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Nisei Week Candidates Revealed

71st Nisei Week Japanese Festival to take place Aug. 13-21 in Little Tokyo.



From left to right: Kay A. Yamaguchi (Gardena Evening Optimist and The Loft Hawaiian Restaurant); Leann Fumiko Fujinami (San Diego Japanese American Citizens League); Michi Renee Lew (East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center); Mimi Mitsuko Yang (West Los Angeles Japanese American Citizens League and Venice Japanese Community Center); Jessica Makiko Kanai (Japanese Restaurant Association of America); Amber Akemi Piatt (San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center and Coordinating Council); Erika Mariko Olson (Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute); and Melissa Ayumi Nishimura (Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council). Photos by MARIO G. REYES/Rafu Shimpo

The Nisei Week Foundation officially kicked off its nine-day 71st Nisei Week Japanese Festival at its Opening Ceremony on Sunday, July 17 at the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy. One of the nation's longest-running ethnic festivals of its kind, the Nisei Week Japanese Festival will take place from Aug. 13-21 in Little Tokyo.



Rev. Alfred Tsuyuki performs a purification ceremony. (MARIO G. REYES/Rafu Shimpo)

"On behalf of the Nisei Week Foundation, I welcome you to the Opening Ceremonies of the 71st Nisei Week Japanese Festival," said Rev. Mark M. Nakagawa, Nisei Week Foundation president. "Our festival theme, 'Honoring Our Community Heroes,' lifts up individuals and organizations on a local, national and global level. We invite you to join in this year's festivities that bring people of all ages, generations and backgrounds together, as one community," Nakagawa said.

The afternoon's mistress of ceremonies was 2010 Nisei Week Queen Lani Kume Nishiyama and the 2010 Nisei Week Court hosted the event for the dignitaries, sponsors, family, and friends of the Nisei Week Foundation. Local dignitaries in attendance include Consul General Junichi

Ihara, Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich and Los Angeles City Councilwoman Jan Perry.

To sanctify and bring success to this year's festival, Rev. Alfred Tsuyuki of Konkō Church of Los Angeles conducted the annual purification ceremony. The program commenced with the 2011 Nisei Week Choreographer Madame Bando Mitsuhiro of Bando Mitsuhiro Kai and eight other dancers who performed two of the official dances she choreographed for this year's festival, "Ai wa Katsu" and "Omikoshi."

In addition, guests anxiously applauded the long-awaited debut of the official 2011 Nisei Week Court, which was announced to the community at the ceremony.

The 2011 Nisei Week queen candidates are:

Jessica Makiko Kanai (Japanese Restaurant Association of America)

Jessica Makiko Kanai is 22 years old and graduated last year with a bachelor's degree in recreation and tourism management, with an emphasis in systems management. Upon graduation, Kanai will continue working in the Japanese American community to help preserve its Japanese cultural heritage. In her leisure time, she enjoys traveling, dancing, watching musicals, trying new restaurants, going to Disneyland, volunteering with Konnichiwa Little Tokyo and spending time with family and friends. Kanai will be supporting Vista Del Mar as her platform.



Dancers of Bando Mitsuhiro Kai perform during the opening ceremony.

Leann Fumiko Fujinami (San Diego Japanese American Citizens League)

Leann Fumiko Fujinami is 21 years old and currently attends UC Irvine, studying art history. She would like to pursue a career in art administration. Her favorite pastimes include running, swimming, art and shopping. This year Fujinami will be supporting the Be the Match Donor Organization.

Michi Renee Lew (East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center)

Michi Renee Lew is 22 years old and currently attends California State University Los Angeles, where she is majoring in liberal studies. Upon graduation, she would like to pursue a career in education and become a middle school teacher, a student activities director, and to end her career as a school administrator. Her hobbies include playing and coaching basketball, swimming, reading, hiking and making ribbon leis. The platform Lew has decided to support this year is the Happy Hearts Fund (HHF).

Melissa Ayumi Nishimura (Orange County Nikkei Coordinating Council)



The 2010 Nisei Week Court greets the 2011 candidates.

Melissa Ayumi Nishimura is 23 years old and graduated from UCLA, where she received her bachelor of arts in economics, with a double minor accounting and Asian American studies. Her hobbies include basketball, Hawaiian and Tahitian dance, trying new restaurants, taking care of her dog, Colbie, and watching "Friends" reruns on television. This year Nishimura will be supporting the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society as her platform.

Erika Mariko Olson (Pasadena Japanese Cultural Institute)

Erika Mariko Olson is 22 years old and graduated cum laude from the Bob Cole

Conservatory of Music at California State University Long Beach with a bachelor's degree in music performance. She is an aspiring performer of the arts and looks forward to playing in leading musical and opera roles. In her spare time, she enjoys singing, playing the piano, swimming, hiking, climbing, biking, knitting, dance, art, opera, musical theater and being a part of the Grateful Crane Youth Group Singers. This year Olson will be supporting Classroom Connections as her platform.

Amber Akemi Piatt (San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center and Coordinating Council)

Amber Akemi Piatt is 23 years old and graduated from University of California Los Angeles, with a double major in psychology and Spanish. Her professional career goal is to start a nonprofit organization that addresses the needs of bicultural families in order to help parents and their children to embrace their roots, while teaching them ways to be competitive in American society. Her hobbies include photography, yoga, hiking, dancing, going to concerts, traveling and baking. The platform Piatt chose to support this year is Off the Mat and Into the World.

Kay A Yamaguchi (Gardena Evening Optimist and The Loft Hawaiian Restaurant)

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July 19- 三宅マイク信一
July 16- Hamao Goto
July 16- Sao Hashimoto
July 16- Shige Harada
July 16- Yayeko Jean Koda
July 16- 後藤浜男
July 16- 橋本佐男
July 14- Aiko M. Tanouye
July 13- 井上衣
July 12- George T. Matsuoka
July 12- 河合登美子
July 9- Robert Hisamoto
July 9- Robert S. Ichikawa
July 9- Richard Takashi Nimura
July 9- Rose Fusaye Oguro
July 7- Hisaye Matsumure
July 7- Kiyo Kay Okamoto
July 6- 永井トミ
July 6- 浜口雅彦
July 6- 前田ひろ子
July 6- Keiso Ken Fujikuni
July 6- Toshiko Hirashima
July 6- Mary Hisae Ishii
July 6- Hiroko Mayeda
July 6- Tomi Nagai
July 6- George Yada
July 2- Kiyoko Onishi
July 2- Martha Masumi Sentani
July 2- Chiyo Matsumiya
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Kay A Yamaguchi is 24 years old and graduated from UC Irvine, with a major in economics and minor in accounting. She currently works for Pricewaterhouse Coopers and aspires to be promoted and transferred to its Tokyo office, to further her pursuit in international business. In her free time she enjoys traveling, learning new languages, dancing and snowboarding. This year Yamaguchi will be supporting the Second Harvest Food Bank as her platform.

Mimi Mitsuko Yang (West Los Angeles Japanese American Citizens League and Venice Japanese Community Center)

Mimi Mitsuko Yang is 22 years old and is currently attending UCLA, double- majoring in international economics and Japanese. Her career goal is to become a health-care executive who creates affordable, quality care for the community. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking, reading, yoga, snowboarding and making jewelry. This year Yang will be supporting the International Medical Corps as her platform.

For a calendar of events and volunteer information, log on to www.NiseiWeek.org or call the Nisei Week Foundation office at (213) 687-7193. The Nisei Week office is located at 244 S. San Pedro St., Suite 303, Los Angeles, CA 90012.

★★★★★ (No Ratings Yet)

Tags: alfred tsuyuki, Amber Akemi Piat, bando mitsuhiro kai, East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center, Erika Mariko Olson, Gardena Evening Optimist, japanese restaurant association, Kay A Yamaguchi, Leann Fumiko Fujinami, little tokyo, Loft restaurant, mark nakagawa, Melissa Ayumi Nishimura, Michi Renee Lew, Mimi Mitsuko Yan, nisei week, pasadena japanese cultural institute, san diego japanese american citizens league, san fernando valley japanese american community center, venice japanese community center, west los angeles jac!



Mark Nakagawa, president of the Nisei Week Foundation, accepts a \$5,000 donation from Shinkichi Miki of the Japan Business Association.

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