

# USJC Texas Newsletter



Volume #01 | August 2024

## Welcome to our quarterly newsletter!

We are excited to start a quarterly newsletter for the Texas region, sharing USJC regional events and members' activities.

## Tsukemen Phenomenon: The Culture and Craft of Japanese Ramen

On April 17, 2024, Asia Society Houston brought a fun and educational event showcasing all things about Ramen! **Robert Gondo** of Tokyo Gardens Catering, **Kenshiro Uki** of Sun Noodle, and **Kumamoto Yuino** of Tsujita Ramen shared profound cultural significance and craftsmanship to make noodles from scratch. Guests enjoyed a bowl of ramen prepared onsite by Killer Noodle.



## USJC Texas Chair



**Steve Sakanashi** became the new regional chair of USJC Texas chapter in December 2023 after moving to Dallas from Tokyo for the mission of connecting USJC members residing in the region. He is currently the Director of Strategic Partnership at Abeam Consulting and has served multiple key roles at USJC including Board of Directors for Japan, President's Advisory Board, and ELP Steering Committee. Learn more about [Steve's background](#).



## Robert Gondo Featured on CHRON

**Robert Gondo** is the Director of Tokyo Gardens Catering which supplies famous sushi at 300 H-E-B locations. He is the grandson of Eugene and Hisako Gondo who first introduced sushi to Houstonians in 1966. Today, Tokyo Gardens strives to make and deliver fresh Asian-inspired food every day. He was the member of the 2019 ELP. Gondo family legacy was featured [on Houston CHRON](#).



## Mark Ikeno Received the Bridges-to-Friendship Award

On April 22, 2024, **Masahiro “Mark” Ikeno** received the Bridges-to-Friendship Award at the annual Sun & Star Legacy Award Dinner hosted by Japan-America Society of Dallas/Fort Worth. The organization recognized his contributions during his time as President and CEO of NEC Corporation of America, as well as his long-time support of U.S.-Japan relations throughout his career and currently as the Executive Director of USJC Japan.



## USJC Texas Welcomed Audrey Yamamoto

On April 22 and 23, 2024, **Donna Cole** in Houston, and the new regional chair **Steve Sakanashi** and USJC Investment Committee Chair **Mark Okada** in Dallas welcomed the USJC new President & CEO, **Audrey Yamamoto** to host a USJC members dinner. Audrey shared her vision and mission to strengthen the organization’s contributions to U.S.-Japan relations. Robert’s Tokyo Gardens catered their famous sushi and entertained the attendees.



## Kanpai! A Saké Tasting Tour of Japan

On May 31, 2024, Asia Society Houston, together with USJC, Genji Saké, and Mutual Trading, brought another fun event to celebrate the diverse world of Japanese saké. Attendees were able to sample a dozen different varieties while industry experts shared the brewing techniques and tasting notes. Robert's Tokyo Gardens catered their fresh sushi again at this event!



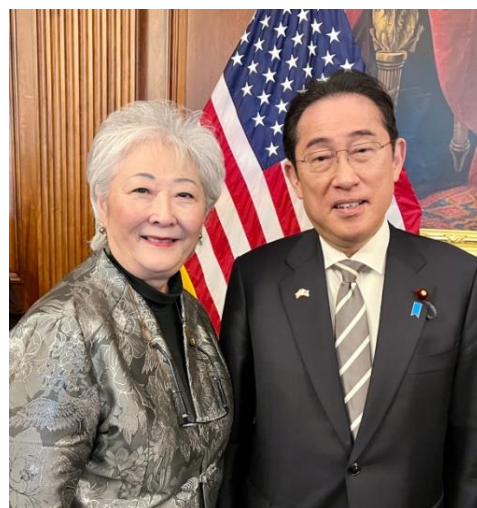
## Royal Public Schools Welcomed Bexar County Judge Peter Sakai

On June 24, Bexar County Judge **Peter Sakai** and his wife lifetime educator **Rachel Sakai**, alongside with other distinguish leaders visited Royal Public Schools to discuss the future of education and support the schools mission and exceptional accomplishments for serving the south side of San Antonio communities.



## Donna Cole Joined PM Kishida's State Visit

On April 10, CEO & President of Cole Chemical and Distributing, Inc., **Donna Cole** in Houston, alongside with **Audrey Yamamoto** and other USJC members, joined Prime Minister Kishida's historic State Visit. USJC was mentioned in the U.S.-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement for our TOMODACHI initiative, Kibou for Maui project, and newly launched Mineta Ambassadors Program (MAP).



## Asian & Pacific American Heritage Month

May was Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month – a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the U.S.! The month of May was chosen to commemorate the immigration of **the first Japanese** to the U.S. on May 7, 1843. Let's recognize the contributions and influence of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islander Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the U.S.

