



GARDENA VALLEY

JCI QUARTERLY

Newsletter of the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Happy New Year 2025 wishes from our Staff and Board at the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI)! We hope that you are all safe and

well. Our hearts go out to everyone directly and indirectly affected by the recent wildfires. With these changing and uncertain times upon us, GVJCI remains committed to providing needed services to the community through our cultural and educational programs for all ages, senior services, and providing a welcoming and comfortable space for people to gather. Each year is a gift of hope, growth, and learning. We wish you much fulfillment in 2025.

We are sincerely grateful for your continued support in 2024. Your support enabled us to complete the following campus upgrades: **solar panel installation**, extend our **wifi connection** throughout our campus, **security system upgrades**, and new **paint and flooring in the GVJCI Nisei Veterans Memorial Hall**. We also held several successful events. We collaborated with the Shokudo Series to present the first ever **Showa Alley** in our breezeway, held another full-house **GVJCI Day of Remembrance** event about Terminal Island, celebrated community tradition with our **2024 GVJCI Matsuri** bringing the community together for a day of great food, fun and festivities, presented our lively 3rd annual **Signature Event: GVJCI Izakaya**, and

held our 8th annual **GVJCI Art Show** featuring local South Bay talents. Our programs and services continued strong with our growing **Japanese Language School** in-person and online classes, our weekday delicious and nutritious **Senior Bento Program** provided by Painter's Tape, sharing cultural traditions and values with our one-weeklong cultural heritage children's **Tanoshii Fun Camp**, hosting four amazing **summer interns** and collaborating with **Lighthouse Internship** working with nine interns from Japan, continuing our delicious **Ouchi-Gohan Workshops** of Japanese home cooking techniques, and many other happenings all year! And we received a generous grant from the Durfee Foundation for **Staff Wellness** that allowed us to use funds towards taking care of our hardworking staff who never stopped giving!

All of this would not be possible without the support you gave us through our fundraising efforts, donations, volunteerism, and participation in our programs and events. We also thank our event sponsors and program grantors whose funding made a significant impact. We truly couldn't have carried out our work to serve the community without your kind and generous support...*doumo arigatou gozaimasu*. We look forward to serving you again in 2025!

With sincere *kansha*,
Alison Kochiyama, Executive Director

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JCI Car Donation Program

Thinking of donating your car to charity? Now you can, and at the same time, support GVJCI! We have teamed up with Harold's Car Donation Service.

HOW IT WORKS:

1. Call or email us to arrange pickup at: (310) 324-6611 or cars@jci-gardena.org
2. Harold's Car Donation Service (HCDS) will arrange towing, always free of charge to you. (Disabled Vehicles, Junk Cars, Scrap Cars and Wrecks also accepted.)
3. HCDS handles all DMV paperwork at time of pickup, including Release of Liability.
4. After the car is sold, your acknowledgment and tax forms will arrive by mail.
5. You get rid of an unwanted car and get the satisfaction of helping others. You also get an IRS approved tax deduction. Yay!

SAVE THE DATE

Friday **APRIL 25**
5 - 9 PM

4th Annual GVJCI Izakaya

Gardena Valley JCI
Nisei Veterans Memorial Hall
1964 W. 162nd St., Gardena, CA 90247

Join us for a fun-filled evening of food, drinks, and music!

Stay tuned for more details...

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!

GVJCI's supporters through grants and donations received between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024 (If we inadvertently missed any names, please let our office know.)

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Brian T. Mitsunaga Memorial Fund 🌸

\$1,000 - \$5,000

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From The Family 🌸

In Memory of Carole Hirata
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 Cherrystone's Restaurant & Catering
 Chuck, Catherine Endo
 Comline Inc.
 Con Global Industries, LLC
 Dai Ichi Bonsai
 Garibaldo's Nursery
 H&H Nursery
 Hawthorne Nursery
 Higa, Kevin
 Hirano, Michelle
 Hirata, Erick
 Homan, David
 Hong Kong Bakery & Deli
 Inouye, Mike
 Iwasaki, Joni
 Javier's Nursery
 Kawahara, Larry
 Kochiyama, Jimmy
 Kouno, Donna
 Kubota Nikkei Mortuary Inc.
 Lee, Tracy
 Maeda, Karl
 Miyamoto, Mike
 Morimizu, Dan
 Mutual Trading Co., Inc.
 Nakamoto, Jay
 Nakatsu, Wayne
 Ohara, Cindy
 Osa, Susan
 Sapporo USA, Inc.
 Sato, Nicole
 Shin-Sen-Gumi Group
 Sugimoto, Donna
 Takamori, Alvin & Debbie
 Mochidome

Tanaka Farms
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 Torrance Bakery
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 Yamanishi, Staci
 Yoshimura, Eileen



Stock Gifts


Brian T. Mitsunaga Memorial Fund

Vehicle Donations

Arakaki, Brian
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 Flower, Nellie
 Grimaldo, Maria
 Hamada, Paul
 Harada, Patricia
 Hays, Justin
 Inouye, Craig
 Inouye, Tomoko
 Kao, Malcom
 Kimura, Katsushiro
 Kohara, Don
 Kubo, Jeffrey
 Manaka, Timoty
 Maruyama, Phyllis
 McHugh, Yuri-Anne
 Morimoto, Vivian
 Murabata, Spenser
 Nakakihara, May
 Nozaki, Roy
 Okimura, Saburo
 Saito, Osamu
 Shiroma, Gary
 Shishido, Larry
 Sugiyama, Rodney
 Takamiya, Marsha
 Takatsuki, Kaori
 Tan, Margaret
 Tanimura, Itsumi
 Yamashiro, Christopher
 Yasuda, Reiko
 Yoo, Deborah

CATEGORY	SYMBOL
Events: Art Show, DOR, Signature Event	🏮
Fundraisers: Calendar, Elemental Funk, Giving Tuesday, Matsuri, Raffle	🌸
Facility Operation	🏢
Friends of GVJCI	👉
General	❤️
Programs: Bento Buddies, Family, JLS, Seniors, Youth	🌈
Scholarships	🎓
Sponsors: Events, Programs, Fundraisers	★
Grants	😊
Corporate & Matching Gifts	🎁



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GARDENA VALLEY

JCI Calendar

FEBRUARY

SETSUBUN

SAT, FEB 1, 10-11AM

**GVJCI Upstairs Classroom
207/208**

Celebrate Setsubun with GVJCI with fun themed crafts and activities for children ages 5-10. Participation fee is \$5. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

AMIGURUMI クラブ (CLUB)

SAT, FEB 1, MAR 1, MAY 3, 1:30-4:30PM

**GVJCI Upstairs Classroom
207/208**

Do you love to crochet amigurumi, granny squares, blankets, and more? Have you ever wanted to learn how? GVJCI's Amigurumi クラブ(Club) is a new, informal meetup for anyone who loves crochet and those who'd like to learn! In this club, we share crochet patterns, help one another on our projects, and get ideas from fellow crocheters. Please note that all club participants need to bring their own crochet materials such as yarn, hooks, and scissors to the meetup. Club participation fee is \$10 per person. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

USE YOUR BUSINESS PLAN AS A BLUEPRINT TO BUILD YOUR WEBSITE

TUES & THURS, FEB 4, 6, 11, 13,
18, 20, 25, 27, 7PM - 9PM

GVJCI Upstairs Classroom 205

If you are looking for a jumpstart into writing a comprehensive Business Plan then this course will help you achieve that goal. You will create an effective business plan ready by the end of the course. This is a free program co-sponsored by the Little Tokyo Service Center. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

SANSEI STORIES WRITING WORKSHOPS

WEDS, FEB 5, 12, 19, 26, MAR 5,
& 12, 7-9PM

GVJCI Upstairs Classroom 205

Write and tell your story. Write about yourself, your family, your friends. Add a story to your legacy. This workshop is designed to help new and experienced writers develop an idea, character or story. Tim Toyama will conduct the workshop. Participation fee is \$10 for each workshop or \$60 for the entire series. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

SMARTPHONE & TABLET CLASS

MONS, FEB 10, 24, MAR 3, 10,
17, & 24, 1:00-3:00PM

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans Memorial
Hall**

Do you need help using apps on your smartphone? Not sure how to edit the settings on your iPhone or Android? Register for our smartphone/tablet class to learn the basic functions of your device! A question and answer session will conclude each class. This is a 6 class series; each class is \$10 or \$50 for the whole series. The second hour of each class will be an informal tutoring hour where students can ask questions and receive help from tech volunteers! Please visit the GVJCI website or come to the front office to register.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS & HOW TO MAKE A PERSONAL GO-BAG

FRI, FEB 28, 1-2PM

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans
Memorial Hall**

From scenario-based discussions, checklists for all age groups, and go-bags, this workshop will provide attendees with a better understanding

of what they will need in the case of a catastrophic event. Join us to start important conversations about emergency preparedness. This program is presented by Keiro and is free to the public. Pre-registration is required. Please visit the GVJCI Office to pre-register.

MARCH

HINAMATSURI

SAT, MAR 1, 10-11AM

**GVJCI Upstairs Classroom
207/208**

Celebrate Girl's Day with GVJCI! We'll be learning about the history and traditions of Hinamatsuri through crafts and activities for children ages 5 to 10. Participation fee is \$5. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

(日本語クラス)ストレッ チ&セルフマッサージ

(NEW)

3月7日金曜日、午前10-11スタ
ート (毎月第一金曜日)

二世ベテランメモリアルホール
新しく始まる日本語でのクラスです。
毎月一回第一金曜日(変更月あり)、
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ヨガマットを各自持参してください。
膝や腰の悪い方は追加でブランケット
やバスタオルを準備してください。事
前申し込み不要。クラスに直接お越し
下さい。

FILMS OF REMEMBRANCE SUN, MAR 9, 11AM-8PM

GVJCI Main Hall

For our annual Day of Remembrance event, GVJCI is partnering with the Nichi Bei Foundation on their annual Films of Remembrance event: a showcase of films commemorating the forced removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans in American concentration camps during World War II. For more information, please visit the GVJCI website.

**THE BRIDGES YURI BUILT:
HOW YURI KOCHIYAMA
MARCHED ACROSS
MOVEMENTS BOOK
EVENT**

SUN, MAR 23, 2-4PM

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans Memorial
Hall**

Debut children's picture book author Kai Naima Williams – great-granddaughter of Yuri Kochiyama – intimately chronicles the experiences and lessons, hardships and victories, and people and places that shaped Yuri's life and influenced her activism. From Yuri's incarceration in a Japanese-American concentration camp during World War II to her participation in movements organizing for better schools in Harlem to her close friendship with Malcolm X, Yuri never wavered in her belief in the power of people – especially young people – to bring about social change. Through imaginative writing and vibrant illustrations (Anastasia Magloire Williams), **THE BRIDGES YURI BUILT** is sure to inspire young readers to embrace Yuri's unwavering belief that together we can build a bridge to a better world. After a reading of the book, discussion with author Kai Naima Williams as well as an audience Q&A will take place. The book is available for pre-order via event registration on the GVJCI website. This event is free to attend for all ages. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

**OUCHI GOHAN
WORKSHOPS (Japanese
Home Cooking with Chef
Mike Inouye)**

**SUNS, MAR 30 & APR 6,
10:00AM-12:00PM**

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans Memorial
Hall Kitchen**

Participants will be instructed by veteran sushi chef Mike Inouye on how to prepare a variety of Japanese foods. Learn how to make gyoza and yakisoba on March 30th (\$80 for in-person, \$40 virtually) and sushi (nigiri, California roll, tekamaki, and kapamaki) on April 6th (\$100 for in-person, \$50 virtually). Limited to 7 people in-person and 100 people virtually. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

APRIL

**セミナー： シニア及び低
所得者向けの公共料金割引
プログラム**

**4月11日金曜日、午後1
時—2時、2階クラスルー
ム207号**

リトル東京サービスセンターによる講演。公共料金の支払いが困難な際の支払プランや低所得者向けの割引プランへの申請方法を説明します。このプログラムは無料です。参加希望者はGVJCI オフィスにて要事前申し込み。

**STRETCH & SOUND BATH
EXPERIENCE**

WED, APR 16, 7-8PM

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans Memorial
Hall Kitchen**

After a long day at work, come rejuvenate yourself at GVJCI for our first Stretch & Sound Bath experience. Yoga instructor Nana Tsubota is a 4th generation Japanese American and Registered Yoga Teacher and Sound Healer. She will guide participants in stretches of 2-5 minutes each accompanied with Sound Healing using 7 sound bowls. Participants are required to bring a yoga mat and water to stay hydrated. Registration is \$15 per person. To register for this class, please visit the GVJCI website.

**INTRODUCTION
TO JAPANESE TEA
CEREMONY**

FRI, APR. 18, 1-2PM

GVJCI Upstairs Classroom 206

A hands-on introduction to traditional Japanese Tea Ceremony taught by practitioner Kenji Mayeda of the Mikichi Okada Association Museum. Limited to 5 participants. Fee is \$30 per person. Each participant must bring their own tea ceremony items which include: chakin, chasen, chashaku, chawan, fukusa, kensui, a tray, and a hot water pot. Please visit the GVJCI website to register.

**MEMORY LOSS &
ALZHEIMERS: LET'S TALK!**

FRI APR 25, 1-2PM

**GVJCI Upstairs Classroom
207/208**

In this free workshop presented by Alzheimer's Los Angeles, participants will receive an overview of Alzheimer's disease and its effects, learn about what causes memory loss and difference between normal aging & signs of dementia, and what to do when visiting the doctor. RSVP: Kristy Huang (323) 930-6257 or khuang@alzla.org

GVJCI IZAKAYA

FRI APR 25, 5-9PM

**GVJCI Nisei Veterans
Memorial Hall**

We invite you to join us at our **4th Annual GVJCI Izakaya**. A culinary event fundraiser featuring specialty small bites, beverages, and music! Registration opens in February. Please visit our website for more information and to purchase tickets. 21+

**MANZANAR PILGRIMAGE
SAT, APR 26, 6AM-9PM**

The annual community-wide Manzanar Pilgrimage at the Manzanar Historic Site will be on April 26th. Manzanar was the site of an American WWII concentration camp that was used to forcibly house people of Japanese descent from 1942-1945. The Pilgrimage Program features speakers, performances, interfaith religious ceremony, and community ondo. Bus transportation reservations will be a first come first serve basis, and registration will end once spaces fill up. Payment will guarantee registration. \$68 per person for transportation. Former incarcerated receive free transportation. If you would like to reserve a seat on our bus, please visit the GVJCI website to register or call the GVJCI Office at (310) 324-6611.

SCAN THE QR
CODE WITH YOUR
PHONE CAMERA TO
REGISTER FOR ANY
OF OUR PROGRAMS!





GARDENA VALLEY

JCI Gardena Valley JCI News

STAFF UPDATE

In October, we welcomed a new staff member, **Andrew Bacon**, as our part-time **Facility Events Coordinator**. Andrew is a lifelong southern California resident always searching for ways to be more involved in non-profit work. A musician by trade, he hopes to bring his experience to our Facility Events and Programs for every visitor and member of the community. Welcome, Andrew!



APRIL DEADLINE FOR 2025 GVJCI SCHOLARSHIPS

GVJCI High School Seniors Scholarship

The GVJCI awards annual scholarships to high school seniors in the South Bay region of Los Angeles County. Former GVJCI Japanese Language School students who live outside of the South Bay region may also apply.

Eligibility: Applicants must have been directly involved with the GVJCI or GVJCI Member Organizations that hold regular activity at the GVJCI. Emphasis is placed upon GVJCI and other community involvement, volunteerism and future goals. High school students must have a minimum of a 2.5 GPA and have post-secondary educational plans.



Scholarships available: Gary Hori Memorial Scholarship, Gardena Valley JAACL Scholarship, and the Gardena Valley Gardeners Association Legacy Scholarship, and other GVJCI scholarships.

GVJCI Undergraduate/Graduate Scholarship

The Brian Takeo Mitsunaga Memorial Scholarship is available to current college and graduate school students.

Eligibility: Applicants must be currently enrolled full-time at a college, university, trade school, business school, or any other institution of higher learning within the United States at the undergraduate or graduate school level and will be continuing in the Fall. A minimum 2.5 GPA is required. Applicants must have been directly involved with the GVJCI in some capacity (ex: GVJCI Japanese Language School, GVJCI internships, GVJCI programs and services. GVJCI member organization's involvement would not qualify.)



NOTE: Previous recipients of a GVJCI Undergraduate/Graduate Scholarship are not eligible to reapply to this scholarship for additional years of their undergraduate or graduate education. However, an applicant who received a GVJCI High School Senior Scholarship, is eligible to apply as an undergraduate or graduate student; or a recipient of an undergraduate scholarship is eligible to apply as a graduate student. In short, individuals cannot apply in an attempt to receive the same scholarship twice.

The applicant is responsible for submitting all materials to GVJCI on time. This application for a scholarship becomes complete and valid only when GVJCI has received all of the following materials.

Applications are available on our website: **JCI-Gardena.org**. Submission deadline is April 7, 2025, and award recognitions will be made on June 28, 2025 at the 2025 GVJCI Matsuri .

To make a donation to the GVJCI Scholarship Fund or for more information, please contact the GVJCI Office or visit our website at jci-gardena.org.



GARDENA VALLEY

JCI Tomo No Kai Corner



Happy New Year 2025! Thank you to all of our Tomo No Kai (TNK) members in 2024! Last year, we ended with a total of 612 Tomo No Kai members! It's time to renew or sign up for 2025 TNK membership. You

can sign up or renew your membership for \$12 at the GVJCI Office or online. What comes with membership? Participation in any of our TNK classes (most of which are only \$6!), our senior bento program which serves healthy and delicious \$7 Japanese bento meals, and our Tomo Cafe social hour where friends and new friends gather to socialize and enjoy coffee and pastries.

There are 2 ways to sign up/renew membership:

1. Visit JCI-Gardena.org/Membership and fill out the online membership form OR download and print out a paper form to fill out and return to the GVJCI Office.
2. Visit the GVJCI front office to fill out a paper membership form.

Please see our website for the latest class schedule or pick one up at our office.

And lastly, please note the following dates/holidays:

GVJCI CLOSURE DATES:

- Monday, February 17 - President's Day Holiday
- Monday, March 31 - Cesar Chavez Holiday
- Monday, May 26 - Memorial Day Holiday

2025 年明けましておめでとうございます! 2025 年友の会会員の更新または登録の時期が来ました。昨年は友の会会員総数612名で終了しました! メンバーシップのサインアップまたは更新は、GVJCI オフィスまたはオンラインで 12 ドルで行うことができます。会員になると何が得られますか? TNK クラスへの参加 (ほとんどが 6 ドル!), 健康的でおいしい 7 ドルの日本食弁当を提供するシニア向け弁当プログラム、友人や新しい友人が集まってコーヒーやパストリーを楽しみながら交流できる友カフェ ソーシャルアワーなどがあります。

会員登録/更新には2つの方法があります:

1. JCI-Gardena.org/Membershipにアクセスし、オンライン会員登録フォームに記入するか、紙のフォームをダウンロードして印刷し、記入して GVJCI オフィスに返送してください。
2. GVJCI フロントオフィスを訪れて、紙の会員登録フォームに記入してください。

最新のクラススケジュールについては当社のウェブサイトをご覧ください。当社オフィスで入手してください。

最後に、2025 年の以下の日付/休日にご注意ください。

GVJCI 休館日:

- 2月17日月曜日 - プレジデントデー
- 3月31日月曜日 - セサルチャベスデー
- 5月26日月曜日 - メモリアルデー

TANOSHII FUN CAMP

Early bird price ends March 28!

JCI

JULY 28-AUG 1

TANOSHII Fun Camp is a week-long youth summer camp that teaches elementary school children (ages 7-10 years) about the Japanese American culture and heritage through hands-on activities, community speaker presentations, demonstrations, games and many other fun explorations. Past activities included taiko, kendo (martial arts), origami, ondo (Japanese dance), Japanese language, and Japanese cooking. Campers will get a chance to learn and connect with their heritage along with high school juniors, seniors and college students serving as camp counselors under adult supervision. For more information, please visit our website.



GARDENA VALLEY

JCI Member Org News

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

By Lyndon Meighan, Director of Facilities & Community Engagement

2024 has been a busy year for our BSA Eagle Scout candidates. I want to acknowledge these candidates for their creativity, leadership, and hard work, as well as their fellow scouts and family.

First, is **Brendan Foster of BSA 718** for refurbishing all our games and bringing life back into them. He led his team and completed a job well done. Second, is **Zachary Furukawa of BSA 242**. Zachary built three new chair racks to replace the aging ones. Zachary, the youngest at 15 years old, did a fantastic job and showed leadership and maturity for his age. The third candidate, **Isaac Kim, is from BSA 683**. Isaac built a new game, Ring Toss, to add to our collection. You will see it at our 2025 Matsuri. The fourth young man is **Marc Shirota from BSA 683**. Marc also built a new Pitching game for us. Marc and Isaac showed terrific craftsmanship. You will see Marc's game at the 2025 Matsuri too. The fifth young man is **Lucas Terrell from BSA 683**. Lucas built a Pinewood Derby Track. This is a beautiful track, and we are excited to debut it at our first GVJCI Car Show and Pinewood Derby Race in August 2025...stay tuned. It's probably the best track in the South Bay. Our sixth and final project in 2024 is from **Roman Vladimirovich Avramets from BSA 719**. Roman refurbished our podium, installed new shelving in one of our storage units, and designed and built a new custom projector stand. Roman is a very ambitious young man and did a fantastic job. He showed terrific leadership and organizational skills. I appreciate all these young men for their creativity, managerial talent, leadership, hard work, and support and commitment to the GVJCI and their community. We wish them great success in their journey in life.



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Caregiver Conference

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Saturday, March 15, 2025

**East San Gabriel Valley
Japanese Community Center**

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Registration Opens: Monday, January 6, 2025

For more information, visit [keiro.org/CC25](https://www.keiro.org/CC25)

Caregiver Conference South Bay - Coming Fall 2025

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Byul Stella Jung
Attorney at Law

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OR CURRENT OCCUPANT



To visit the GVJCI website,
scan the QR code using your
phone camera!

GARDENA VALLEY JAPANESE CULTURAL INSTITUTE

The Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute (GVJCI) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit community center providing various classes, programs, services, and facilities to the South Bay area. We also provide affordable housing through the JCI Gardens Apartments, the adjacent senior housing property.

The GVJCI's roots date back to 1912, when it was known as the Moneta Gakuen, a Japanese language school. In 1967, it was formally incorporated as the Gardena Valley Japanese Language School. Then, in 1968, the corporation changed its name to the Gardena Valley Japanese Cultural Institute to incorporate the broader services and functions the organization offers. In 1971, Compton Gakuen, Gardena Gakuen, and Moneta Gakuen merged, opening its doors officially as the GVJCI's Japanese Language School. The GVJCI has a very proud history spanning over 100 years.

Today, we continue to provide a variety of activities, programs, and services. We are truly fortunate to have an active and well-utilized center serving people of all ages. We thank you, the community, for your active participation and for your support through donations and volunteerism that enables the GVJCI to continue.

MISSION STATEMENT

A space to engage, share, and embrace the Nikkei experience and culture.

VISION STATEMENT

The GVJCI envisions a vibrant network and a welcoming space for all persons interested in Japanese heritage and culture where history and tradition are honored, people are inspired to create action and change, and cultural pride and respect for all humanity are promoted.

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