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NISEI WEEK FRANCES K. HASHIMOTO COMMUNITY SERVICE HONOREES ANNOUNCED

(Los Angeles – July 14, 2019) – The Nisei Week Foundation is pleased to recognize two stellar organizations, the Japanese Women’s Society of Southern California (JWSSC) and the Okinawa Association of America (OAA), with the Frances K. Hashimoto Community Service Award. This award recognizes these organizations for their outstanding contributions to the Southern California Japanese American community. The annual Awards Dinner will be held on Monday, August 12 at the Double Tree by Hilton (120 S. Los Angeles Street, Los Angeles). Starting at 6 p.m., individual tickets are \$100 and tables of 10 are \$1,00.

Also recognized at the Awards Dinner will be this year’s Grand Marshal, Akemi Miyake; Parade Marshal, the Los Angeles Clippers; Inspiration Award recipients retired LA County Alternate Public Defender Janice Fukai; community leader Alan Nishio; and President’s Award honorees, the late Madame Sosei Shizuye Matsumoto and the late Madame Kangiku Sanjo, will be recognized for going above and beyond to volunteer their time and/or service to the community. For tickets or information, call the Nisei Week Foundation at 213.687.7193 or email office@niseiweek.org.

The following organizations will receive the Nisei Week Community Service Awards:

Japanese Women’s Society of Southern California

The JWSSC celebrates 115 years of continued active community service this year. The organization began on March 27, 1904 in Los Angeles when a small group of women, known as Rafu Fujinkai, began to send care packages to Japan during the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1930, the Rafu Fujinkai brought Buddhist, Christian and other women’s organizations together under a single women’s organization called the Nanka Fujinkai Renmai (Federation of Southern California Japanese Women) to coordinate activities and to work together as a single group. A golden era followed the Fujinkai volunteer work and it expanded into many areas of social welfare. Fujinkai members also introduced and promoted the Japanese cultural arts to the community to build goodwill and friendly relations between Japan and the United States.

In 1937, more than 3,000 people witnessed the unveiling of the 23.5 feet stone monument at Evergreen Cemetery to honor the deceased Japanese pioneers. In 1953, Crown Prince Akihito recognized the monument with the planting of two trees with a dedication plaque. To this day, a service is conducted at the monument on Memorial Day.

The organization adopted its present name, Nanka Nikkei Fujinkai (Japanese Women’s Society of Southern California) in 1956. As the JWSSC prepares to celebrate its 115th year, it continues to support the community by volunteering in the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California’s annual year-end charity drive and its Oshogatsu Festival; co-sponsoring the Women of the Year Lunch along with the Downtown Los Angeles Chapter, JACL; participating in the annual Memorial Day services at

Evergreen Cemetery; supporting efforts to assist after disasters such as 9-11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami; and working with Love to Nippon that remembers the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami with its annual memorials.

The Fujinkai provides annual monetary support to the needs of other organizations as well as visitations to Kei Ai Nursing Home. Our sensei (teachers) and members continue to share the Japanese cultural arts of *ikebana*, Japanese tea ceremony, calligraphy, *koto* and *odori* presentations in our community.

The Japanese Women's Society of Southern California is a nonprofit organization. Its current president is Itsuko Ramos.

Okinawa Association of America, Inc.

The OAA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote Okinawan culture and contribute to local and international cultural exchanges. The OAA was formed by Okinawan immigrants 110 years ago and has since grown into a multigenerational organization that provides cultural, educational, and social programs for its members and the larger community. Although the OAA has changed its name, structure and mission to reflect the changing times, the basic goals of mutual aid and retention of Okinawan identity have remained the same.

During the period between 1896-1900, the first Okinawan settlement in the continental U.S. was formed in San Francisco. An Okinawan kenjinkai (mutual aid organization) was founded in 1902, but the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 prompted many Okinawans to move to Los Angeles, joining about 30 others who had settled there from Mexico. In 1909, the two groups united to form the Nanka Okinawa Kenjinkai, the predecessor to the OAA.

During World War II, organizational activities were halted as most of the members were placed in American internment camps. Returning from the camps to Los Angeles after the war, the Okinawans started not only rebuilding their own livelihood but also organizing relief efforts to aid war-devastated Okinawa. From 1945 to about 1953, activities were almost entirely devoted to helping rebuild their homeland.

The OAA found a permanent home in 1999 with the opening of the OAA Center in Gardena. A number of volunteer-run groups within the OAA work hard to serve the organization's mission: cultural and event committees are in charge of creating programs and coordinating performances; different clubs host social and informational gatherings that are geared toward seniors, women, and young people; special committees are tasked with managing membership, preserving the OAA's history, and developing the center's growing library of Okinawa-focused books. The organization also presents annual high school scholarships and Okinawa prefecture-sponsored study abroad opportunities for young members of Okinawan descent.

The OAA leadership believes that the Issei (first generation) pioneers would be proud to see how dynamic and diverse the community has become. Factors like an increase in programs, an active internet presence, and the strengthening of local and international connections have helped the organization reach a wider audience. With more than 900 members and more young people taking an interest in their heritage, the OAA continues to abide by its 100th anniversary theme, "Ichi nu ichimadin: from generation to generation," ensuring that the Okinawan culture will live on for generations to come.

The 2019 Nisei Week Japanese Festival is a nine-day event first held in 1934 and is recognized today as one of the longest running ethnic festivals in the United States. This event will take place in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo district from August 10-18. For a calendar of events, log on to www.NiseiWeek.org, call the Nisei Week Foundation office at 213.687.7193 or email info@niseiweek.org. The Nisei Week office is located at 244 South San Pedro Street, Suite 303, Los Angeles, CA 90012.