

BERKELEY-SAKAI SISTER CITY ASSOCIATION



Celebrating over 50 years of Friendship



バークレー・堺 50年超える友好

Welcome to 2022

Virtual Meeting, March 11, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

The 2022 Annual Meeting will be held at 7pm (Pacific Time) on Friday, March 11, 2022 via Zoom. Please join us. We have a pre-registration for this event. Once you have registered you will receive a confirmation email titled "Berkeley-Sakai Association Annual Meeting" from Contra Costa Retirees <no-reply@zoom.us>. If you don't receive your confirmation email, please check your spam folder.

We have invited friends from Sakai to join us live in the meeting. We will have a brief agenda and then break out into smaller groups.

To register for this event please go to our website: <<https://berkeley-sakai.org/>>

We hope to see you there!

Proposed 2022 Board of Directors (to be voted on at the annual meeting)

Chair: Gary Gibson
Vice Chair: Don Rising
Treasurer: Maria LaForge
Secretary: Linda Komendant
Auditor: Brad McCullough
Directors: Wanda Bonneville, Forest Borie, Juri Komendant, Kathryn Lucchese, Atsuko Morse, Roy Nierenberg, Noriko Nishizawa, Cheryl Rego, Steve Rego, Carolyn Rising, Jay Sordean, Sally Stevens, and Barbara Stevens-Strauss.

2021 – 2022

By Linda Komendant

Two years ago we started the year with 5-6 students planning to visit Sakai in the summer, a City of Berkeley employee ready to run the Senshu Marathon, kindergarten drawings sent to Sakai for an exhibition, an Annual Dinner Meeting scheduled with good food and wine, Board members geared up to march in the Cherry Blossom Parade in San Francisco. By the middle of March COVID-19 hit the world and all was cancelled and postponed. By June we were conducting business via Zoom.

As we adjusted to changing times, our Annual Meeting in 2021 went virtual and we invited friends in Sakai to join us. Besides our usual crew of 17 Board members, we had 19 friends from Berkeley and 18 from Sakai. We broke up into small groups and caught up on how everyone was doing, how life in Berkeley and Sakai was progressing. Several programs (Kindergarten Art, Senshu Marathon, Student Exchange, Goodwill Visits) were cancelled for the year, but new programs were born.

Forest Borie, 7th grade teacher at Longfellow Middle School and newest Board member, with the help of Kate Lucchese, started work on a Pen Pal program. Forest gives an update later in this newsletter.

The Website Committee members continued their work on updating and improving the Berkeley-Sakai Association website. Juri gives an update later in this newsletter, and Barbara will give a summary of the Artists' Exchange which took place in November.

Through the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco, the California Japan Sister City Network (begun in 2020) continued its endeavors with a Spring Workshop on May 14, 2021 and a Fall Workshop on October 22, 2021. These were presented virtually and included some very interesting presentations by sister city groups in California.

Now, welcome to 2022, with renewed enthusiasm and hope for a better year. I like to believe there is a bright light up ahead, and we will all come through this pandemic healthy and strong, and once again be able to visit our friends in Sakai.

Kindergarten Art Exchange

By Carolyn Rising

We were unable to sponsor our regular art exchange between the kindergarten children from Thousand Oaks and the children of Sakai due to the Omicron variant of Covid. We were also concerned about displaying art from Sakai in safe Berkeley venues. However, Sakai officials wanted to resume as many Berkeley-Sakai exchanges as possible. Our Berkeley-Sakai Association board members voted to put the art that we sent two years ago online for Sakai viewers. The collection, with its short descriptions dictated by the kindergarten artists, had already been translated into Japanese by Noriko Nishikawa. We are all hoping to return to a normal exchange program next year.

Art Bridge Artist Exchange

By Barbara Stevens-Strauss

Gallery Irohani hosted several Bay Area artists in an exhibit sponsored by the International Art Bridge Institute from mid-November to December 8, 2021. The exhibit was once again coordinated by our arts contact in Sakai, Junichi Hotta. I was pleased to have two of my chigiri e (paper collage) images selected for promotional materials for the exhibit. All the artists deeply appreciated the opportunity to display our work in Japan to enhance cultural communication, particularly in these pandemic times.

New this year was an invitation to artists to create designs for lantern inserts for the Sakai Rantan festival, which were repeatedly used during the celebration event period. The paper designs were inserted into the lanterns and floated down the river, with accompanying musical performances as well.

Pen Pal Program

By Forest Borie

BSA Board member Forest Borie has been working with a few coordinators of international relations from the Tourism Exchange Division in Ibara City to begin an ongoing Pen Pal exchange. A group of 7th grade students from Foret's World History class at Longfellow Middle School are going to send the first batch of letters before the end of January. Students in Japan plan to replay with even more letters back. There is a lot of enthusiasm building around this old-fashioned exchange as both sides are hoping to create happy bonds of friendship.

Gift of Fire Movie Field Trip

By Kate Lucchese,
Board Member and BSSE 1973

On December 20, 2021, six Berkeley-Sakai Association folks converged on the Little Roxie theater on 16th at Valencia in San Francisco for a one-night-only showing of the new Eleven Arts film “The Gift of Fire,” produced by our friends Katie Peabody and Ko Mori and directed by Hiroshi Kurosaki. We got to know Katie and Ko remotely, if you’ll recall, when we did our fundraising showing of “The Harimaya Bridge,” another of their films, that one written and directed by Oakland native Aaron Woolfolk.

Anyway, Juri Komendant and Linda Calvin met my husband Robert and me at Nikko Sushi on Shattuck for dinner before BARTing to the movie, where we later discovered fellow Board member and Pen-Pal Chair Forest Borie and his sweetie were seated at the front of the theater. Who knew, with everyone masked? All in all we B-SAers made up fully HALF of the audience in the postage-stamp-sized theater!

“Gift of Fire” created quite a stir in Japan last year, briefly being the must-see movie of the summer, unsurprisingly given its bold subject: nothing less than the Japanese effort to make an atom bomb before we Allies did, albeit on a very small, homegrown scale, and with the secret goal of saving young scientists’ lives and tapping a source of boundless energy.

The film gripped us right from the opening moments, when a mysterious roar silences the audience and introduces us to the pottery kiln that is the lab’s surprising source of Uranium, all the way to the final scene’s long, long single take of our hero’s slow realization of what really matters in life. In between we have a sharp taste of the home front in wartime Japan.

Should have been better attended, and is very much well worth finding a way to see it.

Berkeley-Sakai Website - <https://berkeley-sakai.org> By Juri Komendant
or just Google: berkeley-sakai

We update the Berkeley-Sakai Association (BSA) website about once a month, providing information about current and past exchange programs and Japanese related events that may be of interest to our membership. Last year, we added a video of the kindergarten art drawings we received from Sakai and of our last Sakai student exchange to Berkeley. Both videos are about 4-5 minutes long and can be viewed by visiting the Kindergarten Arts tab or Student Exchange tab, both listed in the menu under Exchanges.

We provide links to our Facebook page, the City of Berkeley web site and Japanese organizations that are of interest to our Association. We also advertise events our Berkeley Bridge Artists participate in, Japanese movies produced by Eleven Arts.net, and local events by other Japanese organizations that we might participate in.

If you have photos of past exchanges or events, relating to our association or our exchange programs, we are interested in including as much as we can on our web site to make it interesting to current and past members and cultural exchange participants.

Although, Covid-19 has slowed down our person-to-person cultural exchanges, we are always looking for ways to improve and maintain our sistership relationship with Sakai. Your membership greatly helps us in doing this and we encourage you to keep participating in our Sister City Association with Sakai.

Memberships can be renewed on our web site (or by mail). We also appreciate donations to the Fern Harger Scholarship Fund which is dedicated to helping exchange students.