



Japan America Society of St. Louis, Inc.  
c/o International Studies and Programs  
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## Japan America Society Annual Report 2017

The Japan-America Society of Saint Louis (JASSTL) was founded in 1967 with the mission **to promote friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of Japan and the United States.** The Society is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization and is an all-volunteer society governed by 20+ elected members of the Board. The Office of International Studies and Programs (ISP) at University of Missouri-St. Louis provides operational support to the Society.

JASSTL is the major information clearing house in the St. Louis Metropolitan Community. The Society receives 150 inquiries about Japan in a given year and we answer them free of charge. The Society receives requests for translation services, lectures, authentic cultural activities, and demonstrations from local libraries, schools, and other organizations. In addition, JASSTL support the St. Louis Japanese Language School by hosting the annual fundraising golf tournament. JASSTL has made donations every year since 1998, totaling more than \$60,000.

2017 marked the JASSTL's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and represented a year of growth and transition within the organization. Dr. Chikako Usui stepped down as JASSTL President after a tenure of 10 years, but not before ensuring a highly dedicated and well-qualified team was in place to continue the success of the society. Greg Gorman, an active JASSTL board member and well-respected member of the St. Louis Japanese community, will take over as President beginning January 1, 2018. Kenichi Kitajima of Novus International, Linda Austin of JASWA, and Toshio Kitamura of CSI Leasing will support him in the role of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Presidents. The JAS also used this opportunity to strengthen its treasurer position with the addition of Ron Sakai of Wells Fargo Advisors.

This new leadership team will continue the growth and success that the society saw under Dr. Usui. During the past five years, the Society has recruited new corporate board members and strengthened the annual business/economic and cultural programs by obtaining grants from various sources, including the Japan Foundation, Keizai Koho Center, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, and TOMODACHI (US-Japan Council). Of these, the largest grants have been from TOMODACHI for 2013-2017 (\$92,000), the Japan Initiative grant for 2015 (\$28,738) and 2016 (\$29,238), and the Japan Update grant for 2015-18 (\$50,000).

In 2015, with a grant from the Japan Foundation's Center for Global Partnership, JASSTL began a year-long strategic planning process. The process included the selection of a paid project manager, formation of a steering committee, hiring a consulting firm, conducting a community survey, holding a board retreat, establishing a strategic plan, forming specific

task forces, and carrying out work in those task forces. We initially identified six "Areas of Strategic Focus," agreed to concentrate on three of these areas, and formed a committee in each area. The three areas are Organization, Fundraising, and Recruitment.

In 2016 JASSTL entered the second year of the funded project, capacity building, focusing on the three areas. The **Organization** component included long-term financial planning, succession planning, marketing, and community partnerships. For **Fundraising**, the Society developed various fundraising plans to raise \$16,000, which is what we need to retain the Project Manager for 2017 (8 hours/week). The **Recruitment** component focused on corporate recruitment by developing unique business/corporate events.

The fruits of these endeavors have been very encouraging. During this part of strategic planning, we not only received grants from the Boeing Community Fund (\$3,000 in 2016 and \$2,500 in 2017), we also met our fundraising goal of \$16,000 by implementing several new fundraising plans.

With our newest CGP grant of \$21,340 awarded in 2017, we will stabilize our recent growth. We began by recruiting an assistant to the Project Manager. Hiring Tiffany Seipel on June 1, 2017, her skills and resources were immediately put to use during JASSTL's first-ever Trivia Night fundraising event later that month, which added more than \$4700 to our net income. Her contributions to our administration, event coordination, and social media maintenance have been invaluable, and have allowed us to streamline event planning and office procedures. Her work will continue through May 2018, helping us to develop best practices for our annual programming.

All the above efforts go directly to fulfilling our mission and serving the St. Louis community, largely by strengthening our **annual programs**. Below is a list of the events and programs we offered, along with a short summary of how we are improving on each event/program.

## 2017 Events

### January 22 Shinnenkai 新年会 New Year's Celebration

The event featured Consul General Toshiyuki Iwado from Chicago, Dave Lowry's remarks about the Japanese New Year's celebration, kagami-biraki (sake opening ceremony), New Year's special meal, and fukubukuro raffle. The event was held at Sushi Sen Restaurant and sold out in advance with 68 attending.



## January 30 We are St. Louis: Japanese Americans

Dr. Chikako Usui discussed the history of Japanese Americans in the St. Louis region at the Grand Glaize branch of the St. Louis County Library as part of the library's "We are St. Louis" talk series. The program included not only her presentation, but also a shamisen concert and interactive demonstration, as well as an active question and answer session with the audience.



## February 21 Spring Japan Update: How Will US-Japan Relations Change in 2017?

Japan Update began with an hour-long private meeting of Ambassador Ichiro Fujisaki with 18 selected VIPs, including representatives from the JAS, our corporate membership, and community leaders. Following the private meeting, around JAS members enjoyed a member-only tour of the NOVUS facility. The main program began with an introduction from NAJAS president Peter Kelly and featured talks by our three invited speakers. Ambassador Fujisaki discussed new dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region, James L. Schoff of the Carnegie Asia Program presented on geopolitical change in Asia, and Thad Simons of Yield Lab spoke about the role Japan will have in upcoming agricultural and technological advancements toward global sustainability. Following a Q&A, guests enjoyed the JAS's signature sushi and sake reception presented by local chef Naomi Hamamura.



### May 7 A Celebration of Japanese Culture

This mini-Japanese festival at the Missouri History Museum has gained popularity each year since we began offering it in 2013. In 2017, we offered 9 different performances and exhibits for visitors to enjoy, including *kamishibai* storytelling, a kimono demonstration, a lecture on *Zen* buddhism, a *shamisen* performance, and a *chanoyu* tea ceremony. We promote young talented students of Japanese arts and culture to nurture the next generation of cultural performers.



### June 17 JAS Trivia Night

Our first-annual trivia night fundraiser was a huge success, with 152 participants split between 19 teams, and multiple table sponsors. Premium tables were offered that included Japanese bento boxes from Chef de Art Catering and ikebana centerpieces provided by Dr. Chikako Usui. Attendees also enjoyed a silent auction, which featured several authentic Japanese items, as well as gift certificates to local restaurants, and a jan-ken-pon mini-game. In total, this new event raised \$4,781.64 for JASSTL.



### September 2-4 Annual Japanese Festival

This year's Japanese festival boasted the second-highest record of attendance in the Festival's history with 39,764 visitors, many of whom stopped by our booths. At the tee-shirt booth we sold not only our 2017 festival tee-shirt (featuring a *danchiku* bamboo design), but also tee-shirts featuring vintage festival designs, the five virtues of *bushido*, and the calligraphy for flower. In addition, our beer & sake booth found new success as we teamed up with local brewery Urban Chestnut and Suwa-based sake brewery *Masumi* to create *Konomi*/好み beer. Made with sake yeast from *Masumi* and a hint of *matcha* green tea, this draught beer was a hit among attendees and actually sold out before the end of the Festival. We look forward to offering this special beer at the festival again in 2018.





**September 22 Fund Raising Golf Outing (Pevely Farms)**

This annual fundraising event for the St. Louis Japanese Language School is strongly supported by our corporate members each year. In 2017, we generated a net income of \$3,633.11, of which JASSTL donated \$3,000 to the Language School.

**October 9 Fall Japan Update: Missouri & Japan’s Business Partnership**

This event was a collaboration between JASSTL and CSI Leasing, Inc., one of our silver-level corporate members. Selected community members enjoyed a private pre-meeting with two of the speakers and former US Senator Jim Talent. The main program featured speakers Congresswoman the Honorable Ann Wagner, Mr. Peter Smith of Enterprise Holdings Inc., and Mr. Ken Steinback of CSI Leasing. All three speakers spoke confidently of the good trade relationship between Missouri and Japan to an audience of almost 100 JASSTL and St. Louis community members. Our signature sushi and sake reception, prepared by Chef de Art Catering, followed the main program.



**November 7 JAS Annual Dinner/Annual Meeting with live auction**

Our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Annual Dinner, held at Oishi Sushi and Steakhouse, was our most successful fundraising dinner yet. We sold out our capacity quickly thanks to corporate table sponsorships and the tremendous support of our general members, with 74 people total in attendance. As part of our new fundraising efforts, the program included a live auction of over 20 items; the centerpiece of the auction was a hand-embroidered silk *uchikake* (formal wedding kimono). St. Louis City Mayor Lyda Krewson proclaimed November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 as “Dr. Chikako Usui Day” in celebration of her ten years as JASSTL President. We also presented the \$3000 donation to the St. Louis Japanese Language School, as well as friendship and service awards to individuals who have demonstrated dedication and support to JAS and the local Japanese community.



**December 15-23 JAS Night at the Ballet: The Nutcracker**

In addition to these major programs, JAS also continued to offer regular ikebana (Japanese flower arrangement) workshops throughout the year, about 35 in all, and several Chanoyu (Japanese tea ceremony) experiences. These ikebana and chanoyu sessions provide the St. Louis community regular opportunities to experience authentic aspects of Japanese arts and culture.

**2017 Board of Directors**

Linda Austin	Moonbridge Publications
Bruce S. Buckland	Retired Honorary Consul General of Japan
Jack Coad	Retired from Parsons Brinckerhoff
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Yoshiaki Shibusawa	St. Louis Japan Society
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