three to four-day period. He explained, “You are doing something that is hard enough where you can’t speak normally in long sentences but you can still hold a conversation, which is a subjective way to know.” The workouts should be a balance of endurance training and resistance training which can improve not only your physical health but your cognitive health as well.

Those who have participated in sports when they were younger may find picking up an activity easier than most. Dr. Bickart explained that studies show that whether the individual did sports in high school or not was a significant factor in seeing if they were physically active later in their life.

## The Key is to have FUN - It’s not just Physical

In the end, Dr. Bickart said to make sure we have joy and fun in what we do. “I do not want to undersell the social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of brain health. These are what give us the motivation to persevere through obstacles from one day to the next and get up in the morning.... Ultimately, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being lay the foundation for a balanced and active lifestyle, which protects against dementias and promotes overall brain health.”

For the full article, scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).





# Passing the Torch

## Japanese American Community Basketball

by Chris Komai, Keiro Board Member

When I was 20 years old, my life changed in ways I could not understand or appreciate in the moment. I began playing Japanese American (JA) community basketball in the Nisei Athletic Union (NAU). Even though my first NAU team wasn't very good and I collected more fouls than points, it was a revelation to be able to compete against players and teams more similar in size and ability to me and my team. Plus, the underlying sense of community and camaraderie grew as my Uncle Akira Komai, who helped to found NAU in 1947, induced me to become a scorekeeper and to help administrate the league. I ended up becoming a coach for my team and a women's team.

As someone who grew up in Temple City when it had very few Asian Americans, it was gratifying to interact with groups and individuals who shared the same traditional Japanese cultural values and a love of the game of basketball as I do. As I got older and was playing less, I began wondering how our JA community ended up with such well-organized basketball leagues and tournaments. While I understood my Uncle Aki, the postwar publisher of the Rafu Shimpō, was key to the establishment of the NAU, I didn't understand why.

While my uncle passed in 1983, I was lucky enough to speak with Harry Honda, who was on the first NAU Board after the war, and he was clear that my uncle was a driving force to restart organized sports in our community. Additionally, working at the Rafu Shimpō as the sports editor, I had access to the old copies of the paper. From reading several of the "Dis 'N Dat" columns that my uncle wrote in 1946, it's clear his intention was to provide an activity that young Nisei men could become engaged in with other members of our community.

By the time I started my basketball career in the 1970s, the adult and youth leagues were beginning to flourish. I was



Photographed from front row, left to right, Mickey Komai, Chris Komai, Ted Umemoto and Dean Mizuno; back row, from left, Stan Woi, Victor Tomono, Coach Jim Umemoto, Gilbert Wun and Roger Ono. (Photo courtesy: Chris Komai)

blissfully unaware of the struggle (gaining access to gyms, officials, etc.) my uncle and the other leaders had to overcome so I could have the opportunity to play. When I finally learned the history of community basketball and its role as one of the main connections between Japanese Americans, I understood what my uncle had wanted me to appreciate with the hopes I would help carry on the tradition.

I have continued to serve on the NAU Board, and I worked with a committee to honor people like my uncle who were the pioneers of our basketball organizations. I am part of a new group called the Nikkei Basketball Heritage Association (NBHA), which continues to document our basketball history and pushes awareness for the connection between traditional Japanese cultural values to community basketball.

Thanks to NBHA, I have spoken at public programs about JA basketball history and its connection to our traditional Japanese cultural values. I have been allowed to address the managers, coaches, and parents about how community youth basketball is an opportunity to pass those traditions.

For me, all of this is about feeling gratitude for the gift of community basketball provided for me and others and wanting to pass it down with the understanding that it's about more than just basketball. Like my uncle, my hope is that the younger generations will appreciate the gift that they have inherited and will want to extend it to the next generation. That would make me happy, and it would honor my uncle's memory.

To read the full article, scan the QR code or visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).



## KEIRO UPDATES



### Caregiver Conference

April 13, 2024

San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center

Keiro hosted its annual Caregiver Conference filled with special guest speakers for the keynote and breakout sessions, a robust resource fair, and more! It was a delight to have Our Community come together in support of one another on their caregiving journeys.



### Keiro Announces Survey and Focus Groups Related to Board and Care Homes Providing Memory Care Services

Keiro announced plans to engage with community members through online surveys and select focus groups this summer on its intent to develop small-scale residential models of care, or "board and care homes," to support those affected by memory loss. For more information, visit [keiro.org/survey](https://keiro.org/survey).

### KeiroConnect 2024 Annual Publication Survey Results Correction

The reason for people moving out of their homes due to decline in health should be **64%**, not **68%**. We apologize for this error. The correct results are available at [keiro.org/survey](https://keiro.org/survey).

## 2023-2024 Grants Program Recipients

Congratulations to all the recipient organizations of the 2023-2024 cycle of Keiro's Grants Program!

*Recipients listed in alphabetical order:*

- Asian American Community Media Project (AACoMP)
- Centenary United Methodist Church
- Cerritos Baptist Church
- Continuing Education for the Nikkei Widowed, Inc.
- East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center
- Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles
- Faith United Methodist Church
- First Presbyterian Church, Altadena
- Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute
- Japanese Christian Church Federation of Southern California
- Leisure Club at ESGVJCC
- Little Tokyo Nutrition Services
- Long Beach Buddhist Church
- Long Beach Japanese Cultural Center
- Los Angeles Homba Hongwanji Buddhist Temple BWA
- Los Angeles Men's Glee Club
- Makoto Taiko
- Mission Valley Free Methodist Church
- Nikkei Active Life Club (NALC) USA
- Orange County Buddhist Church
- Orange County Friendship Choir
- Orange County Japanese American Association
- Oxnard Buddhist Temple
- Pasadena Buddhist Temple
- Pasadena Nikkei Seniors
- Sakura Chorus
- San Fernando Valley Meiji Senior Citizens' Club
- South Bay Singers
- Team Kotomoto
- Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple
- Venice Japanese Community Center
- Ventura County Japanese American Citizens League
- Visual Communications
- West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple
- West Los Angeles United Methodist Church
- Zenshuji Soto Mission

For more information, visit [keiro.org/news](https://keiro.org/news).





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## Keiro no Hi FESTIVAL

敬老の日フェスティバル

**Saturday, September 21, 2024**

**Japanese American National Museum (JANM)**

Gather with us for live entertainment, activities, JANM  
exhibitions, and food as we celebrate the older adults in Our  
Community! Complimentary transportation will be available.

Registration opens July 3, 2024.

More information: [keiro.org/knh](http://keiro.org/knh)

日本語はこちら: [keiro.org/jp/knh](http://keiro.org/jp/knh)



## ACTIVE AGING FAIR

**RALLYING AROUND PICKLEBALL**

**Saturday, October 19, 2024**

**Terasaki Budokan**

Connect with us at this fun and  
informative fair centered around  
pickleball, aging well, and building  
relationships in the community!

Registration opens July 22, 2024.

For more information: [keiro.org/aging-fair](http://keiro.org/aging-fair)